



2007

Geoffrey Richards has retired as editor of ARCHITEXT. Stepping into his shoes with BLOCK, we thank him for his heroic efforts over his long term - more than twelve years!!
Pip Cheshire, Andrew Barrie & Sean Flanagan

Saturday Night Live

In light of this month's RAI A 'Departure Lounge' conference, Sean Flanagan considers the reasons for EMBT's broadcast to Melbourne.

Enric Miralles Benedetta Tagliabue Arquitectes Associats (EMBT Architects) is a Barcelona-based architectural firm that formed in 1993. The practice comprises approximately 50 employees and, following the death of Enric Miralles in July 2000 at the age of 45, is led by his wife Benedetta Tagliabue alongside several principals.

EMBT are keynote presenters at this year's RAI A National Conference, being held in Melbourne over the weekend of the 19th-22nd April. The conference is entitled 'Departure Lounge,' and the creative director, Timothy Hill of Donovan-Hill Architects, says the discussion will focus upon the question of practice. He proposes that how architects practice can "make as much difference on the built environment as our talents, tastes or tendencies."

EMBT will be in Melbourne – technically speaking. A live telecast from Barcelona will beam Benedetta and her colleagues to the conference centre where, for the evening, delegates are invited to be her guests and absorb the practice ethos. Hill hopes the broadcast will push delegates beyond contemplating the firm's inspiring buildings and towards comprehending "how they happened at all."

EMBT's most prominent completed project is the New Scottish Parliament (Edinburgh, 2004), which Charles Jencks describes as "the largest crafted building since Antonio Gaudi's Sagrada Familia." The project comprises a number of interconnected buildings whose disposition evokes images of leaves floating down a river and moored boats jostling one another in the tide. The irregular plan embeds the parliament in the medieval city.

The level of craft exercised in finishing the complex design is one reason why the building ran over budget to the extent that it prompted a parliamentary enquiry. Complicating the affair was the fact that both Miralles and Donald Dewar – the political force behind the building – died during the project. Wishing the building to be remembered for its architectural merits rather than as a fiscal crisis, Jencks summarized the situation with the comment that, as with the church by Gaudi, "it is never cheap to build the work of a great, dead architect."

The RIBA awarded EMBT the Stirling Prize in 2005 for the parliament building. The firm has recently completed the Santa Caterina market place in Barcelona and is currently working on a harbour development in Hamburg and a train station in Naples. Their Trinity Quarter development in Leeds

received the green light this month after a seven year delay due to a land dispute. The shopping centre's swarming roof is one of the last projects Miralles designed.

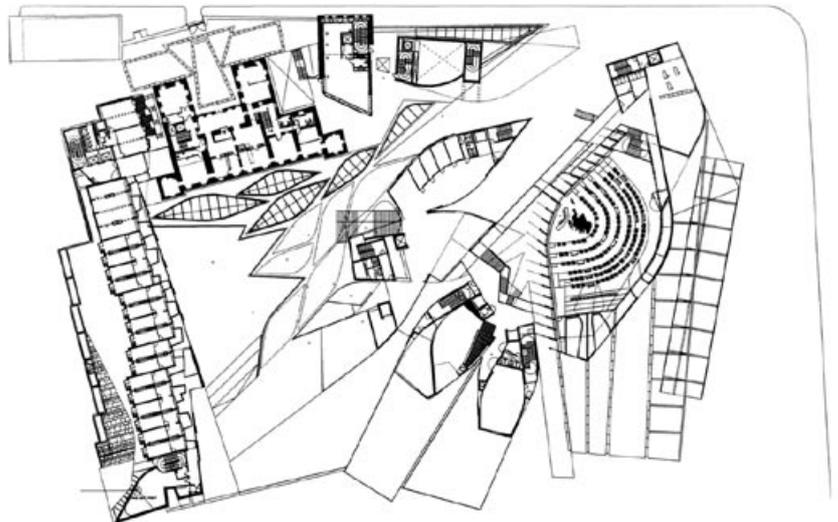
The Aussies seem to have a fascination with Miralles' work. Last year's conference included a presentation by the Barcelona-based architect Carme Pinós who, between 1983 and 1991, worked in partnership with Miralles. Together, they were responsible for the design of the Igualada Cemetery, the 1992 Olympic Games Archery Range buildings, and the La Llauna School project, all in Barcelona. With EMBT beaming-in this year, the Aussies come as close as possible to the spectre of Miralles. But why was it important to invite EMBT to a conference turning around the question of practice?

The interest lies partly in the way firm captures the spirit of the Spanish (Miralles) and Italian (Tagliabue) artisan architectural studio traditions. Artisans were the primary producers of goods prior to the industrial revolution and therefore prior to advanced mechanization, the division of labour, and the standardization of products and materials. Implied here is a very hands-on approach to crafting architecture that is highly particular and marked by the singular rather than the universal condition. Jencks discerned this artisan sensibility in the New Scottish Parliament, where four out five details had to be worked out on site. This meant considerable work for RMJM, the collaborating architects based in Edinburgh. John Kingsley, project architect for RMJM, captures the singular nature of the job: "We did 20,000 drawings. There's no repetition, so every single detail is different and had to be drawn individually."

EMBT's show at the conference will make primetime Saturday night viewing. The conference will tune-in to the office 'at work' around midday Saturday, Barcelona time. One merit of the telecast is that delegates will see directly into the studio and observe the practice at work amongst their much-published, highly-crafted timber models. Miralles believed in models as a means of communicating the development of a project amongst team members. On the other hand, Tagliabue associates the models with the firm's artisan sensibility, believing they are the site where their architecture is "truly constructed directly by hand."

Another reason for EMBT's appearance is hinted at in the Departure Lounge theme. For Hill, the conference is a place where architects depart from professional reservations and speak plainly about the dissenting views and uncertainties that he thinks affect practice. In the space of the conference, practice is considered a question rather than something pursued as a defined course of action. In this context, EMBT's practice is important because it is questionable. Their actions are marked by uncertainties and their projects harbor no pretence to being the exclusive solution to a problem. Miralles said: "We have always presented our work, not as the best or only possible solution, but as one of the multiple variations."

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EMBT's Scottish Parliament, First Floor

The Fine Print

Excerpts from the reports to NZIA Auckland Branch meeting held April 3rd, 2007.

FUTURE AUCKLAND LEADERS PORTFOLIO: Stephen Martin

I attended the first Committee for Auckland FAL meeting (held on 29 March 2007) since returning from leave. During my absence, the four projects proposed at the end of 2006 have been rationalised to three. I will be meeting each project team shortly to confirm which one I will join.

The three projects respectively involve a pilot project to place 15 educated new immigrants into selected industry jobs in Auckland, and two separate projects that aim to educate Aucklanders about their cultural history - one targeting business people, the other children.

HERITAGE PORTFOLIO: Adam Wild

The Rotherham House, 1950

The concept is to secure the Rotherham House, the third Group Construction Company house to be built, as an Auckland centre for the promotion of architecture, architectural debate, and architectural issues. The Rotherham House could be offered as an architect-in-residence studio to visiting architects wishing for some "thinking" space and who are also prepared to talk about it. As well as providing a facility for a resident architect, the Rotherham House could be staffed by students of architecture from both Auckland Schools who would act as guide, assistant, and house keeper at some time during their degree course.

I have spoken with Ath to gauge the project's eligibility for assistance from the Warren Trust. This appears to be worth pursuing. North Shore City Council wants to see a developed business plan for the Rotherham House. They have reservations about non-residential activity in a residential zone, but it would be unlikely that the Rotherham House would be the centre for exhibitions or debate, but more the generator of them. The executors of the estate are keen to explore the options ahead on behalf of the family. The family are sensitive to the interest and value of the place and our discretion is important if we are to make a meaningful difference.

This is a real chance to ensure the safety of one of the most important pieces of New Zealand's architectural legacy and to promote what architects can do.

Architecture Week '07

We are considering a retrospective of Dick Toy. I am still keen to know how accessible the John Scott exhibition is and if we could bring that to Auckland too.

Buildings at Risk

A number of properties have been brought to our attention by members of the public. These include 123 Grafton Road at the eastern end of Grafton Bridge, which HNZ wishes to remove, and the Arkle House and Chapel at the intersection of Dominion Road Extension and Hillsborough Road.

UNITEC PORTFOLIO: Tony Van Raat

MArch

At a meeting in Wellington in March, Victoria and Auckland Universities advised that they were deferring the introduction of the new professional Masters degree until 2009. Unitec has completed all the documentation required and obtained its internal approvals for this degree and will therefore continue to work towards the original timeframe that the three schools agreed of a 2008 introduction. Of course, external approvals may or may not be granted in time for this to be achieved, but as some of our students have already modified their programmes of study to become eligible for the new degree, we will continue as previously advised.

Visitors

Charles Waldheim architect and landscape architect from Toronto was in the School last week speaking on Landscape Urbanism. At exactly the same time, Hamish Neville from Holmes Group (and ex-Arup and Partners) was talking about structural design and breaking away from the Cartesian grid. These two completed a month which had also seen our three Tuscan architects and a group of students from technical University Berlin in the School. From closer to home, earlier in the month Aaron Sills had also made a presentation on European apartment design.

Architecture Week '07

Krystina Kaza is working with the Committee to stitch together the School's contribution. A student competition to design shelters is planned, plus other as-yet undefined activities.



Rotherham House

Image courtesy Architecture Archive, University of Auckland

TECHNICAL ISSUES PORTFOLIO: Michael Middlebrook

We propose to set up a sub-committee of the NZIA Auckland Branch to resolve building control issues in the Auckland region. The goal is to improve the interface between architects and the various councils by getting a consistent approach to (amongst others) documentation requirements, alternative solution verification, timing, and new products. The first steps are: to get feedback from Auckland architects by querying selected practices to find the scope of BC issues, use a web-based questionnaire notified to all Auckland practices to define the extent of issues and then set up an initial meeting between Auckland BCA's, a small group of Auckland architects and the DBH Building Controls Manager to discuss issues and solutions. Similar issues with the RMA that might also be addressed by the same process.

The Practice Notes are currently being updated to include Building Act changes. Warwick Massey is currently getting feedback from members on issues such as Producer Statements, Alterations, Change of Use, and payment for BC's.



Revised Building Code sections, in particular new editions of: F4 Safety from falling (operative 24 September 2007). AS/1 has grown from three pages to seven. Increased balustrade heights, new details, horizontal balustrades permitted, swimming pool fencing section removed, opening window requirements changed.

G1 Personal Hygiene (operative 23 June 2007). new definitions, a general section defining where sanitary facilities are required and what they must contain. Several changes to the tables. Projects likely to be in consent through or after these dates should comply in the absence of verification methods for alternative solutions.

Working Groups have been working with the DBH on the new Building Code risk factors, functional statements and metrics. First draft of the Review completed March '07. Public comment to be completed by July. Final Report of the Building Code Review to be with the Minister(s) by November 2007. We need to continue to participate strongly in this process to ensure a good outcome.

Building Information Modelling. Should the NZIA define some standards? There has been a major movement for architects to adopt 3D parametric modelling and the concept of BIM but there are interoperability issues which have stalled the implementation of BIM especially with bigger projects.

URBAN ISSUES GROUP

The increase in general awareness of Urban Issues and the involvement of architects beyond the Group in urban affairs make it necessary for the Group to develop an understanding of how the Institute of which we are a part expects us to operate.

These clauses outline the baseline requirements that have arisen out of various matters last year:

1. The Group will have a defined membership, consisting of personal members of the NZIA. This will include Colleague members, but simply working in an NZIA practice is not sufficient qualification.
2. An NZIA Member wanting to join the Group will need to be nominated by two existing members.
3. Membership of the Group will be confidential within the NZIA, and members will not be identified outside without their consent.
4. All material or comment issued to the media, including websites, must be approved by the Group's chairman. If the matter is likely to have a wider impact on NZIA or any of its members, the chairman will seek the advice of the chairman of Auckland Branch.
5. Where the Group is making a submission or publicly commenting on an issue that involves an NZIA member in a client-architect relationship, the chairman will advise that member in advance of the Group's proposed actions.
6. When a Group member appears at a hearing representing the Group or claiming membership of the Group, they shall restrict their verbal presentation to the agreed points and shall not express personal views on the matter at hand.

GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO: Nicole Tarlton

Registration

The NZRAB has proposed increasing the fees for Registration Applications this year to \$2100. Numerous graduates and architects sent emails to the NZRAB and the Minister in relation to this. According to Jennifer Pelvin, the Hon. Clayton Cosgrove has not yet made a decision.

Preparation

On May 3rd, we will have a presentation at D72 by recently registered architects about their techniques in preparing for assessment and experiences sitting the exam.

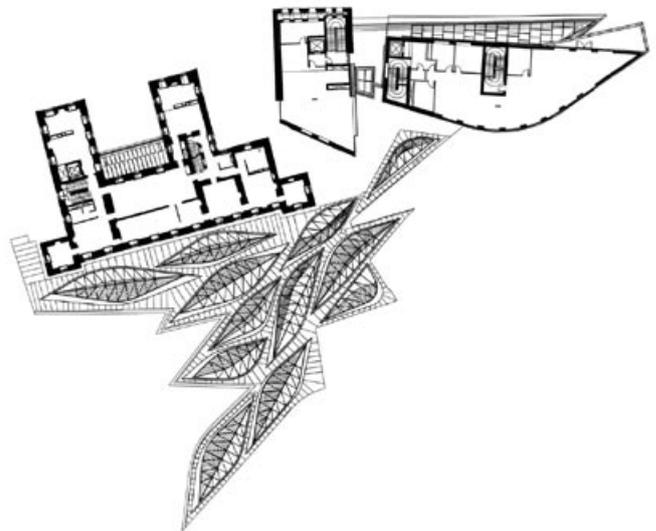


EMBT's Scottish Parliament

Saturday Night Live continued...

Tagliabue notes that the level of variation in the design process often frightens clients who expect projects to develop along a solid line towards a logical conclusion. Rather than a solid line, EMBT see practice as a journey that traverses various schemes. The idea of a journey through design is familiar to many architects. But, importantly, EMBT's projects form an account of that journey and a measure of its variations. They do not conceal the convolutions beneath an image of solidity. Instead, they encourage the questionable side of practice to rise to the surface. Miralles said: "In its very formation architecture incorporates the idea of the journey, the variable. And so it seems fitting to me that the forms incorporate this idea of the variable."

Befitting the conference theme, EMBT speak plainly of the complexities of practice. They will be welcome passengers in the Departure Lounge.



Calder  Stewart
Roofing



Forgotten, But Not Gone

Following a visit to an under-loved gem, Pip Cheshire makes the case for the keeping tabs on young guns as well as the oldies.

I met Alan Matson in the video rental, both of us reeling from aisle to aisle trying to find familiar territory to get us through a bleak early autumn Sunday evening. After the mutual expressions of anguish over the frustrations of the search; a promising hundred words on the plastic slip cover and the further near incomprehensible confusions of zone differential, we ventured onto the common territory of buildings under threat. Alan is a hero, scourge of the unthinking developer, zealot in favour of the unrecognised, unheralded and unloved in our trade; the protector of buildings in the way of change, progress and difference, of buildings in the way.

The chance meeting followed hard on the heels of the grand tour, the supreme Previa tour in search of the nation's best. Discretion and the timing of the Resene awards prevent me from spilling too many beans but the meeting with Alan called to mind a side visit made as we dashed from metaphorical pillar to metonymic post in pursuit of that beyond mere excellence. As you know, it is customary to have an overseas expert on the panel. While these are sometimes expatriates who have washed up on our shores, we were lucky to share this year's expedition with Sydney architect Richard Johnson; an architect of great sensitivity, no little wisdom and possessor of a useful thirst.

Richard is undertaking a rather major project in Auckland that has seen him scuttling across the Mangere bridge at close intervals but rarely beyond the volcanic isthmus. We fellow judges felt it incumbent upon ourselves to share a few of the nation's pearls where they lay within our general trajectory, one of the most exciting of which was Sir Miles Warren's Christchurch College.

I strode into the lobby with the proprietorial air of a returning son of the city. I swept aside the enjoiner for visitors to register at the office and was closely followed by Richard who had recognised the project from publications and had experienced an architectural epiphany, gathering velocity as we passed the dining room heading for the courtyard within we embarked on a whirlwind tour. Within minutes we had ascended the processional stairs of the chapel and were revelling in the traverse seating, the precipitous organ loft, the wonderfully inverted roof, the paintings, the light and, alas, the rather unused smell of this superb building.

Time was short and we descended and emerged into the courtyard's light to find fellow judge Joanna Hurst bailed up by a most unhappy Bursar remonstrating at our lack of respect for the College's private property rights. Judging that snivelling was the better part of valour I played the full *mea culpa* hand, most ably assisted by Richard's reconstructed epiphany; "I saw the in-situ lintel and I just started to run, it overcame me..."

I urge anyone down that way to visit, but to check with the Bursar first and then to reflect on the fragility of the College's current existence. The Bursar is doing a fine job though his primary care is, perhaps as it should be, of the students in the college, the bricks and mortar being, mostly, a source of high maintenance problems and an attractor of unruly and impolite visitors. His rather long suffering response to our acclamations of the building's value and status within the country's short list of modern masterpieces underscores the low status accorded buildings made after the middle of last century.

We are staggering towards a more sophisticated understanding of culture and city building and of the many strands that make up a working urban milieu. The activities of Alan Matson and precious few others have helped us begin to achieve something other than a one dimensional built environment; a sense that we are part of a continuum, that work done today is built upon the lessons and sensitivities gained by those who have trod this land before. While drawings and photographs can record that which was, architecture requires the presence of the artefact itself for the full measure of space to be understood; its smell, its light, its sound, its dimensions and its solidity.



Image courtesy Warren & Mahoney

There is a reasonably robust framework for the identification and protection of buildings built prior to the last seventy or so years, but more recent buildings are on their own, often subject to the inexorable erosion of character and quality that multiple owners and tenants bring. Our travelling companion Richard Johnson described the register of significant buildings established by local branches of the RAIIA which include strong pieces from this decade and which has developed a robust credibility within the developer and territorial authority realm. It is time we generated such lists ourselves rather than leave it to city bureaucracies that are overworked and subject of the inevitable contradictions and conflicts of interest of public bodies. Docomomo (International Working Party for Document and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement) has a slender foothold in this country and SAHANZ (Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand) continues to lay down an academic framework for the review of contemporary buildings. I note that the Historic Places Trust has an article by the redoubtable Douglas Lloyd Jenkins promoting the protection of modern gems on its website but it's time for the Institute to look after its own. I urge you all to nominate ten extant gems from the last fifty years and send them to us at BLOCK (pip@cheshirearchitects.com) to get things rolling.

NURAPLY 3P			
WATERPROOFING		WATERPROOFING	NURALITE
ROOFS		DECKS	waterproofing
GUTTERS		CANOPIES	SYSTEMS
TERRACES		PLANTERS	
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