

RB/SS

November 9, 1970.

Mr. Martin Elks,
37 Roborough Avenue,
MOUNT ELIZA. VIC. 3930.

Dear Martin,

I was most interested in your letter, and I am sorry if I have wasted any of your or your art master's time in trying to reconcile my writings with my 'Fishbowl'. I don't see any inconsistency between them, and I hope that I can explain why in a few words. I think that my definition of 'Featurism' on or about 26 of The Australian Ugliness still explains my attitude as clearly as I can. I have never objected to advertisements, if they are well designed, or to having a bit of fun in the design of buildings, if it is appropriate. I look mainly for an idea — that is, one main idea per building — instead of the more usual assortment of little ideas which are shaken up together to make a building; typically, the 'Featuremarket', with its many loud, stale ideas mixed together.

On the other hand, Red Barn is not a Featurist so much as an "idea" building, and I don't dislike it as much as I do a shambles like the New World Supermarket. The thing that I do find slightly objectionable is that its idea is pretty weak: the stage-setting it creates is so unimaginative, nostalgic, foreign, gaudy and unamusing.

When asked to design another food chain shop, in direct commercial competition with that kind, I accepted it as a challenge. The Fishbowl is not made to imitate a real fishbowl (did you ever see a dark blue one made up of 60 triangles?) but the idea of a fibreglass sphere as a memorable emblem which may be associated with the idea of fish seemed to be valid in this small commercial building. If you don't agree, if you think it looks as gaudy and silly as a New World Supermarket, that is a matter of taste; but I hope you will agree that it has only one idea, simply carried through, and that you can see that the thinking behind it and the New World started out from opposite ends of the span of architectural motivations.

Very sincerely