

I'm going to let the cat out of the bag. To be quite truthful the illustrations of recent Australian architecture on these pages do not typify modern Australian building. Australia has other kinds of building as well - a very generous share, in fact, of the New World style of gaudy commercial eye-catchers, and some Old World nostalgia as well. However, the buildings here are fairly typical of the sort of modern Australian architecture which can be called serious. That is, the sort which develops when the promoter of a building wants more than mere shelter and chooses his architect for artistic as well as for professional reasons. Serious Australian architecture today is less solemn but more thoughtful than it has been for perhaps a century.

It would be too much to say that an Australian Style has developed; such things simply don't happen any more in this airconditioned world. But at least an Australian school of modern architecture is taking shape. Its work is by no means unique. It gives hints of many outside influences. But overall its flavour is not a conscious or obvious copy of any foreign school. It is a branch of international modern design that has grown up here during the last fifteen years or so, and during this time the younger architects have been gaining confidence and a feeling of independence. Their separate works now are beginning to fall into a recognizable pattern.

This is a thoughtful architecture to the extent that a spectacular visual result does not appear to be the most pressing consideration. A fundamental sort of simplicity and an internal orderliness seem to come first. This emphasis usually results in a ~~clear~~ clean overall form in which the structural elements are so clearly displayed that the most non-technical observer can see, if he is interested, just how it is all put together and why it stands up in the wind. The open expression of the structural elements

compensates for the general absence of applied colour and lack of ornament, and further compensation is provided in the textures of the materials selected. For instance, the rich range of colours and grains in Australian timbers has been rediscovered. But they are used with restraint, for this is also an architecture of quite austere taste. It is not romantic in the sense of the elegant historical caricatures of some of the most sophisticated American buildings of this time. Nor does it lean noticeably to the brutal sense of sculptural strength that often marks the contemporary reaction to effete elegance in Europe and Japan. It is in the middle of the road of modern architecture, which is leading, we all hope, to a genuine and settled style of the twentieth century.

In all this, Australian architecture has much in common with Californian and Scandinavian, but also it has its own character and integrity.

The best new Australian buildings are not really in the race for international architectural recognition. If they happen to impress you at all, it is rather by understatement and repose, and a sense of responsible design.