

The buildings produced by our practise are what I would like to regard as "poor architecture" (as in "poor theatre"). Modest means, pedestrian imagery and bush details are employed in an attempt to make public statements within tight budgets. The temporary and the cosmetic are given serious consideration. The first Roman Catholic Church designed after my New York sojourn was at Mortlake in the Western District of Victoria. Mr. Malcolm Fraser is the local member. It was intended to be a

member. It was intended to be a rural Australian public building free from squatter romanticism. This proved an elusive idea and the building was a salutary reminder of context, how participants understand it and how the local architects perceive it. There is a wealth of imagery and recollections out there, but it is almost entirely in urban Australia.

Churches are very nearly pure architecture. They are animated by walls, roof, seats, memories and worship, and not much else.

They necessitate meaning. If an art work aspires to an embodiment of a social organisation, a community, it needs to establish connections between the rules (underlying) and their manifestations in the real world. It is necessary for an audience to be able to make comparative inferences with their own lives. The potential audience will more readily attend if it sees its own preoccupations dealt with in the art work. This is not to be misunderstood as kitsch.

Difficult coded knowledge not taste is involved. The formalisation of behaviour is fundamental to attaining a social organisation. The group is the basic unit. The Church of the Resurrection at Keysborough was designed for a specific group of people. The object was to enable them to read their own architecture. I think they do. After 190 years, an identifiable culture is emerging in Australia. Architecture should be part of this bunfight.

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# PASSION IN THE SUBURBS

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Richard Munday

Getting to Keysborough: it's the first turn on the right after Sandown Park race course, into Corrigan Road and keep going. Keysborough is one of those, well, beyond the pale suburbs, prole-bourgeois. A few trees, flat — a Wasteland — new bitumen and concrete kerbs, new builder houses, all styles. Datsuns, Chargers, and those ideal second cars in the driveways. Inhumane of course, sends architects up their bagged brick walls.

The church is there, a church of the new liturgy, a community church for the new mobile cassette player community. It's not a church only, by the way. It's also the parish hall. But instead of being a church which is also used for men's beer and pie nights, indoor bowls, and meetings of a Tuesday night; or on the other hand, as a parish hall with facilities for Mass — a folding table, maybe — it sets out to communicate the meaning of both functions in the one volume and envelope.

This is in contrast to Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Church of 1906 where a bi-nuclear plan with a central entrance resolves the duality by making the plan symmetrical along the longitudinal axis. At Keysborough the budget required that the two be one.

Solving the problems of structure, function, economics, image — this is a familiar task. Inspiration is one thing. For the architect it becomes a question of technique and, in achieving a satisfying product, it's generally a matter of employing a theme, a dominant binder or a personal vocabulary.

Kahn rocketed to fame employing his idea of articulating "served and servant spaces"; Mies van der Rohe treated all other considerations as subservient to structural clarity and precision; Saarinen conceived stunning visual metaphors; for Wright, followed by many of the leading lights in Australia today, it was the expansion of an unusual event in the program (often taken from another source) to flavour the entire program. A glimpse of perfection.

Venturi's approach is more a worldly-wise generalisation about architecture than another strict visual and philosophical diet. He allows the imperfect solution and argues that architects should exploit actively the entire architectural palette — including ambiguities in the program, intentions, history, decoration. They should devise some fluid hierarchy applicable to the situation. Working on often disparate elements distorting, accommodating, compromising here, emphasising there, they should progress towards an integration, towards a complex truth — a work of art.

There are no fixed laws in architecture but not everything will work in a building or city. The architect must decide, and these subtle evaluations are among his principal functions.

This century saw the creation of a small team of architectural virtuosos. They made the rules and showed how it was done; they were smart, and it was the time. This team acquired super-status, in part at least, because the complementary body of architects lost confidence.

It has become characteristic for architects to be either much in love with the styles of one of the Greats and out of love with the styles of the rest, or (tragically) deliberately ignorant in self defence. For them, the church at Keysborough might look like a hopelessly botched job. Corrigan tried too hard to be, you know, different. Just a whole lot of stuff. Nothing in the least bit unusual. Interesting — nice, just dead ordinary — jammed together. Well, first impressions often hold more than a grain of truth; here it is a challenge to see what the possibilities are, it's not an indication of failure.

The scale of the church is ambiguous; it's a big little building, the only public building in the area so it's important. It is more public than religious. Corrigan accepts the injunction of the traditional building types hierarchy. The church dominates. Its scale and configuration sets it apart from its surroundings. But if the scale sets the church apart, the choice of elements returns it to the milieu because it is from there that they are selected.

