

ADDING TO THE RECENT PAST: CHALLENGES IN DISTINGUISHING NEW WORK FROM THE NOT SO OLD

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INTRODUCTION

In assessing some later 20th century buildings for possible inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register, two examples in particular started me thinking about the challenges in making additions to such recent buildings, compared with their more elaborate 19th century counterparts. Many years experience assessing the impact on cultural heritage significance of development applications and experience of some particularly interesting examples of high quality contemporary additions to registered 19th century buildings, has raised questions about how we deal with additions to significant later twentieth century architecture. Is it more challenging to design extensions to recent significant buildings, because of the apparent simplicity of contemporary architectural styles, lack of decorative features or less developed patina?

The former Clyde Cameron College at Wodonga is a Brutalist off-form concrete and concrete block complex comprising a series of wings of one and two storeys linked by pre-cast concrete pipe walkways. The complex is spread over the site with a strong 45 degree geometry. A recent addition to the pool area has not been that successful although there had been an obvious attempt to make the addition fit in. The grey painted fibre-cement sheet clad addition looked cheap and fake, compared with the solidity and honesty of the off form concrete original complete with the imprints of the formwork. How could it have been done better? It was clearly distinguishable as a later addition, attempting to be sympathetic.....but just didn't work

Another example was an elegant flat-roofed vertical timber boarded beach house (1967) by McGlashan and Everist, published in *Living and Partly Living*ⁱ. Additions so closely matched the original it was difficult (but not impossible) to distinguish where changes had occurred, yet they changed the composition and masked the power and elegance of the minimalist original design. The additions were apparently in line with the client/owner's requirements, and documented by the McGlashan Everist office. What other options could have been considered that would have left the original house, with its stepped staggered box-like form, more clearly readable?

In particular, the two major extensions to the Museum of Modern Art at Heide seemed worthy of exploration, because of the very different approaches taken between the first major addition and the more recent development.

LESSONS FROM HEIDE

The Heide II building, was designed by David McGlashan of the firm McGlashan and Everist and built in 1967. Constructed of Mount Gambier limestone, timber and glass, it is an elegant, modern composition of interlinked L shaped forms, described by Philip Goad as 'a sophisticated de-Stijl composition in plan and section.'ⁱⁱ

The house was commissioned by art patrons John and Sunday Reed who had been living on the property in a timber Victorian cottage, now known as Heide I, since 1935. The brief has often been quoted—'a romantic building, ageless and with a sense of mystery; a quality of space and natural light appropriate to a gallery, and with a sense of walls within extending into a garden.'

¹ Please note that the opinions expressed in this paper are mine and are not necessarily the views of Heritage Victoria.

Once completed, the Reeds lived in Heide II until 1980, when it was donated to the National Gallery of Victoria, and subsequently opened as a public museum (art gallery) in 1981.

Heide II was added to the Victorian Heritage Register in 1988. The following is part of the Statement of Significance:

In the same landscape that captivated the Heidelberg painters some 50 years before, they had established a garden and parkland of exotic trees, and had opened their home with great enthusiasm to artists and writers to fan a new creative spirit in the form of Australian modernism. The building of Heide II and its associated native plantings initiated a further phase in the Reeds' quest to advance modernism, with the house providing the foundation for its future use as a public art gallery and park. Built of Mt Gambier limestone, the house represents a rare and romantic distillation of diverse post-war influences in design to form a unique sculptural whole that is carefully integrated into the parkland.....

Awarded the 1968 RAI (Victorian Chapter) Bronze Medal, Heide II is architecturally significant as one of the finest contemporary houses in the State. A masterly work in design, it marks a high point in the development of this country's post-war domestic architecture, uniting two seemingly irreconcilable traditions, romanticism and mannered rationalism, to express purity of form in a geometric, sculptural whole.....



Heide II, 2009

As soon as it became a public gallery, the architects McGlashan and Everist recognized that changes would be required- off street parking for visitors, caretaker's cottage, service yard for deliveries and garden maintenance/storage, possible extensions, changes to services and updated safety devices such as handrails because of the changed use. They also identified two possible areas for extensions

If it is desired to consolidate or extend gallery space, two possible extensions are indicated, one to each element of accommodation. These are indicative only, however both conform to some guide lines:

- Contiguous to existing gallery space without adverse effect on established space or natural light

- Extension over lower site contours will yield large scale space, well related to existing built form
- Each could extend and repeat established building construction without structural complication.ⁱⁱⁱ

However, the McGlashan and Everist ideas were not used, and the first major extension completed was designed by Andrew Andersons of Peddle Thorp Architects, opened in 1993 and came to be known as Heide III. Heide III used the same materials as Heide II- Mount Gambier limestone, timber and glass and to the casual observer looked quite similar. It added a substantial amount of bulk to the site, mainly over the lower contours of the site attached to the studio/guest flat. Heide II had an area of 230m² the guest flat, 75m² while Heide III had a floor area of 647m². The architect's statement at the time describes the intentions

The new building will seek to compliment the outstanding architecture of the existing house. Its siting, form and architectural language will be sympathetic but at the same time indicative of new functions and a different time of construction.

Despite the need for larger spaces within the gallery, the scale and mass of the new building will be modified by a series of articulated elements and modulated cladding of timber and stone to relate to the domestic scale of the original building.

The distinctive linear and planar characteristics of the existing building achieved with the masonry walls and their consistent parapet height has influenced greatly the design of the new Gallery. A consistency in the height, thickness and the materials of the new walls enhances the suitability of the new gallery in relation to the existing building^{iv}

It must be said that the details of the design were contentious from the beginning and the then Historic Buildings Council laboured hard over the issuing of necessary permits. Looking at the first addition now, the limestone of both the original and Heide III have weathered to a similar degree. While photographs from 1993 show the crisply white new addition in stark contrast to the grey streaked Heide II, it is now less easy to see the difference in the stone. As the bulk of Heide III was added to the studio/guest flat, and the studio/guest flat is linked to the main Heide II house by a bridge, which could be read as a separating device, it is less clear to the casual observer where Heide II ends and Heide III begins.



Heide III in the foreground, photo by Martin Fowler 1993



Heide III seen from the lower part of the site, 2009

Shelley Penn, Deputy Victorian Government architect at the time of the comments below, outlines her response to the Andrew Andersons development:

‘Given the significance of the landscape for Heide, the next architectural development was disappointing.

Heide III, a dedicated public gallery, was designed by Andrew Andersons of Peddle Thorp and Walker and completed in 1993. It was closed in plan and form, appearing hermetic and bulky in contrast to Heide II, whose scale is modulated through its articulation as a series of walls. It mimicked Heide II’s main exterior materials and some details, and connected to it physically such that the two buildings were blurred, confusing the reading of Heide II and making the whole a greater mass on the site. This undermined Sunday Reed’s early conception of “a colony or a significant relationship between dwellings”, and the idea of existing in relationship with the landscape. With limited access to natural light and views, interior and exterior spaces were disconnected. Although this was common for gallery interiors, its external expression need not have been so blunt. The architecture of Heide III mistook the importance of landscape and all things Modern to the Reeds, and undermined the essence of Heide II.^v

The next and most recent development of the Museum of Modern Art at Heide resulted from a design competition for a Heide master plan, won by O’Connor + Houle Architecture who were commissioned in 1999. For the sake of clarity I will refer to this as Heide IV.

It is very clearly different and reflects the desire to more clearly distinguish the original Heide II from subsequent additions articulated in the policy of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP). The CMP, commissioned to assist O’Connor + Houle with the redevelopment, states:

Extensions and Alterations to Heide III

Any future extensions or alterations to Heide III should be resolved in a manner which (a) establishes a clear and articulate visual break between Heide II and the additions. ...^{vi}

In making this statement perhaps there is a not so subtle reference to the blurring of the distinction that had occurred between Heide II and Heide III.

The resulting dramatically different extension, constructed in 2005/06, is described on the Museum of Modern Art at Heide’s website:

Heide [IV]'s titanium zinc façade bends in a slight fold to embrace the external Tony & Cathie Hancy Sculpture Plaza. The dramatic roofline is a re-working of the sawtooth profile of industrial buildings. Internally, the space is elongated and top-lit by a series of skylights, angled to allow filtered natural light into the exhibition spaces without direct sunlight. The overall effect is a gentle unfurling of sightlines as one moves through the galleries.^{vii}

The 2005/06 redevelopment took a dramatically different approach from the earlier additions by Andrew Andersons. The form was dramatically different, although the scale and bulk were not that different. It had its own character, introducing a foreign geometry, materials, colour, texture could not easily be described as 'sympathetic', in the way that word is usually used in the heritage industry. The O'Connor + Houle Architecture reworks the connection to Heide II and makes a new clear connection, with the new material butted up to the old- new dark titanium zinc butting up against Mt Gambier limestone. There is no blurring here. This is immediately recognizable as something completely different.



Heide IV, abutting Heide II in the distance, 2009

However, the main bulk of Heide III as viewed from the park below, remains. Shelley Penn describes the O'Connor + Houle addition as 'a restorative gesture - rectifying the aberrant original Heide III and restoring the experience of landscape as core to the estate.'^{viii}

It is interesting to note the perceptions of someone outside the heritage "industry" of a change in attitude towards the way we deal with heritage sites. In *The Age* article on the redevelopment of Heide, the then museum director, Lesley Always, notes that the architects chose to make "a very distinct" point of difference between the old and new buildings:

A number of years ago, when you were building on a heritage site, the philosophy was that you built something that blended in.

But the architectural philosophy has changed so that you are making a contemporary architectural statement for today.^{ix}

Have attitudes changed, as Lesley Always clearly believes, or is it that modern buildings require a different approach?

APPLICATION OF THE BURRA CHARTER

The Burra Charter^x gives broad guidelines for additions.

Article 8

Impact on setting

Conservation requires the retention of an appropriate visual setting and other relationships that contribute to the cultural significance of the place.

New construction, demolition, intrusions or other changes which would adversely affect the setting or relationships are not appropriate. Explanatory notes: Aspects of visual setting may include use, siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and materials.

Article 22.1,

New work such as additions to the place may be acceptable where it does not distort or obscure the cultural significance of the place, or detract from its interpretation and appreciation. Explanatory notes: New work may be sympathetic if its siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and material are similar to the existing fabric, but imitation should be avoided.

22.2

New work should be readily identifiable as such.

The application of the Burra Charter requires professional judgement and thus can never be totally objective, and there are variations in its interpretation even within the heritage profession. The Explanatory notes to Article 22.1 imply that siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and material need to be similar to be "sympathetic". And this approach has generally worked well in dealing with additions to 19th century buildings. In the case of Heide III, largely because of the siting and use of the same materials, the passage of time has made it more difficult to readily identify it as different from Heide II, despite the essential architectural character being quite different from Heide II.

Does Heide IV, comply with the Burra Charter and its explanatory notes? It does not distort or obscure the cultural significance of the place, and is clearly identifiable as new work. But can its jagged dark titanium zinc form against the weathered Mount Gambier limestone be described as sympathetic?

BEFORE MODERNISM

For older buildings the passage of time means that fashions or styles in architecture have changed, buildings have weathered, patinas developed, and materials may no longer be available. Distinguishing new work from old, sympathetically and without imitation, becomes a relatively easy process and there are many excellent examples to prove this point. The recent addition to Melbourne's GPO by Williams Boag Architects Pty Ltd, which won the Australian Institute of Architects Award for Commercial Buildings in 2005.

IMAGE TEMPORARILY REMOVED

Melbourne's GPO, with addition by Williams Boag Architects, in the foreground, 2009.

However, some tried and true devices for distinguishing new from old, such as simplifying detail in additions to buildings which are more decorative in nature, cannot be relied upon when, for example, the building being extended is clean lined and crisply detailed International Modern. Likewise, mechanisms such as material and textural differences can also become problematic.

OTHER ADDITIONS TO MORE RECENT BUILDINGS

BHP Research Laboratories, Wellington Road, Mulgrave

While not strictly an addition, the BHP Research laboratories at Mulgrave illustrates two successive similar buildings designed by the same architectural firm, Eggleston, MacDonald and Secomb. The first building, dating from 1969, was constructed in Aus-Ten 50 or Core Ten steel, which rusts to form a protective coating. Unfortunately now painted and recently the vertical members painted white, the elegantly and carefully detailed Miesian design is a steel and glass

box, with large horizontal steel beams hiding the concrete slab floors behind. The columns are supported on visually expressed pin joints.



The 1969 building, Eggleston MacDonald and Secomb

A companion building dating from 1992 is located directly behind the original building and faces it across a sunken courtyard. A similar expressed steel framed building, it uses the steel in a completely different and structurally more economical way. The tubular diagonal bracing immediately distinguishes it from the first building. It is a development of the original, sited sympathetically with a similar bulk. It is aligned on axis with the essentially symmetrical original building and is also symmetrical in form.



1992 building

Had there been a more constrained site, there may have been a very different response. The recent intrusions to the sides of the site are less sympathetic.

St Kilda Library, 150 Carlisle Street St Kilda

The St Kilda Library is a perfect illustration of Lesley Always's interpretation of the change from blending in to 'making a contemporary architectural statement for today.'^{xi}

The 1971-73 St Kilda Library is a Wrightian mannered Brutalist building designed by Dr Enrico Taglietti, a Milan-born, Canberra based architect. The solid battered off-form concrete base anchors the building and allows the strongly horizontal roof with deep rough sawn timber fascia to float above.

The addition by Ashton Raggart, McDougall (ARM), was completed in 1992-4 and won two Royal Australian Institute of Architects Awards in 1995 (interior and architecture). The façade of the addition is a smooth bluestone open book, with glazed panel providing a picture on one page.

It is a post- Modern design, with the junction between the Taglietti original, and the ARM addition being a recessed glass and metal section.



The 1971-73 Taglietti building in the foreground, 2009



ARM addition, 1992-94, 2009

As heritage architect Richard Peterson concludes in his article on St Kilda Library; "This Post- Modernist conceit remarkably blends with Dr Taglietti's layered Brutalism in a masterful way."²

Does it comply with the Burra Charter? It is certainly readily identifiable as new work. In terms of siting, bulk, scale and form, it is sympathetic to the original design. In terms of its architectural character, it is a statement of its time, as was the original building. In terms of materials, colours and textures, it is quite different. The smooth, almost polished finish to the bluestone pages of the book, forms a distinct and appealing textural contrast, while the muted colour of the bluestone sits well with the grey concrete. The natural finishes of the bluestone, metal and glass are different from yet sympathetic to the natural finishes of the original building, probably because they are honestly expressed, like the original.

What makes it so successful? It is a piece of high quality architecture in its own right. It has integrity. It is "of its time" yet is respectful of the original building. It is playful.

Like Heide IV it is a pleasing sculptural contrast, which allows the original to be clearly read.

CONCLUSIONS

The Museum of Modern Art at Heide in particular illustrates the complexities and challenges in adding onto modern buildings and the subjectivity of the interpretation of the Burra Charter.

- Have attitudes changed among the heritage professionals as Lesley Always believes? Or do modern buildings require a different approach?
- Do the explanatory notes for Article 22.1 of the Burra Charter help architects design appropriate solutions or those charged with assessing the appropriateness of the proposed works and their impact on cultural significance?
- Is there a hierarchy of importance for the 'sympathy' criteria - siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture, material?
- Is it a case of the simpler and more elegant the original, the more difficult it is to design an addition (without imitating) which doesn't become more complex, and visually competitive. In the end does it matter as long as the new work is a sensitive high quality design and clearly different?
- Is it important to consider not just the siting, form materials, colours etc, but also what philosophy underpinned the original design, and to be sympathetic or respectful to that, or should we be accepting of contemporary philosophical or fashionable approaches.

From the examples I have described, it seems to me that:

- Attitudes may be changing as we learn that additions to modern buildings may require a different and more flexible approach.
- In the case of modern buildings, using the explanatory notes to Article 22.1 of the Burra Charter; if siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture, and material are all 'similar', the result could be disappointing, could too closely mimic the original, and we could also lose opportunities for more creative solutions
- Siting, bulk, form, and scale, are all of critical importance, with the other four being of lesser importance. Character, colour, texture and materials can be quite different, yet the results can be successful.
- Ultimately, the result will always be dependant on the sensitivity and skill of the designer.

This paper raises questions rather than proposing answers and will hopefully lead to further discussion.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ McKay, I. et al, *Living and Partly Living, Housing in Australia*, Nelson, Melbourne 1971.

ⁱⁱ Philip Goad, *Melbourne Architecture*, Watermark Press 1999 p 191

ⁱⁱⁱ McGlashan and Everist Architects, Heide Report, January 1981, Appendix 1 in Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Conservation Report (Final draft 28 June 1996) , Heritage Assets Branch, Building Services Agency, Office of Building, Department of Infrastructure, June 1996.

^{iv} Peddle Thorp Architects, Heide Park and Art Gallery, Proposed additions to the Heide gallery, 7 Templestowe Road Bulleen Victoria, March 1991 (Infrastructure Library)

^v Shelley Penn, review in *Architecture Australia*, "Heide, New work at the Heide Museum of Modern Art, by O'Connor extends the Reeds' vision of landscape, art and place, March/April 2007, p2, in <http://www.archmedia.com.au/aa/aaissue.php?issueid=200703&article=11&typeon=2>

^{vi} Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd with Dr Philip Goad and Paterson and Pettus Pty Ltd, Heide II, III and IV Conservation Management Plan, August 2000.

^{vii} http://www.heide.com.au/Heide_III

^{viii} Penn, p3

^{ix} "New era begins for Heide" *The Age*, 24 November, 2004, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/Arts/New-era-begins-for-Heide/2004/11/23/1100972377723.html?from=storylhs>

^x The Burra Charter The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance, 1999

^{xi} Richard Peterson, *A Place of Sensuous Resort: Buildings of St Kilda and Their People*, St Kilda Historical Society February 2005, in <http://www.skhs.org.au/buildings.htm>.