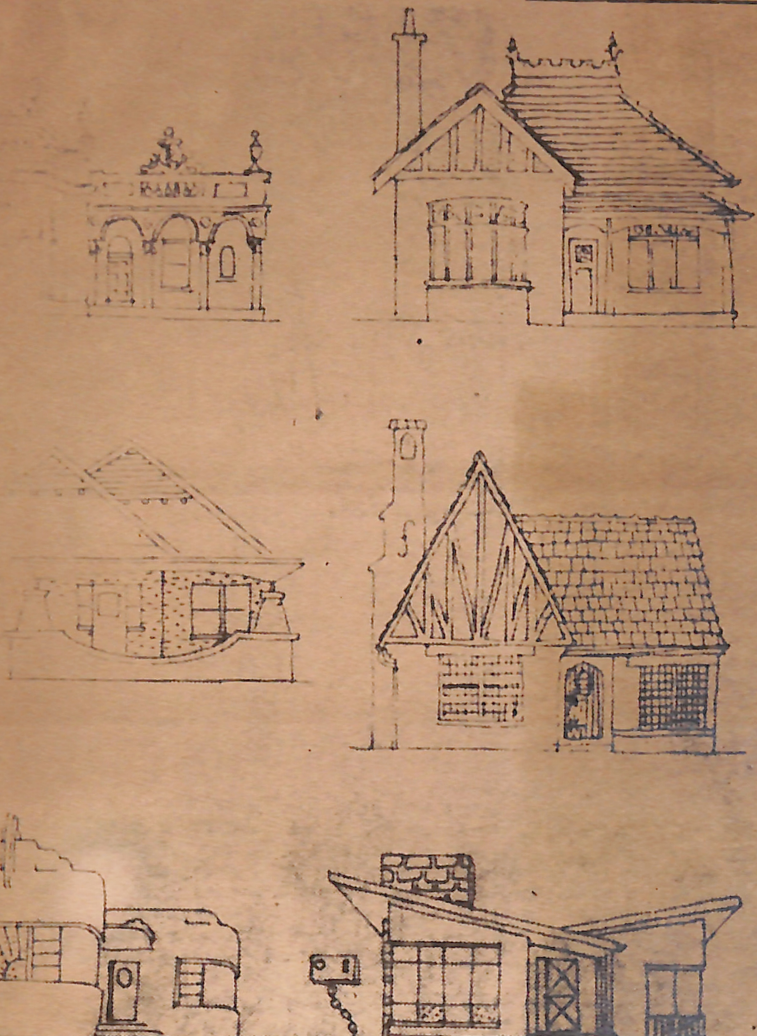


SUBURBAN PRETENSION



Robin Boyd, author of *The Walls Around Us*, castigates the typical examples of Australian suburban architecture from various periods shown above, as all pretending to be something other than what they really are. Some tries to be simply a good house to live in.

Guide To Appreciation Of Architecture

Architecture, which in its unselfconscious moments regards itself as the Mother of All Arts, has never been a dominating matriarch in the Australian cultural scene.

One of the main reasons for this is that architecture has for too long neglected to raise its voice. It has been content to conceive and nurture a small family of buildings which are pleasantly formed and of good character.

Until very recently, Mother Architecture has been diffident about taking on herself responsibility for the teeming mass of buildings conceived without benefit of the wedlock of arts and planning, and raised without manners.

Robin Boyd is not the first of the family of architects to concern himself with the general appearance and civic manners of Australian towns and cities. But, in too many cases, this concern has been voiced only within the family and then submerged, in the hope that the masses would learn from the behaviour of an exemplary few.

Boyd, however, has decided that example is not enough and that, anyway, the family itself can do with some self-examination under the eyes of the masses.

Denounce

So, raising his voice to a level not appreciated by all the family, Boyd, set with evangelical fervour, has with denouncing the Australian ugliness.

The effect has been remarkable.

Australians are becoming self-conscious about the country's architecture.

Most of them are now aware that there is a lot of ugly building about.

Many of them can recognise ugly building. Some can even recognise good building.

The frequency with which words and phrases such as "featurism" and "milk bar modern" are used in general conversation, and the vehemence with which our hotel and beer garden aesthetics are nowadays denounced, testify to Boyd's influence.

Having won the attention of the public with his denunciations, Boyd is showing nice judgment as a propagandist.

In his latest book, *The Walls Around Us*, Boyd switches from histrionics to historical instruction.

made people sit up and take notice.

Now Boyd has set about the job of giving them some primary education.

Simplified

The Walls Around Us is described by its publishers as being "the story of Australian architecture told and illustrated for young readers."

This should not, however, put off adult readers. The history certainly has been simplified, but this should only make it more assimilable to people coming fresh to the subject.

At the same time, Boyd has only slightly modified the bite of his comments in deference to younger readers.

Boyd has, in a book of only 90 pages, produced a clear, precise primer on the history of Australian architecture.

Boyd looks first at our social history and then ranges through the evolution of architecture in Australia — beginning with the mud huts of the First Fleeters and arriving finally at Sydney Opera House.

On the way he briefly reviews architectural fashions and the effects of the most influential architects on work in Australia.

Two Greats

Greenway and Griffin are the two greats, so far as Boyd is concerned.

Boyd now conceded that there is real hope in the land for civic beauty.

Australian building, he concludes, may be growing up.

What is more, he finds that Australian architects now "contribute ideas to the world."

It is probably not too much to claim for this little book, as its publishers do, that it "should recruit a new generation of architects."

At the same time, it should give another boost to the social sport of house watching and enlarge vocabularies at all levels for house and garden discussions.

Boyd, as an architect able and willing to communicate on a popular level, seems to have himself earned a place in future architectural histories of Australia.—J.L.

THE WALLS AROUND US, by Robin Boyd. Published by F. W. Cheshire. Price 19/6.

(a who the pol S the in for had A tion an prof I a pov nat A app sto pla no air A pet wh fea pic wh iet eff ab

to T w te