



MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY PRESS

268 DRUMMOND STREET

CARLTON, VICTORIA 3053

TELEPHONE (+61 3) 9347 3455

FACSIMILE (+61 3) 9349 2527

P.O. Box 278,

CARLTON SOUTH,

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3053

17 July 1995

Mrs Patricia Davies
290 Walsh Street
South Yarra 3141

Dear Mrs Davies,

COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
Boyd: *The Puzzle of Architecture*

We have received the enclosed request for permission to use an extract from *The Puzzle of Architecture*.

I have written to Judith Buckrich letting her know that the rights have now reverted to you. I am charging a small permissions fee (\$30.00) for the extract from *Marvellous Melbourne*. You would, of course, be quite within your rights to do the same.

Yours sincerely,

Janet Putnam

Rights and Permissions

earliest life in the Port Phillip colony and its 'coming out' in the 1880s, it has changed with subtlety at first and then dramatically from the 1960s. It has provided us with examples of almost every kind of building that has been built in the last one hundred and thirty years, especially if we include the extension of the road known as St Kilda Road, St Kilda where so many interesting nineteenth century shopfront terraces line the east side of the road.

Its initial rise and fall, from the 1880s to the 1920s was spectacular and all too brief. From the 1920s onward many of the magnificent houses were used as rooming houses or guest houses, and many were being used by institutions and for offices even before re-zoning for non-residential building began in the 1950s. It was at about this time that ordinary people started to take an interest in architecture as well as art and cultural affairs. It was now not only the upper classes who had the time for such interests.

Society changed substantially in the aftermath of World War II. Many more people were working in offices and much more money and time was available to ordinary people of all ages and classes. The city or the central business district began to change dramatically. (Though nothing was ever as dramatic as the way Melbourne grew in the fifty years between 1838 and 1888 and changed from bush to a thriving metropolis with many substantial buildings.) Robin Boyd, Australia's foremost commentator on buildings and town planning wrote in 1965:

In the 1950's the man of taste looked up at the first of a long line of grey-green office towers and was puzzled. He knew that this uncommunicative block was a genuine product of modern technology. It was sensible. It did not positively offend his taste. yet he could find no word to describe it more polite than 'interesting'. he much preferred to turn back to the eighteenth century when he could use the word 'glorious'. The realization of this anomaly gave him no pleasure for he did not wish to rely on nostalgia: he wanted to live happily with the art of his own time. He wanted

to like the skyscrapers, but they only disturbed and bored him. he could see that they might have pleasant proportions and colour, if done by men of taste, but this was hardly enough. ... how can art exist, how can it hope to flourish, under the suffocating necessity to be useful?

The very foundations of architecture are riddled with such questions, for unlike all the other arts architecture cannot be explained by simply saying that it is a medium for communicating experience. As an art it is burdened inescapably by its practical and social responsibilities. ³

Boyd expressed not just the concerns of what he like to call 'the man of taste', but at some level, everyone's concerns. There is no doubt that although the building of modern office blocks along St Kilda Road during the 1960s and 1970s was deemed necessary and desirable by everyone (indeed any other attitude would have been condemned as moribund and ultra conservative), little thought was given to the durability of many of the buildings that were built, let alone their beauty. They were built quickly and with as much economy as possible on the whole, as were the many cream brick blocks of flats which went up to house the stream of immigrants to Australia at this time.

The pity is not so much that usage changed from residential to commercial, as that too many of the interesting buildings in the various nineteenth and early twentieth century styles prevalent at the time were destroyed. If only more of each style had remained in the street as testimony to each period gone by. One house, for instance, that did not survive was that built at number 448 by Harold Desbrowe Annear. The house was described in *Identifying Australian Architecture* by Apperly, Irving and Reynolds as 'a modest villa given enhanced status by the addition of classical devices.' ⁴ It was built in a style called 'Inter-War Free Classical' and was really a building of beautiful proportions. Two stories high with a pitched roof, it had an exaggerated portico and one round inset window among many rectangular ones with plain lead panes. It was the only Desbrowe Annear house in St Kilda Road.