



Elizabeth homes . . . Mr. Boyd does not think much of them.

UNIMAGINATIVE COPYISTS—that's us

ROBIN Boyd's subject in "The Australian Ugliness," is ours as much as his.

He tackles the whole problem of our national taste in visual matters, which leads him deeper into vital considerations of what makes us tick.

And this is not a knocking book; it hits us hard, but allows us our good points and our occasional evidence of idealism.

Mr. Boyd is one of Melbourne's most distinguished architects. He has also written books and articles about the way we live, and he is a rare example of a professional who can write about his subject with clarity and wit.

Take, for instance, Elizabeth.

Robin Boyd is familiar with the ideals behind its planning, with the advantages its inhabitants enjoy.

'Dull, flat'

What infuriates him (though he is too civilised to abuse anybody in particular) is that the Housing Trust, with all the power at its disposal and the wonderful opportunity to create a whole new town, chose instead to create (in Mr. Boyd's words) "a balanced reflection of the average established Australian taste."

Dull, flat, average, practical — be these and you will succeed. Never offer anything new, challenging, exciting. That is the way the official mind works in Australia.

Mr. Boyd asks this question: "When so good at heart, why is Elizabeth so depressing to the eyes?"

He answers it by saying that the visual failure of Elizabeth is not the fault of the Housing Trust or its technicians or ad-

Are you typical?

- Do you own a two-tone car in squashed mulberry and cream with Special written all over it?
- Do you think eucalypts are untidy trees and not nice to have around the home?
- Do you not mind overhead wires and advertisements in suburban shopping centres?
- Do you like park benches painted in five primary colors?
- Do you think Elizabeth is what a modern town should look like?

If so, you are typically Australian in your tastes, and you will probably be annoyed (and amused) by the book reviewed on this page by The News Art Critic, **GEOFFREY DUTTON.**

visers, but of the majority of the people, us, who want it that way.

The most obvious fault of Australian taste, that gets the biggest pasting in this book, is what Mr. Boyd calls "Featurism." This consists of cloaking and camouflaging, disguising the whole in the interests of features. Mr. Boyd relates this interestingly to the fact that prettifying up the foreground may compensate for the huge, fierce, natural background of Australia.

It also comes from an urge to brighten things up, and Mr. Boyd gives some superb examples from what he calls "the circus that is central Adelaide."

To make way for the Featurists, people chop down trees and demolish old buildings, two favorite Australian sports.

Hilarious

Mr. Boyd gives a hilarious but also heart-rending picture of the growth of an imaginary suburb, from the original cottage in an orchard on a hill to the final consummation of a "Glamorous American-style Drive-in Shopping Centre."

He is also most illuminating on our cultural

relation to England and America; he coins a word "Austerica" for that large portion of our life which is as much American as Australian and winds up with his devastating wallop:

Smugness

"The most fearful aspect of Austericanism is that beneath its silliness and vacuous lack of enterprise, is a terrible kind of smugness, an acceptance of the frankly secondhand and the second-class, a wallowing in the kennel of the cultural underdog."

This book calls for honesty about the things we haven't got and pride in the good things we do have. It also shows how a misguided search after "beauty" can end up in flagrant dishonesty.

It is bound to stir up a tremendous amount of controversy, for an Australian's home is the castle of his taste (or lack of it).

But this book goes to the very bases of our way of life, and that is what makes it so important.

Whether you agree with Robin Boyd or not, there is no doubt that he cares passionately about the face of Australia. Do you?

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