

## S M U D G E S

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For the last time. Next Editor, W. GHERADIN.

JANUARY

## DOUBLE



FIRST SINCE '41,\* TO GODFREY, SPOWERS, HUGHES, MEWTON, AND LOBB FOR TWO PUBLIC BUILDINGS

1

## CIVIC THEATRE, ASHBURTON

The movie industry, maturing slowly even under the slow-killing hand of Babbitt, has yet in Melbourne a long way to go.

Cinema owners are little removed from their ancestors (the peep-show operators), the vulgarity of whose booths is now a source of amusement.

There was not a modern cinema built in a Melbourne suburb before 1948. The usual cinema (Capitol, Australia, etc., excepted), born of a new industry, owing its function to science, its clothing to an ignorant, rich father. The main theme was Opulence Plus. This has resulted in the vulgar tragi-comic barns that are a show place of every suburb. Erected ostensibly to please a public, but rather to epitomise the taste of those into whose hands this great medium of enlightenment has fallen.

It is, therefore, of significance, architectural and social, that recently a cinema which is "modern" has appeared in Melbourne. In fast-growing Ashburton, the Civic Theatre was erected by an organisation, independent of the major cinema chains.

It is a simple rectangular auditorium. Lacking a balcony, it features "stadium type" seating (first introduced in the "Time," Balwyn); the foyer is at the side and entry to seating is from a cross aisle. For once the fibrous plaster firms did not have a Roman (nor Spanish) holiday. The ceiling is flush, studded with louvred down lights. Walls are smooth plaster, acoustic tile and fluted plaster (for acoustic purposes, one hopes). The proscenium is completely plain and flanked by two gay murals by Anne Montgomery. The well-detailed seating is framed in blond wood. Aisles carpeted in well chosen plain colours are lighted neatly by roof slots, as yet untrimmed.

The untidy pattern of projection windows is unsolved. (Couldn't this wall section be painted out darkly?) The rear of the theatre is otherwise simple planes, walls, ceiling, floor.

The lobby ceiling is plain suspended plaster (the suspenders show), pierced with large, circular openings (just like the Coral Room). The floor is terrazzo, as about as unsympathetic a finish as possible, and with a distracting pattern, over-styled shadow boxes mar the walls.

The exterior is rendered, squared off and finished in tan with white lining. External advertising, the bane of cinema exteriors, is perfectly handled and adequate. The building, being low, fits the street pattern, proving that a good cinema can be a striking, but good neighbour, proving also that a "modern" cinema can be built.

One hopes that when cinema building is once again possible, the Civic will have been but a forerunner of many of its kind.

So don't delay, go right away—there is hilarity, but no vulgarity, at Godfrey-Spowers suburban theatre.



We couldn't show all the pictures, so we only showed the best!

2

## ARTS BUILDING No. 2

Unfinished but occupied, Arts Building No. 2 is the latest shot to be fired in the Battle of the Styles. The battle that drags on only in the University grounds, churches, public departments.

Here is the first successful attempt to introduce "modern" architecture into the University on a permanent basis. Although the Grainger Museum (c. 1937) with its curves and glass bricks had an idea, albeit a bad one, Walter Butler's pre-Great-War Conservatorium must have startled local Goths and Tudors. Only last year the new School of Architecture was allowed to get by with its downright simplicity, in the knowledge that being composed of Army huts it would not be with us for long. (In a nearby corner are some Army huts erected in 1916).

The building is yet unclothed with its brick veneer, and its steel windows are standard frames for economy. So the building's main architectural significance is in its interior.

Structure is of reinforced concrete, well handled internally in contrast to recent University framed-structures.

The building is planned along sound, conventional lines—two major wings at right angles with central corridors, but the plan is worked out to exquisite detail.

In an area where gray and chocolate is the latest in colour schemes, this building uses colour competently and excitingly to delineate areas, give emotional reaction, to dramatise its own form. Nowhere better than in the two unique lecture theatres (left).

The interior will teach more to its occupants about the possibilities of architecture than any series of lectures. Another floor is planned. The roof, at present, boasts a "ghost" lecture theatre and truncated columns, shewing just how expensive it is to save money. If the usual procedure is followed this floor will never be added and a good building spoilt.

There is little to be said about the building's exterior—a multiplicity of window sizes and cill heights complicate a simple mass. The wedge-shaped theatres express externally. The porch slab is pure borax; it is supported on a pipe columns. By carefully tapping columns, a down pipe will be discovered.

There is no truth in the report that the south facade of Young and Jackson's was to be removed and stuck on the blank west wall of this building.



\* Billson and Mewton's for the Coral Room (Palais), the Mewton House and the House-Next-Door.

# HOUSE

OF THE YEAR (exclusive)



In a community that allows little experimentation in building technique, this house is of interest if but to show that imaginative building did not cease when Roy Grounds introduced a used-razorblade slot in his bathrooms, that there are people who can design something new, still people who can build it.

In a built-up area, on a site long abandoned as unsuitable for conventional building, this house stands.

Bisected by an open storm-water drain, riddled with pile sinkings (remains of an abortive building attempt), the site offers but a slim strip of land along a jagged cliff.

The plan is delineated on the western boundary by the local site regulations, on the eastern, by the limits of solid ground. Both natural and imposed limits produced a building. But ingenious building became architecture by the joint effort of an architect and a builder, both of whom knew what they wanted, knew how to get it.

The house is fundamentally a long living area containing cooking, sleeping and dressing areas. This section hugs an uneven site by variation in floor levels. Subordinate areas are divided with varying degrees of privacy by a counter-height bar, a sliding venetian blind, open shelving, a bank of closets.

The service areas are grouped in line along the western wall. The only apartment possessing four walls, windows, and a door is a bedroom at the rear. In planning, this house carries the dialectic process of modern architecture a little further, a little faster. Areas of the small house flow into each other. Differing activities are separated but only rarely by a solid partition. The resultant space pattern is dynamic, its architectonic qualities limited by the designers will. So it is with this house. Areas merge, sometimes easily, sometimes dramatically. The effect is heightened by variation of colour, texture (internal lining is, in part, Oregon, vertically).

As of all buildings of architectural significance, structurally, this house is advanced. "Normal" house construction has varied little, except for a continuous simplification of structure for purely economic reasons. This house, using new or old materials in a new way has evolved unique structural forms.

Construction is basically brick veneer. Sections are double brick, left exposed internally. The rear portion of the east wall is a continuous window. Roof load is carried on slim, double-spaced studs, while the window-frame slopes from a low cill out almost to the gutter-board, thus giving an effect of space belied by the floor plan and permitting the frame to be built up out of simple sections.

The only shop joinery in the job is the flush doors. The roof is of compressed straw (Solomit) on widely spaced rafters, and exposed under eaves. Sheathed with felt, its low pitch allows the hangar and ridge to merge, thus producing a vastly simplified roof section. Main living area is on filled land, the slab thus necessitated is anchored on the west side and virtually cantilevers over the doubtful land. This slab is covered with cork tiles. A familiar material (for service areas) is thus dragged out from its habitat and plonked down in the living-room, and through to the bathroom.

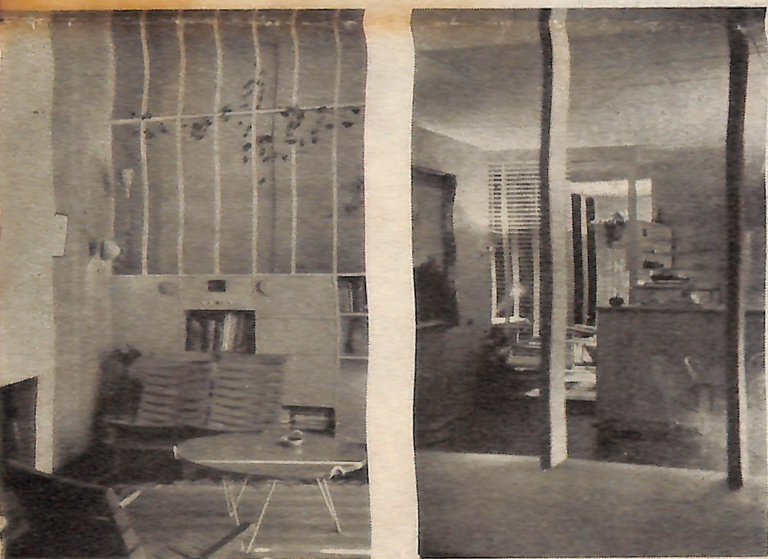
Such a house would never have been possible with an unsympathetic builder. The designer was fortunate in having John Murphy—known better as an artist—as builder. Murphy was completely in sympathy with the designer's ideas, and evolved many details as the job progressed.

As with most design-conscious architects, trouble was encountered with poorly-styled local fittings. Much adaption and wangling was necessary. It is reported that the bricklayer got into the spirit of the job. Came the time for inserting vents, he naturally reversed them. Another operative suggested removing an unsightly trade-mark from a fitting. Then he removed it.

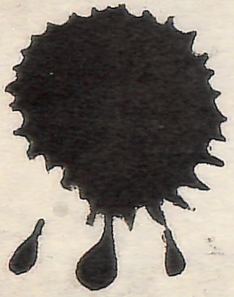
It is perhaps in the fittings, detailing, colouring and landscaping that the student will find most of interest. But it is in the basic idea and in the technically superb evolution of that idea that lies the main and everlasting importance of the Boyd house.

Local enthusiasts can look upon this house and find in it a challenge to Lloyd Wright's "Falling Water." After all from a height, there is but little difference between Bear Run, Pennsylvania, and the overflow of the Camberwell City Baths.

- LOCATION: Riversdale Road Camberwell.
- ARCHITECT-OWNER: Robin Boyd.
- BUILDERS: Murphy and Green.



LIVING AREA



## BLOT OF THE MONTH

The Additions to S.E.C. Drafting Offices,  
Church Street, Richmond.

In 1946 the S.E.C. was awarded a Bouquet for the original "temporary" building, with its entire east wall of glass, frank expression of a simple structure.

The additions are permanent and look just that. Nothing could shift those masses of brickwork. Dull and interesting, a good building spoilt, an idea lost.

## LIFE IN THE METROPOLIS DEPT. TALKED OF IN LONDON.

(From our own correspondent) London

Ballerina Dorothy Stevenson and Lieut.-Commander J. McL. Adams, better known as "Fanny," of H.M.A.S. Sydney, newly commissioned aircraft-carrier, are god-parents to the four-weeks-old daughter of Lieut.-Commander David Stevenson and his wife, formerly the ballet dancer Myra North. The baby's name is Jacqueline.

Dress designer Peter Russell likes nothing better than his clients to have a good, hard tussle with his models before purchasing them.

He frequently demonstrates the virtues of his craftsmanship by throwing the models around in the salon and beating them on the floor. He leaves for Australia shortly to design clothes in showrooms there.—(Argus 7/1/49.)

## CORRESPONDENCE DEPT. "Smudges,"

May I express my appreciation of the November issue of "Smudges." I think that the write-up on the "Latrobe Valley Development" was very pertinent and also very timely. I should hope that Cabinet Ministers were sent a copy of it, for it seems, despite Heath & Gower's magnificent Report, the Government is determined to go on planning more buildings in Morwell, on top of the most valuable Brown Coal Deposit we have in Australia.

The article was quite refreshing and cheered me up. I do hope it will send a quivering shaft into the hearts of those in High Places, and awaker them to a sense of their responsibility to make a comprehensive long-range plan.

F. OSWALD BARNETT,  
Collins St., C.1.

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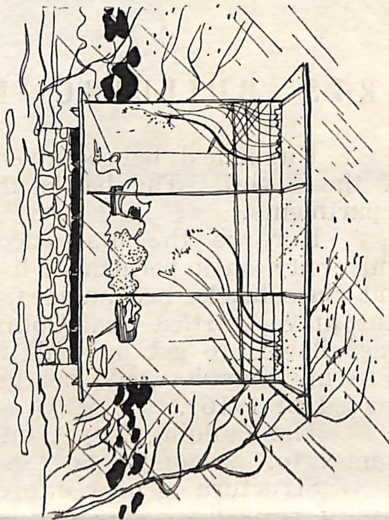
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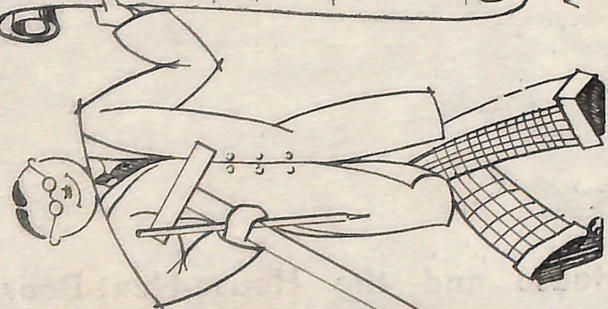
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