

Home owning a happy field

LIVING IN AUSTRALIA, by Robin Boyd (Pergamon Press, \$6.95).

Becho L.

By JAN MODDER

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AUSTRALIA, says the statistician, "has a higher proportion than any other country of people who own, or are in the process of buying, their own houses."

And this, of course, makes this country — or should make this country — a happy field for the varied talents of the architect.

For there is no doubt that the time is here when even the smallest dwelling place offers scope for the manifestation of those peculiar qualities which go to make the man who designs such a structure.

But Robin Boyd, more in sorrow than in anger, throws off the remark early in the piece that "about 95 per cent of an architect's time is occupied more with getting the drains right than with sharpening his visions."

Not vague

The visions Boyd has in mind are mainly controlled by four basic characteristics — surface, space, structure and spirit.

These are not vague aesthetic concomitants of a precious whole, but recognisable, accessible factors that are able to transform a house into a home.

In the end it is some form of architectural alchemy. But, thank goodness, the architect — or the alchemist — does not need a conical hat, a magic wand and a raven on his shoulder his wonders to perform.

That is the fundamental fact of Boyd's "Living in Australia," his boldly, interestingly stated thesis.

Quality lift

"If we want to raise the quality of living," he says, "and presumably that aim has considerably broader appeal than wanting to do anything about the quality of culture, then the most effective way of all is to improve the quality of the house."

In a house one is "toying with personal feelings, with the quality of living rather than the quality of culture."

Boyd's plea comes at a most appropriate time. That is not to say that his warning was not applicable years ago, or that it will not be pertinent in the future.

But this perhaps is the time when there seems to be more pulling down and putting up than ever before in Australia's his-

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