

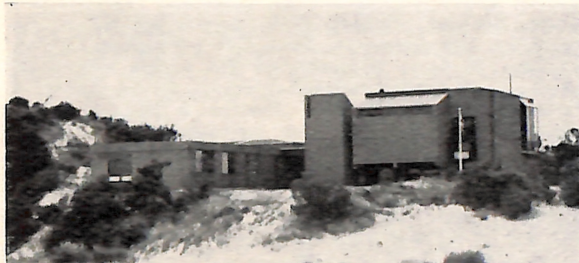
Issue No. 164

June 1, 1966



Architecturally speaking the Sandown Park Hotel-Motel is one of the finest buildings of its kind around Melbourne. The constructional system and the materials are unexceptional: face brick walls (inside and out), conc. slab floor, exposed sawn oregon, boxed or exposed steel beams, steel deck roof, sprayed vermiculite ceilings; but they are disposed in a co-ordinated and imaginative manner. Air conditioning ducts for instance become a strong element in the various ceiling level planes. The public spaces around bars are particularly handsome for they manage to overcome the inherent difficulty of designing for the Australian drinking public—long bars, large floor areas—by developing a variety of spaces with very simple means and with few tricks. Consequently when the bars are crowded there is less than the usual sense of crush and when few people are present the place does not seem empty. It is a happy compromise between the rowdy tiled halls of the local tradition and the smug snuggeries of the English pub. Here and there commercial design "features" have not been resisted and on the rear elevations the brick pier, window void, brick pier rhythm has been over-indulged. But for beer, bed and breakfast it's beaut. Jorgensen and Hough archts., Commodore Motels owners & builders.

¶ C-S hopes it is forgiven for crediting to David Moore the photograph of the Sydney Opera House in the May issue, when it was actually taken by Max Dupain.



The offices and council chamber for Esperance Shire Council, W.A., by archt. Peter Grigg, are a refreshing change from the anti-architecture of country towns, the banal glassy buildings imposed on them by city firms and the universal bulldozing of every site. This building is sited high over the town yet, by careful integration with surrounding dunes, avoids dominating it in any way. It is the first of 4 stages in a proposed Civic Centre complex, so appears a bit disjointed at this stage; other loose ends are attributed to high pressure building in Western Australia's booming country towns and to last minute economies affecting details. E. S. Morrison, bldr. Total Area 7,250 sq. ft. Cost \$76,000.

¶ At a meeting of the Industrial Design Institute of Australia in Melbourne, Mr. E. T. Robinson, Managing Director of Control Data Australia Pty. Ltd. spoke of a computer-controlled device, employing a "light-pen" with which a designer could draw freehand on a kind of television screen and watch his sketch electronically converted into an accurate and mathematically determinable re-presentation. By drawing sufficient plans and elevations and throwing the appropriate switch, a perspective view from any angle would be constructed by the computer. As a super-drafting machine, this boon to any office would soon free arch'l assistants from the hazards and drudgery of trying to interpret their principal's butter paper doodles and give more time for the finer arts of making tea and paper aeroplanes. Suitably programmed with the predilections of current arch'l fashions, in terms of roof pitch, plan shape, fenestration and finishes, one can imagine the computer producing a set of working drawings for buildings no less imaginative and apposite than those we see about us today. If you put in hogwash you can't expect a feedback of pearls. There may be a delay before we see this handy little labour-saver in operation, for according to Mr. Robinson there would be some rather difficult programming—"certainly not beyond the wits of man, but requiring a capital investment of some \$1 million."



The top photo is of a gnarled bronze sculpture by Stephen Walker, winner of a competition for a sculpture and fountain to be placed in Kippax Lake (Sydney), to commemorate Australian Women's Sporting Achievements. The City Council rejected the winner and selected instead (lower photo) another sculpture by Diane Hunt, from the competition (not a prize-winner): a slender lady astride two trestles from which will burst 60 ft. jets of water. Whilst the original winner may have had its limitations e.g. size 14' 6" long x 16' 6" high x 6' 0" wide in a lake 250 ft. long and 200 ft. wide set in a large flat dreary park, and like some women athletes, seemed a little disgruntled, it at least approached the borders of art in comparison to the City Council selection which looks like the nude ladies you see on Everage-style tele sets (without the water of course).



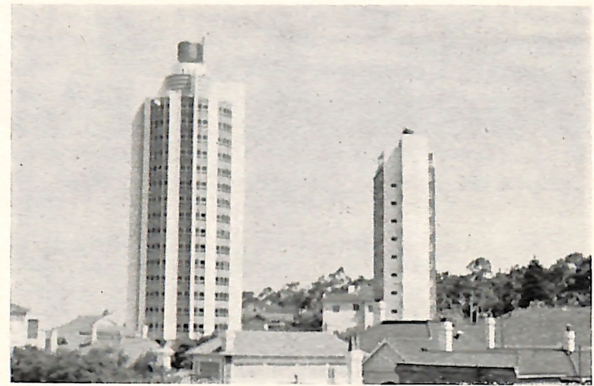


In Perth, architects Krantz & Sheldon have been introducing an increasing degree of sensitivity into many of their recent flats. An example is this scheme in Hensman St., South Perth, which looks over a courtyard towards the Golf Course and River. Though the courtyard is only a glorified car park, the cross fall to the site has enabled it to be a full storey below ground floor flats and it has been pleasantly surfaced and planted. External materials to the courtyard include off-form concrete, fine-sawn jarrah and black-painted concrete fins, and steel opening lights set in jarrah sub-frames. This conscious design effort does not extend to the access side behind, nor to the internal fittings. Accommodation of nine 2-Bedroom and twenty-nine 1-Bedroom flats cost \$216,000—just under \$6,000 a unit. Watson Construction Pty. Ltd., bldr.

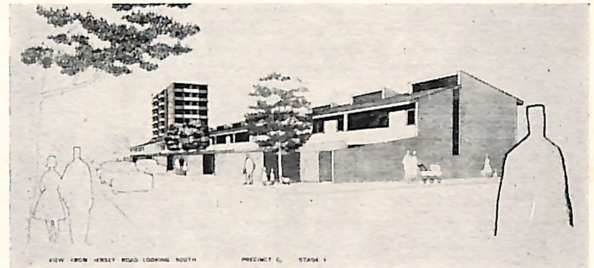


Krantz & Sheldon's latest block, on Stirling Highway, hit the local headlines because of objections to the face brick mortar which is left spilling out unstruck, but it is in fact very successful and not half as glutinous as it sounds. The townhouse type maisonettes, looking in onto each other over a planted courtyard provide much more varied and pleasant living accommodation than normal flats, while at the same time eliminating the unattractive access gallery elevation. Sixteen 2-Bedroom maisonettes, cost \$96,000, i.e. \$6,000 a unit. H. P. Oorschott, bldr. These flats are fine considered in isolation, but the problem of getting a whole row of them staring into each other's toilet windows was unsolvable under existing zoning by-laws. However, W.A. Model By-laws have now adopted recommendations of a report by Clarke Gazzard & Partners concerning the zoning of multiple dwelling units. These tend to encourage large scale development by providing for a plot ratio which increases proportionately to the size of the site, and they will inevitably produce a greater proportion of high rise flats. These are sometimes less sensitively designed than the best walk-up flats.

¶ New Zealand is having great trouble finding suitable designs for its new decimal currency. The first selection of coin designs chosen by the N.Z. Govt. pleased neither the Royal Mint nor the N.Z. people, despite the fact that one side of the 20 cent coin depicted "the true N.Z. rugby player". Eventually, with a great display of democracy, the Govt. released 26 new designs for public comment before making a firm decision. On the whole they are an unexceptional bunch, symbols of flora, fauna and Maori carving predominating, but not nearly as well related to the circular shape as Stuart Devlin's Australian coins. In-use criticisms of the Australian currency have been mostly upon lack of size differentiation rather than pattern. The one and two cent coins are difficult to distinguish and the 20 and 50 cent pieces are too easily confused.



Krantz & Sheldon's Mount Eliza flats stand high up in West Perth overlooking the city and close to the State Government Offices (see C-S No. 160, February '66). The basic concept of providing a slender profile is correct, and the ingeniously compact central core and circular shape transform the concept into reality. Windows all around disregard orientation without and function within (the top five floors of single apartments have the same face as the lower floors housing 2 flats each), so that the resultant amorphous elevation has to have fins and boosters applied to give the appropriate rocket age image. The 25 wholly air-conditioned flats will cost over \$800,000, a good slice of which went on housing the statutory 1.3 cars per flat. Civil & Civic Pty. Ltd., bldr. The 15-storey cylinder is sited within a few yards of a previous block by the same architects, which is ridiculously different in scale and form.



At the end of April the Glebe Administration Board of the Diocese of Sydney, Church of England in Australia lodged with the Sydney City Council application for development permission, Stage one, for Saint James Glebe, Edgecliff, Sydney, a 28.6 acre area of urban land formerly leased to various private persons but now controlled by the Board and ripe for modernisation and redevelopment. Broadly and briefly, the proposal is to divide the whole Glebe area into three major pedestrian precincts. Precinct A: high rise apartments, town houses and flats. Precinct B: Car parks over the Railway Tunnel and underground station, shops, offices and bachelor flats. Precinct C: (photo above): medium density low rise terrace houses and walk-up apartments. Radburn principle of cul-de-sacs for car access, alternating with greenways. Stage One will provide 230 new dwellings, to house approximately 350 people and would affect only 52 existing residential tenants. Clarke Gazzard & Partners, Architects/Planners. Rankine & Hill, consulting engineers; Hardy Busby & Tyson, surveyors.

¶ March '66 issue No. 161 of C-S confused credits for the renovations and new work at Griffin's Capitol Theatre in Melbourne. It should be made clear that C. Ian Turner & Associates archts., were responsible for the shopping arcade, and that all the work from the head of the main entry stair including the foyer and auditorium was carried out by the office of Ronald G. Monsborough & Associates, archts.

¶ A further letter-to-the-Editor on the Utzon debacle: "Your two issues on the Opera House are extremely biased and in many ways inaccurate. You say that you came to Sydney before the first issue to 'find out the facts'. Michael Lewis has already had to point out to you that you did not attempt to check certain so-called 'facts' relating to Ove Arup and Partners. It is now my turn to ask why you failed to speak to the President of the N.S.W. Chapter, Ron Gilling, or anybody else, such as myself, who might have given you another side of the story. Could it be that your mind was made up before you came?"



Let me take up some of the points of your second article. The special general meeting of the N.S.W. Chapter on 28th March was called on a motion of confidence in the Council's actions for one reason only; the Utzon-in-Charge Committee, through its spokesman Harry Seidler, had publicly declared its intention of having the Council thrown out ('Sun' 16.3.66, 'Australian' 17.3.66) for not dancing to U.I.C.'s tune. You say 'it is hard to imagine why a motion destined to split the Chapter down the middle should be proposed at (such) a time . . .' Now you know who proposed it. You may argue that the Council should have taken no notice of anything Harry Seidler had to say, but I assure you the threat was a real one. The Council had no choice but to take the initiative, in my view. I agree with you that the whole episode was sordid in the extreme.

You applaud Utzon's description ('naive') of the Council's efforts on his behalf, and say 'Hughes was killing them' (the Council). Wrong. The one who was naive and got 'killed' because of it, was Utzon himself.

Why? In the first place because he resigned. He had a watertight contract with the State Government—it is said that he could have been dismissed only by Act of Parliament—and he walked out on it. His more hysterical supporters have tried to argue that this wasn't a resignation!—as if the accused were to say 'Yer Honor, sure I shot him; but I never used the word "murder"'. It's his own fault if he died.' But Utzon himself had to admit at that famous meeting that his own legal advisers had told him that, no matter what he called it, his actions amounted to a resignation; they have since confirmed in writing that their client resigned. So much for that furphy.

Having terminated his contract by his own act, apparently in a fit of pique and over two issues which do him no credit, Utzon was faced with the delicate task of persuading a reluctant client to give him a new one. How does he set about this delicate task?

His first act after resigning was to send the client an ultimatum presenting his own terms for his reinstatement! I have no brief for the State Government, which is perfectly capable of looking after itself. Maybe they really are all black-hearted villains down at Parliament House, but that's beside the point. Surely even the most saintly client would have felt dubious about re-engaging an architect who went in for such extraordinary antics.

There seem to be only two possible reasons for Utzon's resignation. The uncharitable one is: he was fed up with the job for various reasons and chose this way of getting out. The charitable one is: he was dissatisfied with the terms of his contract, and honestly believed that if he walked out the Minister would beg him to come back on his own terms. If there is an explanation which doesn't fall somewhere between these two, I should like to hear it.

The first reason is uncharitable because it implies Utzon is a knave. If he had no intention of returning, he had no right to involve a lot of well-meaning people in fighting (often each other) for his return. But there is more to it than that. We have heard a lot recently about moral obligations, but how about the moral obligation of an architect to see the job through to the end in spite of difficulties—especially if the building, in his own words 'belongs to the world' and 'can't be finished without me'? The second alternative implies that Utzon is incredibly naive. No client, let alone a Minister of the Crown, would tamely submit to that sort of threat. Any architect who tries it on can expect to have his bluff called.

Knave or naive; not a very edifying choice. Which do you prefer?

In the face of all this, how could a professional Institute declare that Utzon's actions were ethically impeccable, his stand morally beyond question? And yet it was nothing less than this that he and his more rabid followers expected, in spite of the fact that at no time, either before he resigned or after, did he ask the Chapter for advice or help! On the contrary, he persistently refused to see us, speak to us, or answer our letters. The one time the Council managed to interview him we practically had to force our way into his office.

As if this were not enough, we were expected to impose a boycott as well. If an architect resigns, walks off the job, and leaves his client in the lurch, is it then the duty of the Institute to say to the client 'Your ex-architect is a Great Architect. He can do no wrong. If you don't succeed in wheedling him back, we'll declare your job black'? So far from being a duty, it's illegal.

If an architect (even a Great Architect) and his client are in dispute, and neither party will allow the Institute to arbitrate—if there is no longer even a contract to arbitrate about—what more can the Council do but try over and over again to bring the two to the conference table to settle their own differences? This the President did, in spite of lukewarm encouragement from the client, total obstruction from the architect, and ill-informed criticism from people like yourself.

It is typical of the standard of your reporting that it doesn't hesitate to name Ron Gilling and other villains when they do something you don't like, but is careful to keep them anonymous when their actions meet with your approval. You give the credit for 'negotiating conferences between parties who will still talk to each other' to Allan Gamble and 'one or two others'. It detracts nothing from Allan Gamble's true role to state that the first and only time the factions were united was at a conference initiated and attended by Ron Gilling and convened and chaired by myself. Your correspondent was the only person invited to this conference who didn't come; he was on holidays. Those who did included Peter Kollar, chairman of Utzon-in-Charge; other prominent members of U.I.C.; and moderates such as Allan Gamble, Peter Keys and Tony Moore. The conference agreed on a common programme, and its outcome was the meeting of April 27, called at the request of myself, Don Gazzard, and Milo Dunphy. The motions adopted at that meeting were substantially the ones I suggested to the conference, and the second one, calling for the reopening of negotiations, merely recommended what the President had been trying for all along.

The conference took place on a Friday. The following Monday, the day before the Minister announced his panel, Ron Gilling, Allan Gamble and I went once more to see Mr. Davis Hughes. Again the initiative was the President's. We went because we had been given some reason to believe that Utzon might be prepared to negotiate, and on this basis we asked the Minister to see him again. The Minister's reply was that we had no mandate to speak for Utzon and that he would see him only if the approach came from Utzon himself.

Peter Kollar tried to get this message through to Utzon. He failed. Ron Gilling then sent an urgent telegram, which said in part 'Jorn, I beg you to make this last effort for the sake of the Opera House'. No reply was ever received.

The Chapter did, however, receive a letter from Utzon. It said that the motions to be put to the Special General Meeting of April 27 were of no use to him.

In short, we were all wasting our time.

When I state that we met with total obstruction from Jorn Utzon, I mean exactly that.

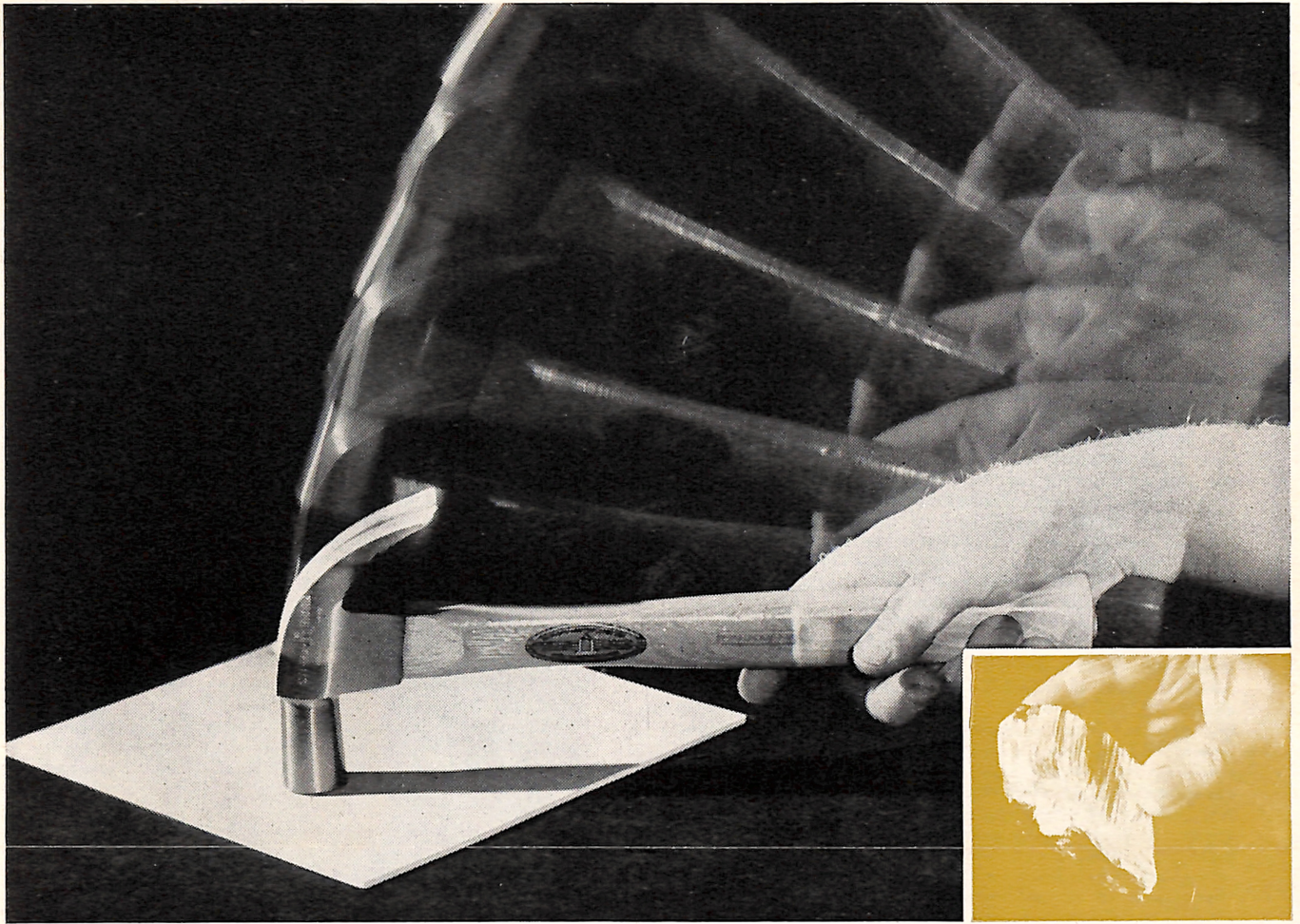
If Utzon had set out deliberately to bring about his own downfall, he couldn't have made a better job of it. That is his own affair. What should concern the rest of us, and very deeply, is that he had, with the maximum of publicity, shown the world a picture of the architect as one who is more concerned about losing face than about saving the building. Those of us who sincerely believe that the architect is there to serve the public and not vice versa will find it harder after this to convince the public of our sincerity.

You have devoted two issues of Cross-Section to presenting a one-eyed view of the Opera House affair. I now call on you to redress the balance, and do justice to some of the people you have misrepresented, by publishing this letter in full. I rely on your good faith in this. If you suppress it, or merely quote excerpts out of context, it will prove to me that Cross-Section is more interested in grinding an axe than in finding the facts.

Yours sincerely,  
Bryce Mortlock."

Reading this letter with previous issues of C-S, plus the articles which have appeared in "Bulletin" and "Nation", perhaps readers are now in a position to make up their own minds on the Opera House affair. C-S does not believe that all the many people who gave information on Utzon were either mad, ignorant or liars. When honourable men differ, who can be believed? It is unfortunate that representations of opposite camps have fallen into maligning each other's motives. C-S started off without prejudice for or against Utzon and finished believing that without him as architect, the building would suffer. The efforts of C-S were to present information to architects who, if they relied upon official pronouncements only, would have had a one-eyed view.





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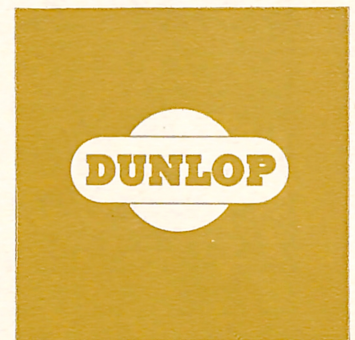
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