

DANGEROUS & WRONG

Freerange VOL.5

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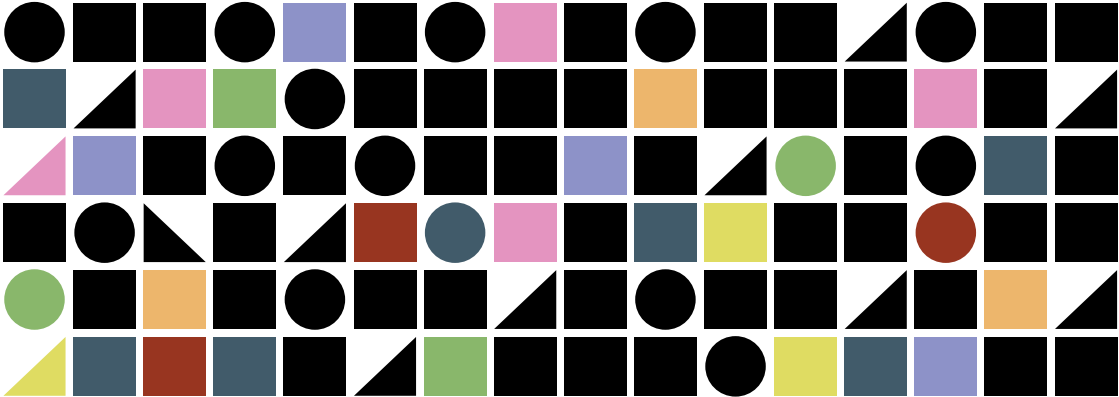
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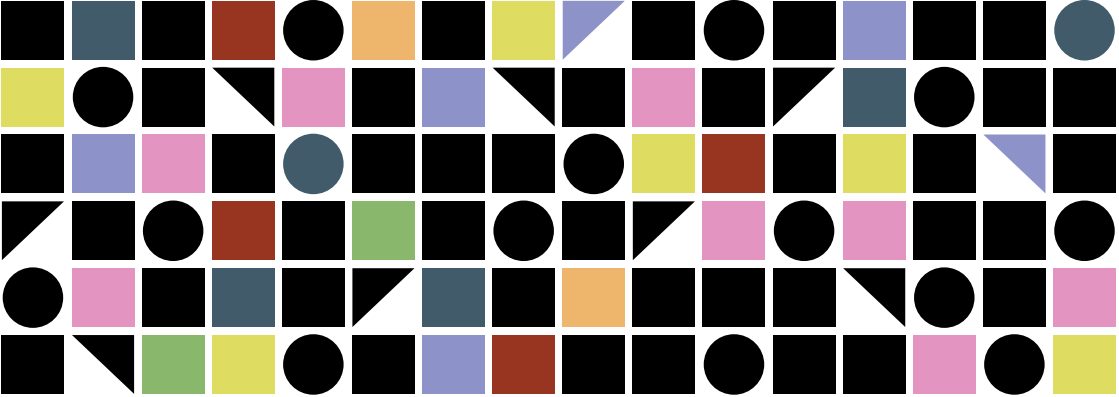
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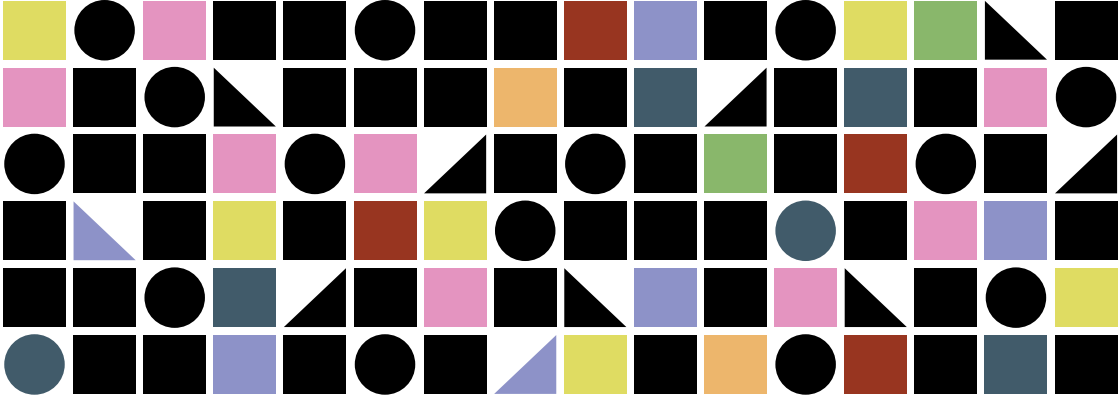
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PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER SYKES
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DANGEROUS AND WRONG

THE END OF DEATH: A PORTRAIT OF AUBREY DE GREY

BY ANDREA RASSELL

THE author of *Ending Aging*, Dr Aubrey de Grey, is a biogerontologist, communicator of science, and a formidable intellectual presence behind the lectern. His beard (so large it boasts its own Facebook page) and ornamental hair ties complement a somewhat controversial stance on the world stage.

De Grey is allied with the transhumanist movement, the central tenet of which is to overcome the current limitations of the human body through technological means. This includes radical life extension technologies such as those postulated by de Grey.

He claims that the first people to live to more than 1000 years old have already been born. Biogerontology approaches physical problems of ageing before they become evident.

De Grey has founded the philanthropic research institution Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence (SENS), where researchers are tackling what de Grey has identified as the “seven deadly things”. These comprise:

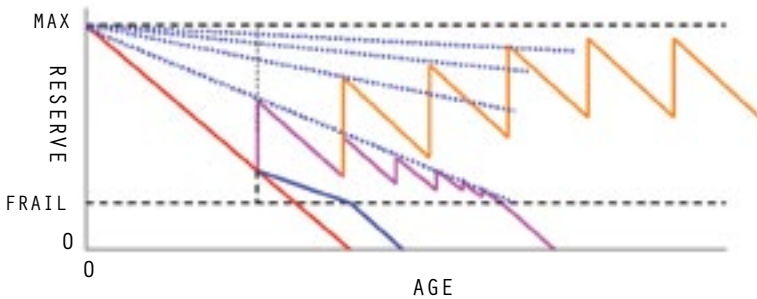
- Cell loss, cell atrophy.
- Extracellular junk.
- Death resistant cells.
- Mitochondrial DNA mutations.
- Intracellular junk.
- Tissue stiffening (extracellular crosslinks).
- Cancer-causing nuclear mutations.

SENS believe they have developed achievable solutions to each of these problems with technologies that already exist and de Grey is globetrotting to raise awareness, and funds, to ensure that these technologies are not neglected.

Of utmost importance in de Grey’s claims to the feasibility of radical life extension is the time span of the availability of rejuvenating therapies. Throughout history, the pattern of technological advancement has been similar. Major breakthroughs are inevitably followed by incremental advancement. In Australia these incremental advancements are sometimes not only inevitable, but legally required. After registering biomedical devices with the Therapeutic Goods Administration for example, continued improvements are mandatory.

Therefore, once issues surrounding rejuvenating therapies are solved, for example the safety of genetic replacement therapies, then life expectancy should increase ever quicker. This is the crux of what de Grey terms the longevity escape velocity (LEV).

THE SIMPLE LOGIC OF LEV

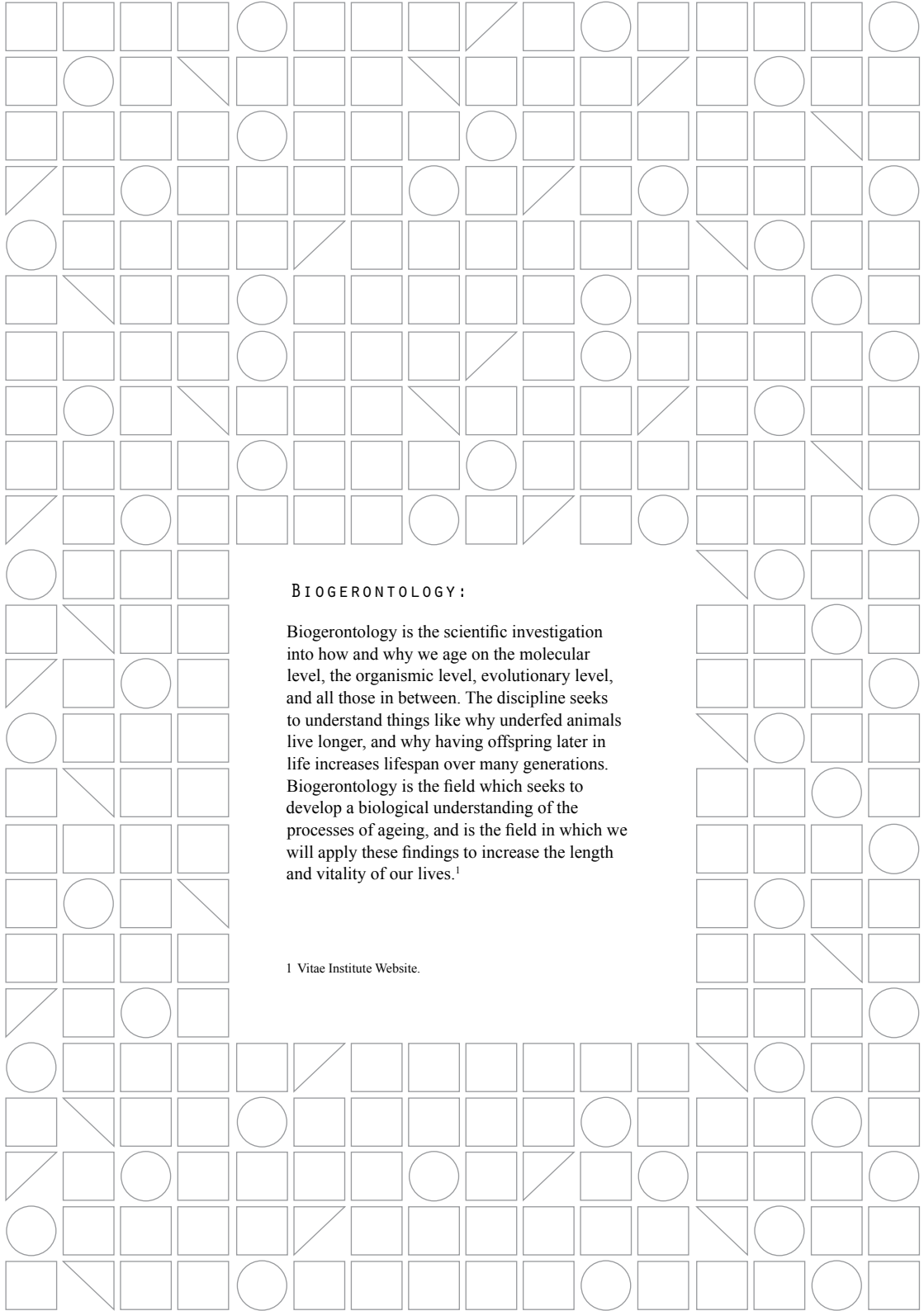


FIXING HALF THE DAMAGE, THEN 3/4, THEN 7/8...
 - OUTPACES THE SO-FAR-UNFIXABLE DAMAGE...
 - MAINTAINS HEALTHSPAN INDEFINITELY

On the ethical implications of an aged population de Grey is unwavering. He stresses healthy ageing, as opposed to extension of the frail years, and his bottom line is that it is immoral to deny future generations the choice to utilise these technologies rather than not to develop them at all. One gets the sense that, beneath all the science and controversy is a man who genuinely wants to save lives and decrease suffering, and if someone with the intelligence, tenacity and energy of de Grey is approaching these issues with all of his might, humanity may well be the better for it.

Graph: From De Grey's 2007 Transvision presentation "The Mythical Merits of Mealy Mouthed Messaging", held in Chicago.

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BIOGERONTOLOGY :

Biogerontology is the scientific investigation into how and why we age on the molecular level, the organismic level, evolutionary level, and all those in between. The discipline seeks to understand things like why underfed animals live longer, and why having offspring later in life increases lifespan over many generations. Biogerontology is the field which seeks to develop a biological understanding of the processes of ageing, and is the field in which we will apply these findings to increase the length and vitality of our lives.¹

1 Vitae Institute Website.



DANGEROUS AND WRONG

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

BY CALEB SMITH

THEY say that when you get back from overseas nothing will have changed. It's some kind of unifying statement. People try to render an experience generic to connect with one another. I'm back. The city is a ruined map and she's dead.

The city I grew up in, my childhood, where I met her, the streets and buildings we lived among, they've been memory wiped and replaced with dust and mud. So some homogenous do nothing phrase of about what it's like to return from overseas doesn't cut it. My past has been derendered to 2D photographs. There is no material left to the past anymore. No sense of a place where my past dwelt.

They told me I shouldn't come back for the funeral. Her parents and mine formed this conspiracy of knowing what's best for me over the phone. Parents never take into account what their child is feeling when they claim to know what's best for them. They operate from this point of a certainty of outcomes, prescribed from a list of homely axioms. It doesn't matter if they fit. Such thoughts are never tested for fitness of purpose.

They offered me the rational factors.

“There isn't any city left to return to, there's no power, water, there's no streets just mud. There's a curfew and most of the city is closed to the public. We don't know if we are going to be evacuated.” And “You're doing well in London, she would want you to be happy, we know you care, you don't have to come back to this to show it.”

Her parents had been offered a slight reprieve in the fact that the body had been identified and returned promptly. Hardly a balancing grace, but the scale was all shot out of place. Even her death was dwarfed by a list of others, the families suffering only one of many.

In times when my life has fallen over and I've spent weeks just lying in bed in a grey echo, I've reached out to any source of meaning that could break the loop of the same thoughts over and over. When I feel weak of a world full of empty actions I fall back on paternal authority as an absolute. So it was half a year before I packed it up and came back. I spent that long wishing I'd chosen otherwise before actually doing something about it.

When I got back what I felt was that there was no place to come back to. No home over there or here, like I'd made the folly of stepping off the loom of fate and now I was doomed to wander listless through infinity until I found a way back to that fine thread. When I left and she stayed, was that when I fell off? We thought we were being adult, we'd met young and we decided that spending some time apart would be a good thing. We could see if we could pick it up later on in life. Looking back, we were just acting out the maxims we thought were expected of us.

I was never quite as successful in London as I'd hoped. I shouldn't complain. I'd found work in my field as a photographer, but it was only for magazine pieces, the interior of people's apartments. I'd go out and say I was a photographer for a newspaper but I would never

say what bit. I'd had a few girlfriends in London but it always felt like they were just filling a role. I mean, I liked them but in the back of my mind I thought I'd come back one day and be with her. So that was my OE, not quite the big thing I'd been promised and it ended this way with this to come home to.

I didn't really gel with my old friends when I got back. I didn't make too much of an effort to, either. It was almost as if they didn't acknowledge that I'd returned. They were the sort that had stayed, so I guess we were different people. They'd all been unified by an event and the experience of what followed and I had no part in any of that. Bars had sprung up in the suburbs and everybody needed a drink, a lot of houses were still deemed uninhabitable and the insurers, the council and the government were moving slowly. The centre of the city was still a red zone. It was still rubble. The rest of the country had moved on and forgotten that it was still day to day. Crime, violence and a more permanent depression were creeping in.

I guess that's why he did it. Some guy had started to set up art pieces in the red zone at night. It was giving the city international attention again. There were projectors run by generators, set up in front of former landmarks, beaming their former image onto the rubble. He'd also set, mild explosives on remote to kick up dust when security guards arrived to investigate. Their reports on the news didn't fully articulate what it would have been like to experience it. The light image of a building distorted by a nebulous swirl of dust. It was a simple idea, but it told our story. We didn't have buildings or people, we had ghosts. The dust would have been too shy of substance to give the buildings life. The dust would have fallen and the image would have faded, turned back into rubble.

That's when I had the half-drunken dumb idea to sneak into the red zone, where the police were now trying to hunt the artist. I wanted to get pictures of his work. More than that I wanted to see it. I spent hours looking without result. I had to work hard not to stumble onto parcels

of policemen. There had already been two instances where I'd nearly been caught and had to hide two stories up a partially demolished building while they searched for me below. I'd nearly had buildings come down on me as I navigated between them. I hadn't been fruitful and I considered leaving the red zone for the suburbs and sleep.

I had paused down the remains of an alleyway for the remainder of my hip flask, when I saw the light. You wouldn't have been able to see it from the street. I staggered over the bricks to find a way in. The building was dark, and looked like it had been derelict before the disaster. From what I could tell there was some rumpty décor from an era that could not be looked back upon favorably. It lay covered in dust and rubbish. There was a half used roll of tin foil on the floor, and plastic bags. A ripped "Tears for Fears" poster lay hanging from the wall. Obscure objects lay clustered about, out of vogue exercise equipment, and a broken observer's telescope, next to a zodiac chart.

It was dead stupid of me to start checking doors given the visible signs of drug use lying around me. The city had some nasty habits before everything and I didn't want to see their affect on a person after a year of desperation. I was drunker than I thought and lost in the dark. I made it to the light, guided by the sound of the generator. It led to a dead end, just a stark light bulb and the smell of petrol. I was tired, and I got lost on my way out of the building. I wandered into a room whose only occupants were a mattress, a few opened packets of condoms and a poorly binged A4 printout about channelling ghosts. The mix of drink, tiredness and emptiness of being, lead me to the bed. I didn't care if I was in a dangerous place, with every artifact a warning sign. I was too drunk and tired to care what happened to me. I settled into the cold and half slept a whirl-drunk sleep.

I awoke in the cold; there was a body next to me. It had spooned up underneath a blanket that had been thrown over us both. I jumped into alertness, a little less drunk. It was a woman, she was awake and I realised she was naked under

the blanket.

“What?”

“Sorry, you looked cold.”

“I have to go.”

“Wait...”

Something in her voice made me stay.

“Tim, it’s me.”

I hadn’t seen her before in my life, I didn’t recognise her voice, but there was a familiarity to the inflection.

“Who?”

“Please, listen to me, it’s Anna.”

“How dare you.”

I ran over to her and grabbed her. I felt like hitting her. She must have gone through my wallet while I was asleep. How could anyone be this deficient in this city full of grief to pull this, without a shred of empathy? My dead girlfriend. I clutched both her arms and was probably hurting her. Her bare breasts had been exposed by my coarseness of action. I had her sitting up and scowled into her eyes. Something there was getting me to falter. I realised I had started to sob. I was shaking. She had a hand about my waist. The other moved to touch my lip.

“Remember when you left.”

The rotunda in autumn, our last kiss before I left. The last bit of sense memory I can reach back and still feel, the presence of her lips. I was sobbing back then, too.

I lurched forward and kissed the woman, I rushed towards that feeling of presence. It felt of her. I didn’t stop.

The feel and move of her, the little breaths and sounds and sighs. It was Anna. It was her in my arms. She was tugging at my clothes as I mapped her with my hands. I felt her hip up

against me, as she pulled me hard against her. I looked into this woman’s eyes through the dark. She looked nothing like her and she had this body of another. Her breasts felt different in my hands. She was so foreign to me in sight and touch. I was so far away in this funny room, in a dark within dark. She felt me hesitate and again slowly brought her lips to mine. If she were a temptation I’d succumb. I’d given in to the feel of her. She had me in her hands and guided me into her. I lay on top of her, enthralled and rushed with excitement. I needed this, I needed her. An erroneous feeling rushed up inside of me. It was the feel of Anna and the touch of another. An exhilaration of the foreign and the familiar amalgamated into an impossibility of being. I was well amidst the exploration of this new form from within the bounds of accustomed intimacy. It was a dark thought, but it was like cheating on her with her. I went into her, harder, faster, the slap of new flesh against mine. Her legs splayed in submission, she rolled against the mattress driven by impulse. I pulled her gaze to mine, her form ran indistinct as I rushed forth inside her. She offered a little kiss on the cheek when I was done, but her eyes changed when I pulled out of her.

“No, no, Anna, stay, please.”

I was grabbing the other woman again roughly and sobbing again. She soothed me as I begged her to bring her back, bribed her to bring her back. I offered platitudes of guilt and god before the form of the woman next to me consoled me. She was a remnant to cling onto, something of a warmth that was and had been. I kissed her but she was someone else. It wasn’t a kiss of love or lust but one of thanks.

“You have to go,” she said. Her voice had a harder edge now that it was her own.

“Of course.”

I got up, put on my clothes and went to leave.

“Leave the camera.”

“What?”

“ You need to pay.”

“No way. It cost me over \$2000 bucks.”

“Was it not worth it?” she said. I’d already regretted my words before she said it.

I offered my thanks and left. They sounded a little hollow. In the cold walk home my mind tried to put itself to rights. I made myself busy bringing order to the conflict of my actions. I was grazed by doubt, it may have been a con, but I needed this. I had finally been able to put her to rest. How could it have been a con? It was too intimate. The two women I’d been with that night were beginning to disincorporate in my mind. I’d thought I’d needed a physical artifact of Anna but the presence I had been missing was not borne of matter. She wasn’t like the city, something drawn up out of object or form. It was her spirit I’d needed to feel again to be able to farewell. The other woman was the first since I’d been away that I had been able to be with without guilt of not being with Anna. I’d been across the world and not given into the experience, the thrill of being until getting back. I’d never been somewhere so foreign in London. There was an incongruity to the fact that the furthest I’d been out of my usual experience was in my home town. The other woman had been the physical I’d also needed to bring me back to being. I had been in danger of turning myself into a ghost, chasing Anna through the walls.

I didn’t buy a new camera. I gave up on photography even though I had a degree in it. I felt an image by itself couldn’t capture the way I saw the world now. It didn’t capture what mattered.



I AM MANY.
Byron Kinnaird



I am Gabriel, messenger,
Of your Body, and toward Death,
and I saw him crash beautifully to the ground,
Fallen as we are.



I am Michael, fighting
For Who is like God?
Treading the dark below
Armed, and the Foremost of us All.
I am the burdened prince of mercy,
I will help you become death.



I am Mary, mother.
Blessed art thou among women.
Flesh, warm, and like the rain to skin
Veiled, under the blue of stars.



I am Raphael, healer.
Come rest in my winged
Embrace, where no shadow is,
Wrapped in warm black,
I will help you see the quiet.



Iain Duns, father.
No harm shall come to you
Under these feathers, in these walls
I will Love you
As the sky only knows.



I am Samael, and I am Icarus, fallen.
Winged for a moment
Following our Fathers
Until we die.



FIGHTING FOR THE MONSTER

BY MARTIN LEWIN

IT all crystallised in a terrifying instant in a coffee shop last year. I was standing there, DSLR in hand, trying to make a film (for God's sake!), arguing with the manager of the store about the ramifications of what I was shooting. But strangely the words that were coming out of his mouth seemed to somehow echo my own. Yet there we were, diametrically opposed. I had the feeling that a year or two earlier in my life I would have wholeheartedly agreed with him. Or should I say, his words were exactly what I would have said before I started working for an international design consultancy.

The gist of the argument was Small Independent Artisan vs. Generic Corporate Behemoth. And in that horrific moment, I realised that, for the first time in my life, I was fighting for the big guys.

There's a quote from Nietzsche "Wer mit Ungeheuern kämpft, mag zusehn, dass er nicht dabei zum Ungeheuer wird". "Whoever struggles with monsters may see to it that he does not thereby become a monster". It's something that I think about in my job. Quite a lot actually. With clients, including major utility companies, banks, the health industry, food and beverage manufacturers, not-quite-democratic governments and even charities, some form of ethical analysis is not only a hobby of mine, but something that all my colleagues and peers are bound to engage in from time to time, to varying degrees.

I could, as a masochistic exercise, find egregious breaches of ethics within the corporate

boundaries of most, if not all our clients. (The obvious counter-statement here is: So what? They're HUGE companies. It's like pointing at a town like Ballarat, population 100,000, and judging its collective morality solely by the worst offences of the worst offender). But largely I don't. Because the moral certitude of my youth is giving way to something vastly more complex. And really, it hurts my head a bit to think about it. I work with these companies every day, and the question of whether my clients are making the world a better place often seems like looking at an elephant through a loupe. The question is just too big to answer.

But here are my guesses, my attempts to placate my conscience.

I'm fairly certain that these giant companies, for all their collective might, are actually less destructive than an army of aesthetically pleasing mom 'n' pop stores would be. The guys at the top are smart enough to realise that their main *raison d'être* (making money) often conflicts with what their consumers expect of them (not polluting shared environments like rivers, for instance) and consciously seek to redress that conflict (point A). So they create corporate responsibility charters which, admittedly, do get broken, but they have the effect of drawing an ethical line in the sand. They have to think about the consequences of their actions at enormous scales, because they often operate at yes, enormous scales. This is not something that your artisanal bakery has to think about, by definition. Yet there are great benefits to thinking at massive

scales. For instance, if you can figure out a way to trim 10g from a package weight, and make it denser to pack, you've not only saved a shit tonne of money in freight but also done a bunch of that environmental stuff that everyone keeps talking-about.

Large corporations might be bland and repetitive and soulless. They might swallow High Streets whole, chewing up the diversity that we pretend to love (but love not quite enough to actually shop at). They might have the marketing smoke and mirrors tricks down to such a fine art that, despite our best intentions, when we're short of towels/lotions/electrical goods, we find ourselves wandering through their heaving, sliding doors in a kind of glazed stupor, spitefully denying our rational selves and our righteous assurances that "advertising doesn't work on me".

But here's the rub. Their economies of scale, their supply chains, their drive toward efficiency (which, yes, I know, leads to some terrible things, but see point A for an admittedly weak rebuttal, anyway.) All these things allow for products to be produced incredibly cheaply. And the open accessibility of what were once luxury items is one of the great miracles of the 20th century. That in the West anyone, ANYONE, can buy a decent meal from their local supermarket, or a mobile phone for the price of a cab fare. That to me is a GOOD THING. Consumer choice is the only form of democracy that has a 100 per cent rate of engagement. Consumption as a leveller.

And herein lies the paradox. Since governments realistically gave up years ago, the only people left capable of supplying a democratic experience (or at least a simulacrum of it) are the corporations. And so enraptured are we by these "consumer benefits" that we repeatedly vote for governments that reduce public power and hand that power to the corporations, thus further cementing our own roles as consumers rather than citizens, substituting real democracy for this pseudo-consumer-democracy.

I'm not stating that as a good/bad thing. It just is. It's a fact.

It's also perhaps not an overstatement to say that corporate power is not just rising, but it's actually obliterated all cultural opposition. Vice Magazine and the rise of Hipsterism (is that a proper -ism yet? It should be) are salient examples of how socially acceptable it has become to treat brands as legitimate extensions of human personality, and how easy corporations find it to absorb dissent and recycle it as next season's edgy new look.

But what gives corporations an even more strangely democratic effect is that they are really, really, really interested in giving people what they want. Trust me. (As much as anything, my company is a translation service. We're a conduit between the boardrooms and the people on the street who are paying for all those Rolexes being worn in the boardrooms.) Companies live and die almost completely through the perception of their product's value.

CONSUMER CHOICE IS THE ONLY FORM OF DEMOCRACY THAT HAS A 100 PER CENT RATE OF ENGAGEMENT. CONSUMPTION AS A LEVELLER.

Which is where I come in. I help to design products (stuff) and/or services (non-stuff, but things we still pay for) and/or the marketing angles that promote said stuff. And usually I design for these large corporations. And although I don't personally believe that the privatisation/corporatisation of Western society is necessarily a positive shift, it's just the way things are, there is more to be gained by engaging with these guys, our new overlords, helping them to create better, more intuitive, cheaper and more beautiful products, than it is to stand sanctimoniously on the sidelines thinking how much better the world would be if we all read The Guardian and the New York Times.

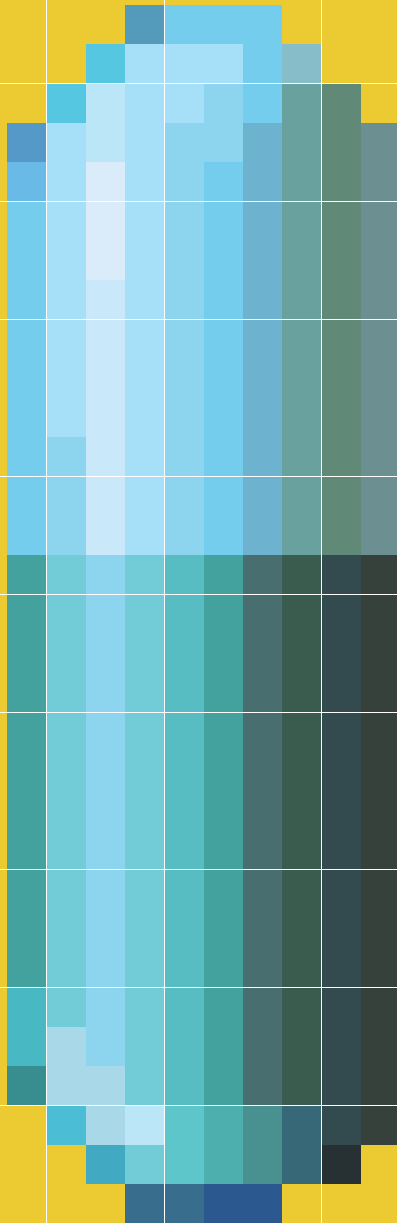
Back to the shop and my argument with the store manager. These thoughts were all jumbling around my head, nebulous and inchoate, whilst the manager more or less accused me of stealing the intellectual/aesthetic property of his store in order to feed the new product development pipeline of the large multinational who happened to be our client at the time.

I was, in fact, doing what all designers do, taking what they like and admire about the world and recycling it into products that can be manufactured at scale. I was just operating at a much larger scale than he was.

If that meant that a better product could be made for more people at a lower cost, is that not more democratic? If I was helping to spread

the values that I appreciated in his store by transplanting them into the heart of a larger beast. Is that not a good thing? Are we not, by engaging with these corporations, if ever so infinitesimally, making them - and by extension, the world - better?

I said as much to the manager, and we parted, agreeing to disagree.



COUNTING THE YEARS

BY NIMITA ARORA

In providing public healthcare, governments must make difficult decisions about which drugs and medical services deserve funding. But is it ethical to put a price on someone's health?

What is the value of a human life? Most of us would like to say that a life is priceless, but in reality, society and individuals make decisions every day based on implicit assumptions about how much a life is worth. Many ancient societies performed human sacrifice, often to appease angry gods. Today, we will risk the lives of soldiers to defend a principle, such as democracy or freedom.

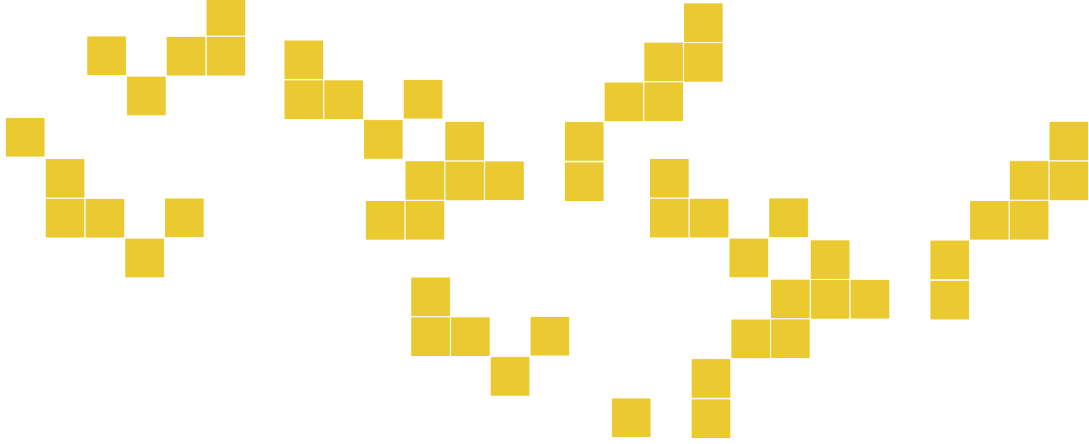
In both cases, we are taking part in a calculated bargain, where human lives are traded for what we consider to be the greater good. At an individual level, many of us will knowingly trade several years of life for the pleasures of alcohol, cigarettes or Camembert cheese. It is likely that none of this is particularly shocking news to anyone. Somehow the concept of valuing life is not as challenging when we are trading it for intangibles, such as societal values and lifestyle.

But what if we were to put a dollar value on life? This question inevitably makes people more squeamish. Would you say that a year of your life is worth \$1000, \$10,000, \$100,000 or \$1 million? Is a year of your life worth less than that of a new-born baby? Is a year of life worth more when you are happy and healthy, than it is when you are depressed and sick?

These are some of the prickly questions faced by governments when they commit to providing any form of public healthcare. In Australia, we are fortunate enough to have a relatively equitable and effective healthcare system. Through Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), even the poorest Australians have access to affordable treatment by doctors and subsidised medicines. Under both of these schemes, funding decisions are made by combining scientific, economic and social information to determine the value for money provided by a new drug or medical device.

This dark art is known as “cost-effectiveness analysis”. Technically, it refers to the ratio of the cost of the intervention to a relevant measure of its effect. More simply put, it is a method for estimating how much a new medical product is going to improve people's lives, and whether that benefit is worth the extra cost. A cost-effectiveness analysis usually involves combining evidence from clinical trials and real-world information about treatment patterns and resource-use to build an economic model.

Once all the relevant information has been entered, the model spits out a single number that represents the cost of extending a patient's life by one year at full health. The concept of “full health” is important, as it allows us to properly measure the value of drugs that could improve your chances of surviving, but may also make your life miserable in the process. This is often the case in some of the more



serious forms of cancer, where the horrible side effects of chemotherapy may not be worth the extra months of life you may win back through treatment.

About a year before he succumbed to oesophageal cancer, Christopher Hitchens wrote in a Vanity Fair article about what he called the “oncology bargain”.

“Here’s the wager. You stick around for a bit, but in return we are going to need some things from you. These things may include your taste buds, your ability to concentrate, your ability to digest, and the hair on your head,” he wrote.

For many, especially those who are dying, this bargain is a no-brainer. Of course you would do anything to wrangle a small amount of extra time to spend with your family and friends. But in a country with publicly funded healthcare, should the government be responsible for footing the cost? For example, the cancer drug Avastin can stall disease progression for three months in a patient with advanced breast cancer, but can cost \$60,000 to \$100,000 for a year of treatment. On top of that, the drug is associated with a range of nasty side-effects, including severe high blood pressure and haemorrhaging.

The many thousands of dollars spent stretching out a patient’s dying weeks could equally be spent on an affordable bowel cancer screening program that would probably save many lives. This may sound callous, but it is a very real dilemma. According to Australia’s National

Medicines Policy, the goal of healthcare should be to achieve optimal health and economic outcomes for society as a whole as well as for the *individual* patient.

Australia is one of the first countries to have adopted cost-effectiveness analysis for the purpose of allocating healthcare resources. Like the UK and Canada, we have been doing this so long that no one even questions the ethics underpinning the system. The US, on the other hand, has a slightly more idiosyncratic view on these matters.

With a value system that prioritises personal liberties over utilitarian goals, many Americans feel the idea of cost-effectiveness analysis implies rationing, which in turn implies socialism and “Big Government”. Debates over universal healthcare over the last few years have included predictions of death panels and denial of medical treatment for the elderly. These hysterical arguments ignored the following facts:

Private health insurance companies already ration healthcare in a way that is far more inequitable than most public healthcare systems.

The US already has publicly funded healthcare for the poor and the elderly, via Medicare and Medicaid. But because these programmes do not use cost-effectiveness analysis, US healthcare spending per capita is more than it is in countries with universal healthcare.

IN AUSTRALIA, THE AMOUNT THAT SOCIETY IS WILLING TO PAY FOR AN ADDITIONAL YEAR OF LIFE AT GOOD HEALTH IS ABOUT \$40,000 TO \$50,000.

Despite this, health outcomes in the US are far worse than they are in countries where healthcare is rationed, such as Australia and the UK. Those patients who are able to access healthcare, through insurance or Medicaid, use more health care, but not necessarily better quality healthcare.

President Obama's recent healthcare reform package, which the US Supreme Court has largely approved, promises to provide Americans with better access to medical treatment, and should be recognised as a remarkable achievement considering the widespread hostility it continues to face. Despite this progress, the notion of quantifying the value of a patient's life remained too controversial to be openly accepted as national policy.

In fact, the legislation underpinning Obamacare specifically bans cost-effectiveness analysis, stating that decision makers *"shall not develop or employ a dollars per quality adjusted life year (or similar measure that discounts the value of a life because of an individual's disability) as a threshold to establish what type of health care is cost effective or recommended."* (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 2010).

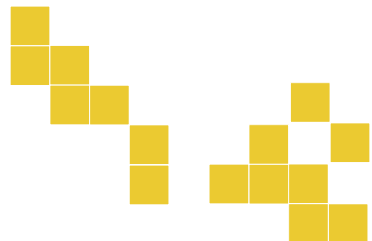
This type of ideological thinking is not sustainable. With an ageing population, the costs of healthcare in developed countries make up an ever increasing proportion of government expenditure. Adding to the problem, pharmaceutical companies are charging more

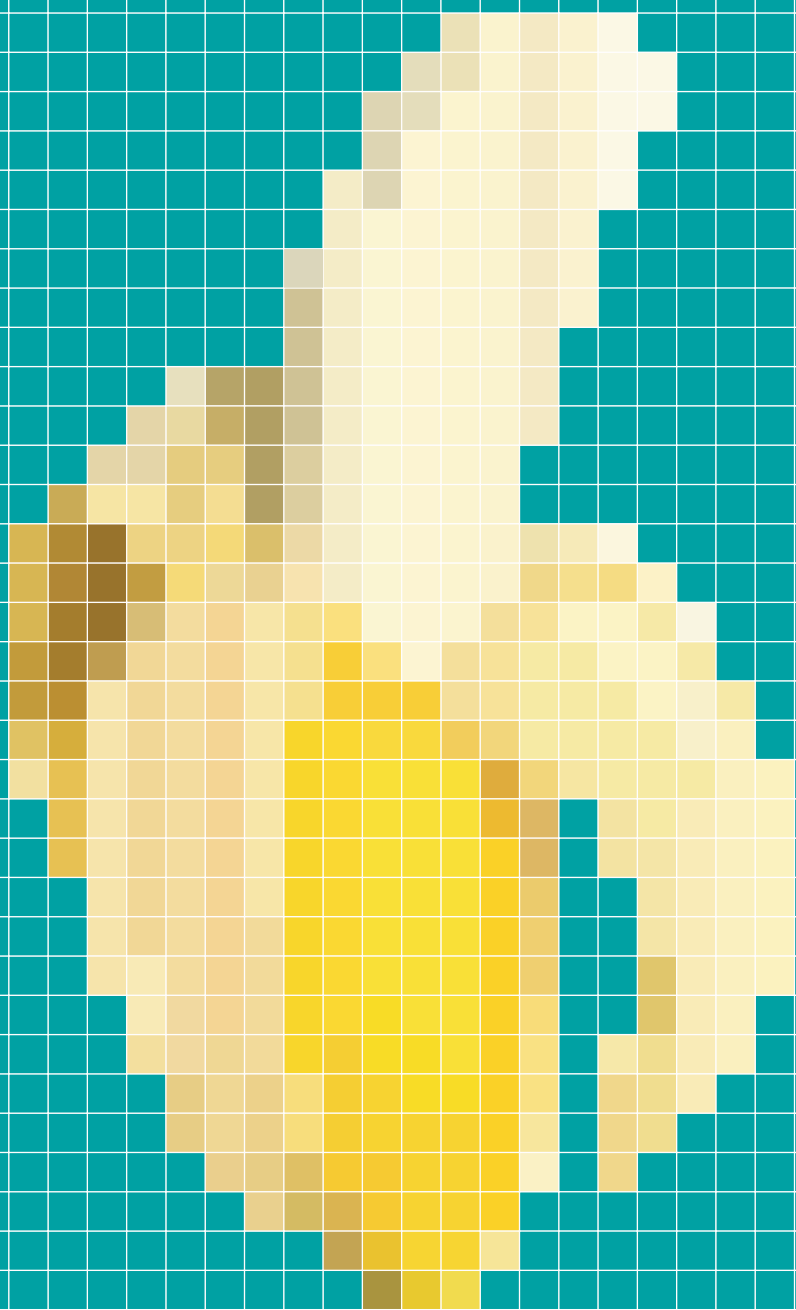
and more for new medicines as they try to compensate for their shrinking pipelines and growing research and development costs. The bucket of money allocated to the healthcare budget is not bottomless.

At some point, someone needs to make difficult decisions about which products and services should be funded by the government, and which should be paid for out of our own pockets. Although it is in some ways a crude and cold instrument, cost-effectiveness analysis is an effective and fair way of dealing with these issues.

All of this means that the answer to my original question, about the value of a human life, actually can have an answer. In Australia, the amount that society is willing to pay for an additional year of life at good health is about \$40,000 to \$50,000.

Ponder that, next time you have an extra glass of wine, or eat some Camembert cheese.





PENIS ENVY

BY JOHNNY MANZANA

I KNOCK, enter and am offered a glass of tap water. It's a beautiful apartment. The host, Sam, offers me a seat on the soft couch and seats himself at the other end, so we have a corner each. Small talk.

This is a meet up and we are waiting for more to arrive. "I'm new to New York." "Oh, how did you hear about us?"

"I found you on the internet." "Oh." Long silence. Umm, ok me again. "Ha, that's a lovely rug," I comment on the furnishings and the view, attempting to be familiar and at ease. "I love the high ceilings." God, where is everyone? This is New York, I thought heaps of people would be into this. Waiting. It looks like it might be just me and Sam, on the soft couch. "Have you already started restoring?" asks Sam. And the meeting gets underway.

Sam, me and his laptop. Hunched in. Two strangers on a couch, looking at a website that sells DIY products to men who want to restore their foreskins. This isn't weird at all. Sam begins telling me about the Dual Tension Restorer, made of plastic and silicon.

Would I like to see one? Sure. Sam gets up. I'm left looking at before and after shots. Very impressive. He returns carrying a tupperware which he opens between us. It is full of hoses, weights, rubber bands, clips and many plastic parts. He chooses a few parts and lets me see how they fit together. "You can also use this one with the inflation method," he says.

"Do you want to see how it works?" "No, its ok," I reply casually, thinking "no, Christ, stop don't put it on!" I say: "I think I've seen how they work on a video."

Sam, is the facilitator for the New York chapter of the National Organisation of Restoring Men. He holds this monthly meeting, as well as facilitating a web forum for men to discuss and get advice on restoring their foreskins in New York.

He is a hard-core foreskin fan and, once the box of devices is put away and the conversation moves from the technical to the ethical realm, he rises sharply against cultural acceptance of circumcision. "It's against a child's rights. It is barbaric." And a tirade of other reasons flow forth from it being a subversion of nature, a ploy of the medical-industrial establishment and a result of the conformist nature of American fraternities before he finally, tellingly, settles on a personal anecdote about the penises of other men.

Sam began to realise that intact penises were normal on sojourns in Europe, where his homosexuality blossomed in the arms of foreign men. Thanks to the sensitive loins of a swarthy uncut Greek the anti-circumcision community gained a vocal, and envious, intactivist.

Midway though Sam's story Silvio, a lapsed member of the group shows up, and sits in rocking chair on the rug. He is familiar with Sam, and the two know each other's back story. Sam urges Silvio to fill me in. Silvio twists the rocker closer using his feet, takes a breath and a

sideways gaze, and begins, “I had this done when I was eighteen, I was in the army.”

He explains that as a baby his penis was saved from the knife by his Italian community, where circumcision wasn't customary. About half the boys at his school were cut and half not, following cultural lines. He didn't ever really think about it. But then, as a young man fighting in Vietnam, it became a valuable asset. As the fighting raged, claiming the lives of friends, opting for a circumcision was a sure fire way to get a reprieve from the war. Silvio claimed he had soreness and burning on his penis and traded his prepuce for a week's care and respite.

The doctors circumcised soldiers a batch at a time. They gave him a tight cut and joked about what they were doing to him and a long line of other men. It was dicks out in the dorm room for the next week, as the doctor would come around nightly and apply ointment.

For years Silvio did not notice any difference in the pleasure of sex. But into his late thirties he began to feel that the sensation was tapering off. Still, years passed before he started restoring. Now, at fifty-five years of age, he has been restoring for two years, has about half coverage back and is ecstatic about the restored sensation of sex. His advice is to just get started, and start as young as you can.

Happily, the rates of circumcision in New Zealand have dropped to around 1% of newborns. The procedure is now only performed when medically called for. The fact that daddy is cut is no longer a good reason to mutilate baby boys. And this is progress we should be proud of.

However, those already born have a little catching up to do. More information on restoring is, of course, on the internet (perhaps best with private browsing switched on). Check out www.restoringforeskin.org/. Also, the coverage index (www.newforeskin.biz/CI/CIchart.htm) gives a guide to how much of your foreskin is missing and is useful for comparisons. Armed with this knowledge, a credit card and a sense of adventure no one can stop you!

DEATH OF THE ARCHITECT

BY EMRE OZYETIS

I WISH we could talk about a form of resistance in architecture that comes from an authentic antagonistic perspective that challenges the status quo.

Hardly any architectural professional acknowledges their one and only vocation in the building industry, being the middle person between the capitalist and the constructor. Yet their autonomy is being lost¹ as they are integrated as professionals into the globalised work force² and as the role of architects shifts toward being human resource managers in the building industry. Despite this architects are still hanging on to their image as designers who deal with space. It is true they are still curators with a repertoire of solutions to design problems, but this repertoire does not necessarily consist of design and/or construction of space³; instead, it mostly coordinates design and construction within a network of various disciplines. A growing group of pragmatic academics are acknowledging this shift and re-description of the architect's role⁴. Through this repositioning of the prior "archaic" vocation of "the architect", however, architects' primary role as the middle person for the capitalist is overlooked and even concealed.

The world we live in is full of struggles against inequality. It's been a long time since we questioned the potential of our "advanced" scientific consciousness to evolve a state where we no longer exploit and use or abuse each other, just as it's also been a long time since we gave up on projects which aimed to

radically change state of things". "It's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism," is well worn⁵. The bigger picture that defines the state of things is no longer the enemy. There is no strict and rigid "outside" force that we all feel like fighting; instead we have all declared our autonomy. Maybe capitalism is not the enemy anymore? After all, the revolutionary tools of our times could not be appropriated if Foxconn did not make those tools so accessible. Maybe instead there are various forms of capitalism, and we could ask "which capitalism are we to antagonise?"

But first an old question: "How to antagonise capitalism?" The already commodified May, 1968, events⁶ were ignited by frustration with the sacrifices required to realise utopias⁷ and a deprivation of agency because of the assumed exteriority of capitalist forces⁸. The world is as upside down as it was back then. The enemy is still in charge and we somehow still keep the struggle alive. We are able to claim temporary autonomous zones in our permanent autonomous comfort zones. We still come together, protest and vocalise our dissent with our solar sound systems; we can reclaim the roads, party with purpose, and move on after our non-violent-action. Yet we can never escape the anguishing knowledge that every moment we enjoy is at the cost of some other person's basic human rights. This realisation condemns us to frustration with ourselves and necessitates a constant struggle with the system. Ironically this was once "white guilt", but through our struggles we have created equal opportunity to participate in oppressing others; directly or

indirectly, regardless of our skin colour, race, or gender. Unless we antagonise this sustained common and equal ground that allows equal participation in oppression, we are welcome as autonomous and active agents.

Back to architecture. Architects' vocation, like many other professions, is being challenged by the contemporary dominant economic political and social structure⁹. Professionals are under attack, and they need to decide whether to be a tool of the oppressor, suppressor, the exploiter, the capitalist or not. Being indifferent is choosing to sustain the status quo.

How much resistance is possible? Are there gradients of being a tool for the capitalist when you work for the capitalist? Is it possible to resist from within academia? Can we go on justifying our practicing architects pseudo-attempts to challenge status quo? We could start with the premise: Unless we rebel, unless we are disobedient to authority, we simply participate in authority's domination¹⁰. This resistance requires an actual physical space no matter how intermingled the networks we assume to be part of¹¹. Counter-insurgency is not necessarily about destroying the environment of insurgency, but could be in the form of narrating or manufacturing the insurgency by the sovereign power, through the environment where resistance takes place, including the physical environment¹². Sovereign power needs submission to dominate¹³. The most vulnerable moment of sovereign power is the moment when the limit of bio-power is challenged, when the dominated are able to exhaust themselves instead of submitting to sovereign power¹⁴. However, the dominated also has the potential to transform its body rather than being exhausted, through constructing a new body and a new life by simply refusing to participate¹⁵.

Architects who choose to resist can subvert the sovereign power with their labour and social production. To do so they may need to let go of every assumption and expectation inscribed in their profession and practice, along with their privilege and the comfort they can obtain through their profession. This may mean

not practicing their "work". Not practicing their work means lending their practice to insurrection. This is where the problem with contemporary architectural design practice and theory that is portrayed to be "against" (social architecture, critical design, radical architecture, Temporary Autonomous Zones, this magazine, this piece of writing, research, academic wanking) lies. Every time when we choose not to challenge the status quo as a whole and instead operate in gradients of resistance, we are lending our labour to counterinsurgency for bio political production. Maybe rather than inventing gradients of resistance to tame our struggle and frustration, we can inquire into our participation in what we are frustrated about. Here is an analogy or a metaphor: prison abolition and architecture. Is it enough for an architect to boycott building prisons if they are for the project of prison abolition movement? Or does it make more sense for them to actually participate in designing and building prisons so that they can subvert and bastardise the prisons which are to be abolished? How can an abolitionist architect take direct action against prisons with their practice and their tacit knowledge¹⁶ (know-how)? Maybe one of the answers we are not likely to consider is a more ethical and authentic one in this analogy/metaphor, transferring the tacit knowledge architects acquired through practice to subvert spaces (if it ever exists) to prisoners. Maybe we need to be motivated to work from an actual prison itself. If we are still not ready to pursue on giving up our comfy chairs in academia or in business, maybe recent paradigm shifts in design research could lead architects into prisons to work against systems of oppression and exploitation without denouncing their titles as "architects". Maybe an architect who is in prison, abolitionist or not, is an architect who takes direct action to change the state of affairs.

FOXCONN: FREE ENTERPRISE AT WORK OR GLOBAL DEMON?

Hon Hai Precision Industry Co Ltd trades as Foxconn and is a Taiwanese multinational electronics manufacturing company headquartered in Tucheng, New Tapei, Taiwan.

It is the world's largest maker of electronic components and the largest exporter from Greater China. It is often embroiled in controversy about the working conditions of its workers, especially in China.

Foxconn has factories in Asia, Europe and South America, which together assemble around 40 per cent of consumer electronics products in the world.

Foxcon has 13 factories in nine Chinese cities, more than in any other country.

Foxconn's largest factory worldwide is in Longhua, Shenzhen, China, where hundreds of thousands of workers are employed at the Longhua Science and Technology Park, described as a walled campus, sometimes referred to as "Foxconn City".

Covering about three square kilometres it includes 15 factories, worker dormitories, a swimming pool, a fire brigade, its own television network and a city centre with a grocery store, bank, restaurants, bookstore and hospital.

Many of the workers work up to 12 hours a day for six days each week.

Foxconn continues to expand in China.

But there are two suicide events associated with Foxconn in China. One the high-profile death of a worker after the loss of an iPhone prototype in his possession and the other, a series of 14 suicides linked to low pay in 2010. In reaction to the spate of worker suicides a report by 20 Chinese universities described Foxconn factories as labour camps and detailed widespread worker abuse and illegal overtime.

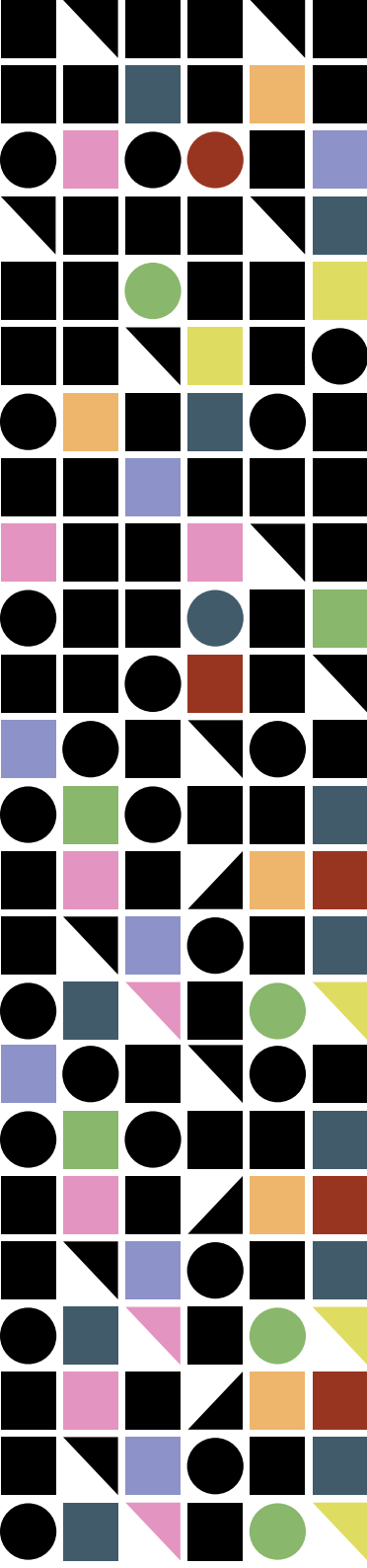
In response to the suicides Foxconn installed suicide prevention netting at some facilities and it also promised to offer substantially higher wages at its Shenzhen production bases.

Workers were also forced to sign a legally binding document guaranteeing that they and their descendants would not sue the company as a result of unexpected death, self injury or suicide.

Sources: Wikipedia, Forbes Global, Ruth Alexander, Reuters

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- 1 See Paolo Tombesi's essay (2001) "A true south for design? The new international division of labour in architecture" in *Practice*, 5(2), 171-180.
- 2 Winter 2011 issue of *Official Journal of the Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter* with articles by Lucinda Mason, Anthony Perker, Robert Puskand and others, was pretty much dedicated to this theme.
- 3 See Stan Allen's essay "Introduction: Practice vs. project" (2000) in his collection of essays "Practice: Architecture, technique and representation" or Edwin Gardner's essay (2006) "Revising practice: Strategies and attitudes for architecture in the next century" or <http://www.spatialagency.net/>
- 4 See Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till's book (2011) "Spatial agency: other ways of doing architecture, institutions, architects", RIBA's research project "Building Futures" at www.buildingfutures.org.uk/ or Rem Koolhaas interview (2011) with Spiegel: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,803798,00.html>.
- 5 Summer Special Edition (2008) of "Turbulence: Ideas for Movement" was dedicated to the question of this apathy, pointed out by Žižek in late 20th century -not necessarily portrayed as an apathy- with the theme "Who will save us from the future?" <http://turbulence.org.uk/turbulence-4/> or see Dominic Pettman's book (2002) "After the orgy: Toward a politics of exhaustion".
- 6 See Jean-Paul Sartre's interview (1970) "A Friend of the people" given to the French periodical *L'Idiot International*.
- 7 Stalin the scapegoat.
- 8 Frankfurt School is old.
- 9 Of course, it is questionable how much "Empire" or post-Fordism or whatever we call as the new world with new mode of domination is contemporary.
- 10 "Disobedience to authority is one of the most healthy and natural acts." Hardt and Negri in their book (2003) "Empire", pp. 210-1.
- 11 See Negri's conversation (2010) with Hans Ulrich Obrist in <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/in-conversation-with-antonio-negri/>
- 12 Hardt and Negri in "Multitude" on negative and positive techniques counterinsurgency strategies can appropriate, p.58.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid. Hardt and Negri on suicide-bombers.
- 15 Hardt and Negri in *Empire*.
- 16 See introduction of "Buildings, Culture & Environment: Informing Global & Local Practices" (2003) where Raymond J. Cole and Richard Lorch talk about explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge.



SIMPLICITY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF COMPLEXITY

INTERVIEW WITH INGO KUMIC

Ingo is a consulting urban strategist. He has worked in Asia, the Middle East and Europe assisting regional and city government with the strategic business of making and managing contemporary cities. He has a PhD in architecture and has been a guest critic in architecture, urban design and planning at the Architectural Association in London and the University of Technology in Sydney amongst others. He is currently the Strategic Advisor, City Strategy and Development for the City of Knox in Melbourne Australia.

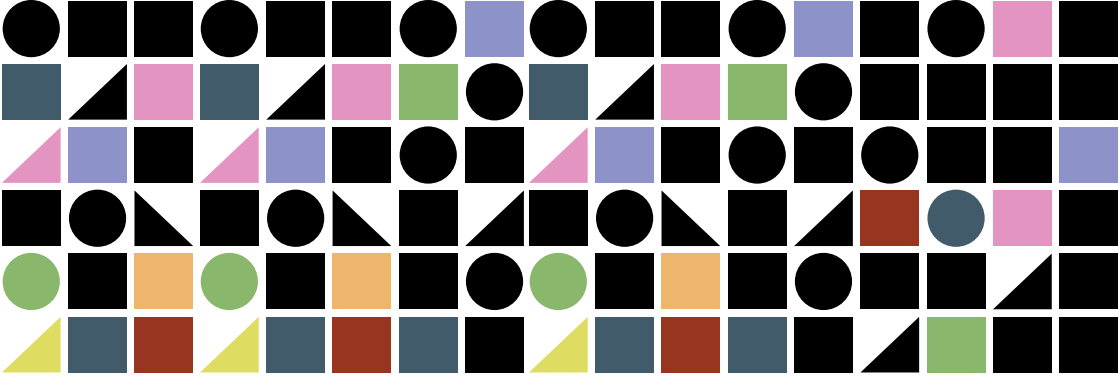
I CONTACTED Ingo thinking we might speak about the dangers of political corruption and self-interest in making our cities. However, what he had to say was more far reaching than that, and was primarily about a culture that retreats into expedient representations of simple images rather than engaging with the political complexity of reality.

NS : My crude experience of planning processes (eg. from zoning laws to balustrade details), to speak very vaguely, suggests they issue from a world view that imposes limitations on ways of living around some near sacred values: avoidance of all forms of risk, conflict and a denial of death - the effect of which is a villainisation of the dangerous, but also the dynamic and engaging. Instead you suggest planners might adopt a less prescriptive process, a 'controlled generative process'...

IK : You're right to say that I'm an advocate of a 'controlled generative process'. It's a reaction to what I (and I'm not alone by any stretch)

saw as an unhealthy prioritisation of narrative about how the object exists (the city as a technical vision) over why it exists (the urban political vision). The technical has become the de facto political vision. My aim is to remake the city as a political vision first through a 'strategic design' process. For this to happen one must subordinate frameworks which seek to uphold the technical integrity of the object to frameworks that uphold the political integrity of the object, re-sequencing the process so you get the political reason for an object sorted before crafting a technical vision. As you might imagine the criteria for the latter look totally different to the former. By doing this one also invariably subordinates: instant gratification to gestation, experience to meaning, image to brand, consumption to production, popular acclaim to critical acclaim and dare I say it, building to architecture. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said "I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity." Ultimately this is what a 'controlled generative process' is about.

The thing which excites me about this approach is that there is no 'expert' developed guideline to relieve politicians or bureaucrats of the responsibility to exercise critical perspective (which is exactly what all this built form / design guideline bullshit does). The relevance of an architectural / urban design / planning response would be assessed on the basis that it is a profoundly socio-spatial response. Architecture is political otherwise its just building.



NS : Why do you think planners tend towards this dead type of image driven planning?

IK : Expedient political rhetoric. Same reason why Bob Carr declared 50% of East Darling Harbour would be open space before anyone had even considered the complexity of that sites role in the future of Sydney. We have grown up on a diet of what a successful city looks like, not what actually makes it so. I often use the image of a surgeon alongside an image of an actor playing a surgeon, the point being that just because you look like a surgeon doesn't make you one. But we now use these images of success as a pacifier for the masses. Change is a difficult condition for politicians to manage, so in order to take the edge off it we run design competitions as a way of soliciting images of success. It feeds our consumptive sensibility and satisfies our never ending aspirational state.

Planners now simply codify these 'images of success' so that we can replicate them and so that politicians can say that they now preside over a process which guarantees success.

But 'form' is simply evidence of a process of making, it is the end of a long and at times catastrophic re-birthing of people and place. What the contemporary political condition now advocates is an estrangement from that process.

I prepared a regen strategy for a Chinese town some years back. Like much of the regen work at play in China then (and now I suspect), they wanted to undertake a substantial cosmetic renewal of this old town in order to position it in the global cultural tourism market. Confucian

temples would be used as museums, prefecture would become a hotel, the streets would become outdoor playgrounds in the style Jan Gehl might imagine. And, the biggest rub, the majority of the populace would be relocated to newly built apartments blocks making way for the new middle classes required to run and service new cultural tourism infrastructure. However, as we noted to our clients, what they saw was simply the evidence of the value generating process. The real investment needed was in the very people they had seen fit to relocate, everything they now wanted to exploit was made by the people they wanted to estrange. Our revision of the regen strategy was predicated on investment in 'value generating mechanisms or processes' thereby making the town, like any other urban condition, a living cultural artefact that is in a continual state of being and becoming.

I think one of the root problems confronting us today is that 'liveability' has become a dominant strategy in political power accumulation. It is a strategy of consumption not production, it is based on the question 'what can I get out of life', not 'what can I put back in'. This means that much of our 'designing of city' is geared towards its consumption. My critique here is not an either or proposition but one of sequence. That is, I'm suggesting that when renewing or regenerating the fortunes of a city one must first ensure that we understand, and where applicable, innovate 'why' the city exists. I think it is both irresponsible and short-sighted to prioritise investment in 'how' the city exists when its reason for being has been threatened. For example, towns and cities whose industrial 'reason for being' has long disappeared but whose government invests in cosmetic



treatment to distract from the fact that there's no wealth generation.

Like so many contemporary exercises in 'economic regeneration' that city government, through the use of urban design, often overlays an image of a 'city' it would like to project to the world rather than present the strategies required to enable the urban condition required to support that type of city.

NS : What kind of genuinely political questions do you think we should then be asking about our cities?

IK : By political visions rather than technical visions I'm suggesting that we need to subordinate questions concerning what the object looks like to questions which first seek to reveal:

- what sort of change is required and why?
- how will it affect society, the environment, the economy?
- how should we manage the change required?
- what specific interventions are most likely to enable the change needed?

Then we can begin to imagine the intervention itself.

In practice, 95% of Metro Strategies contain visions of what we want to be (eg we want a modern and prosperous economy, a healthy and resilient community, etc) designed by consultation processes which speak to thousands of people but, from the point of view of strategy, serve no real purpose. For example, the community mandates the destination of a world

which is more sustainable. Fine. But when we start to trot out our tactics and strategies for delivering this we are confronted by differing views about the way we affect change.

Rather than asking political questions of glib and trivially correct statements about our desired state, we should be asking political questions about the things that threaten our ability to achieve this state. These things are typically referred to as 'drivers of change' and can work either for or against us. Drivers of change such as population (ageing, migrating, health, education), resources, (natural-fossil fuel, water, food, human-education, health), technology (health and communication), identity (people, events, actual/ hyper imagery), and governance (representation, decision making etc) have a profound effect on whether we end up with a modern and prosperous economy or a healthy and resilient community. So why not ensure strategy seeks to make (drivers of) change work for us rather than simply confirm where we want to end up?

Good urban strategy is about a continuous dialogue that checks whether the vision is still relevant. It's about asking what's changed, how constructive that change is and what caused it to change? To be effective strategy must focus on how we respond to the things that cause change and not the change itself. That is, it must seek to enable those things or drivers that cause positive change and try to influence those drivers which cause negative change. Urban strategy which simply seeks to manufacture the change we desire while ignoring the drivers behind the negative change we seek to address fails the city and its people.



NS : This separation of image and reality, and the desire to somehow go beyond this ironic gap, is pervasive in many areas of our society...

IK : I think this difference can be explained in terms of ‘brand’. There is a difference between offering an aspirational brand and therefore the promise of an aspirational experience (likely to result in poor brand equity) and offering the brand as is experienced (results in good brand equity). What fascinates me is the role of the city-as-commodity in contemporary capitalism and, rather than diminishing this, to better understand how making the city as a commodity can actually work for its own long term benefit. We have always done this through urban design and architecture, that is, we’ve always sought to ‘create a sense of place’ but this conceptual framework is inadequate in the context of contemporary capitalism and the idea that the city is a commodity. ‘Place’ and ‘brand’ have an equivalence insofar as both are phenomenons of meaning and identity that can either be induced or restricted through the, say, people, events or objects. We can use brand as a way of organising the making and management of the city, especially if the brand includes ‘the possibility of the serendipitous, the unknown and the unscripted’. Brand can be as complex or as reductive as we want.

NS : One effect of focussing on ‘images of success’ or a reductive branding image (or language) is that this assists an obscuration of motive and power. Are you arguing for greater transparency and democratic engagement?

IK : Correct, and I’m simply using the language and tools employed by shareholder-

serving corporate interests or urban elite (often used, as you point out, to hide or obscure) in a manner that removes ‘language and conceptions of progress’ as an impediment to a more inclusive social act of making the city. Corporate investment language often uses the softer language of place as a political aesthetic. In this sense they simply adopt an image of what it is people would like to see while peddling the same thing they have always peddled.

The shareholder-serving corporates could never truly adopt the socio-political language of making the city, their accounting frameworks would keel over. I decided a long time ago that it was easier for ‘us’ to adopt their language and conceptions and reframe them in terms of spatial political economy (see Alexander Cuthbert’s work on designing cities - great stuff). By using ‘brand’ I am now able to capture ‘place’ as a commodity and therefore better articulate this in terms of capital (all types) and in terms of investment and development. Underpinning all this therefore is the adoption of strategic design as a process by which we shift from planning to urban (brand) strategy (see Martin Kornberger’s paper on *Governing the City* –from planning to urban strategy Theory, Culture & Society 2012).

NS: I would think that this attempt to demystify and control process would attract a lot of powerful opposition?

IK: Yes, sometimes. I think my main challenge is to current norms around urban governance:

1. I’m advocating that government shift from ‘dictating’ to ‘enabling’, from ‘servicing’ to ‘strengthening’ and adopt a business model where we ‘build’ society rather than build in



spite of it. For example, innovating the business of urban development so that it prioritises commercial investment in ‘activity’ above ‘property’, has caused traditional observers of urban renewal (determinists) to scoff. Apart from my stand that the property developer’s business case is wholly inadequate to lead the making of cities, it removes certainty for property developers and re-assigns it to developers of business/ activity (productive conditions).

2. Prioritising strategic design process over statutory processes challenges great swathes of local and state government business. The former binds politicians to their community whereas the latter binds politicians to the local government organisation. The problem is that sooner or later a politician always seeks affirmation from its constituents - the question we need to ask ourselves is whether it’s because of us or in spite of us?

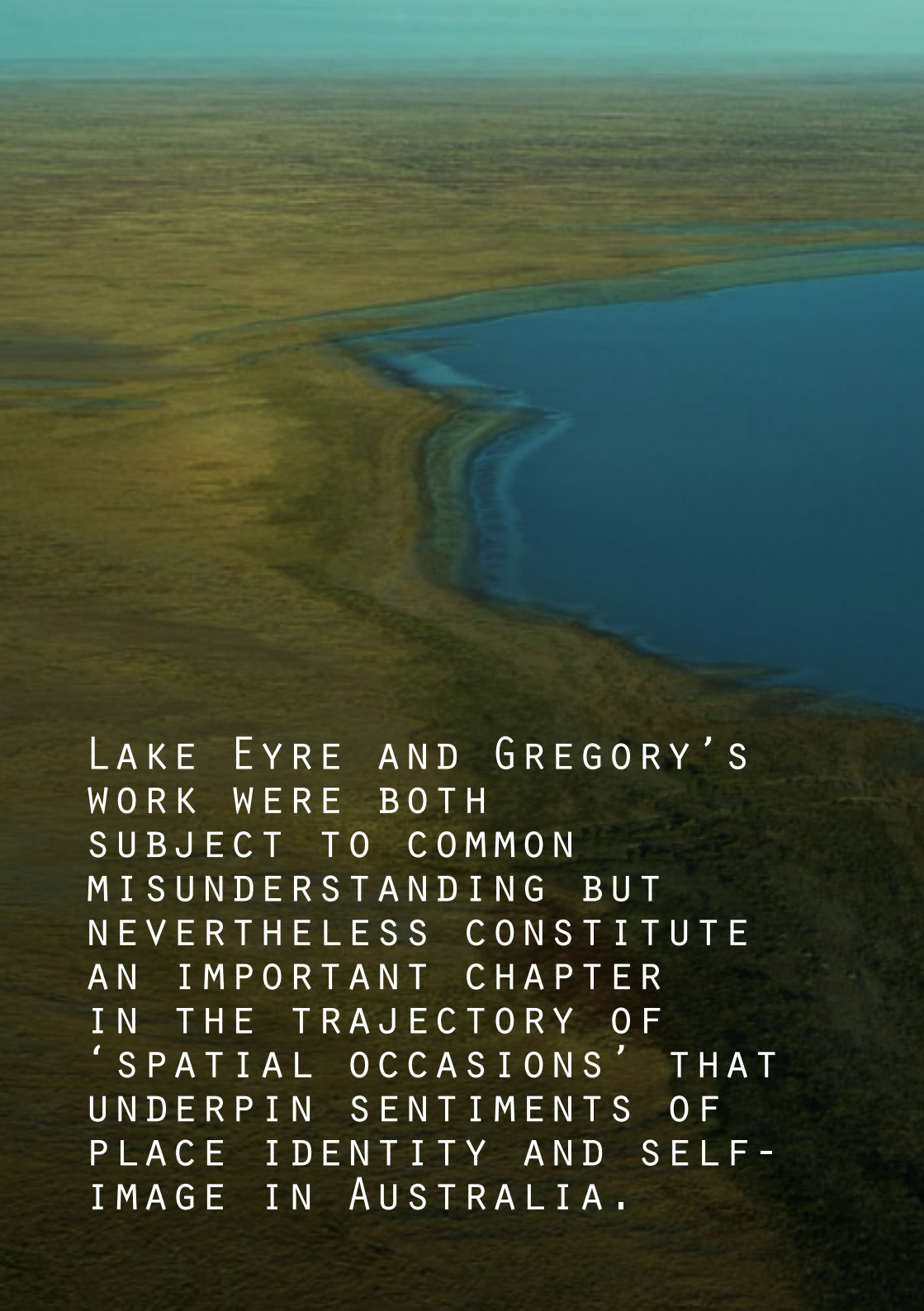
NS : I love the way your work suggests a recalibration of the current function of city development from generating wealth for a select few to increasing the quality of life for the broader public. ‘The simplicity on the other side of complexity’...

IK : The difference it makes to quality of life lies in the value that people get by being involved rather than being dictated to.

Wealth generation is still critical though, but the notion of wealth is important here. It’s not just financial capital which dominates. Wealth is understood as all manner of value and as such can be explained in terms of how this value is generated. A City’s fundamental reason

for existing is economic. It is also critical to note that ‘economic’ refers to a type of social behaviour. It is not something other to the social. To correct the balance so that economic activity sustains, rather than exploits, we must employ local ‘spatial investment and development programs’ to enable the re-production and re-accumulation of value in a way that prioritises the health of our planet and our society, and gives greater legitimacy to the intervention of local government in the generation of wealth. In this context I believe a mechanism like ‘brand’ provides a useful platform for telling a story about ourselves, the story we tell is up to us. It can be as complex or as reductive as we wish.

Design is political otherwise it’s just building. This means we’re engaged in a political process whereby we’re building society not building in-spite of it, a process in which our primary task is to ensure our cities are a projection of why we’re here and where we’re going rather than a promotional image of who we’d like to be. Therefore when we talk about innovating our cities we’re not talking about how it exists but rather, why it exists (for examples you could look to any failed development which speculates on a favourable response from the public. Things like cultural venues which close down after 12 months because the venue reflects the type of society that government wants to see rather than the type of society exists. That said, to see a different society means that the initial investment must be in establishing the capacity in that society to change and become the patrons of that venue in the future. Deterministic strategies fail more often than not. Time to reverse.)



LAKE EYRE AND GREGORY'S
WORK WERE BOTH
SUBJECT TO COMMON
MISUNDERSTANDING BUT
NEVERTHELESS CONSTITUTE
AN IMPORTANT CHAPTER
IN THE TRAJECTORY OF
'SPATIAL OCCASIONS' THAT
UNDERPIN SENTIMENTS OF
PLACE IDENTITY AND SELF-
IMAGE IN AUSTRALIA.

SPATIAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEAD HEART OF AUSTRALIA

BY MARK LEONG

“...the Bibliography of Lake Eyre is incomplete”¹

IN 1906 English geologist John Walter Gregory published a book that would contribute to the lexicon of Australian spatiality. *The Dead Heart of Australia* is a profile of Lake Eyre, a confronting and perplexing ‘region of magic’ located in arid central Australia and northern South Australia. Lake Eyre and Gregory’s work were both subject to common misunderstanding but nevertheless constitute an important chapter in the trajectory of ‘spatial occasions’² that underpin sentiments of place identity and self-image in Australia.

To Gregory – a professor of geology at Melbourne University – Lake Eyre was of ‘especial importance in the natural science of Australia’.³ A class field trip in the summer of 1901-1902 led him to the region, forming the basis of his research. The resulting book however is more than just scientific in constitution. It reads somewhat like a treatise on the Australian landscape with Lake Eyre as the central case study. Personal reflections are interwoven with history, myth and aesthetics. Generous accounts of local aboriginal perspectives are provisioned. Gregory also addresses the lasting ethical issues concerning the nationalistic movement of engineers, hydrologists, technocrats and later, industrialists who would forever transform the national relationship to country.

Despite the extent of his effort, the national significance of Gregory’s work remains more recognised for a catchphrase lifted from its title rather than the book’s actual content. ‘Dead

heart’ thus became popularly tied to a gloomy national discourse on Lake Eyre. The morbid description proposed a ‘bleak idea’⁴ for country. However this bleakness did not originate from Gregory. Dead heart simply identified the existing sentiment of an early Australia provisionally at odds with its sense of place.

1 NARRATIVES OF ANTICIPATION

Since Edward John Eyre’s disappointing encounter in 1840, the primarily dry and temporal ‘lake’ has occupied Australia’s geographic centre as a non-iconic, featureless saltpan. He described the site – part of Australia’s largest endorheic basin, and lowest point at 15 metres below sea level – as a ‘poisoned’ land, ‘miserable’ and melancholic to the eye and mind. Furthermore, write the accounts of early inland explorers, Lake Eyre represented the failure of a national dream that rested upon the discovery of fertile inland waters. Lake Eyre contested the imperative of European ‘civilization’ which was tied to the myth of an inland sea promised at/ as the ‘heart’ of a dry, expansive continent.

‘Dead heart’ references two aspects of the Australian collective conscience surrounding 19th Century inland exploration: the anticipation of the interior, and the disappointment that followed.

Firstly are matters of the heart. Early nationalism commonly used spatial-geographic and psychological-emotional metaphors to speculate the continent’s interior prior to exploration. This national search for heart is idealised in Thomas J Maslen’s 1827 fictional map⁵, depicting a heart-

shaped inland sea in the centre of the continent, connected to the coasts by vein-like waterways; a land existing in the mind prior to geography. The desert is affirmed as a space of the imagination. Early inland explorers exploited these spatial metaphors, living out popular curiosity by hurling themselves towards the expansive interior in pursuit of the mythologised inland sea.

Their journals describe an antipodean nation – conceived at the end of the known world – and becoming increasingly concerned with a discourse of its centre. Explorers such as Captain Charles Sturt proclaimed to “lift up or tear down” the ‘veil’ or ‘curtain’ of mystery that hid the country’s interior-heart.⁶

The search for heart was a search for the sense of belonging in an unknown country; a search for being-at-the-end-of-the-world.

The second aspect to understanding ‘dead heart’ are the disappointed outcomes of inland exploration, amounting to descriptions of a heart that is dead. The phrase would canonise Lake Eyre, associating it with the heartbreak of early inland explorers’ heroic failure to find water. After all the anticipation Lake Eyre was a place of disbelief, perceptually incomprehensible by Europeans for its expansive flatness, dryness, monotony and heat. It was an unreal space, a repository for tales of hardship, delirium, deprivation and existential disorientation.

‘Dead heart’ as a nationalistic term was therefore a unique pairing of romantic and apocalyptic imagery placed upon the Australian landscape. On arrival in Lake Eyre, Edward J Eyre provided such an example. Unable to make sense of this new experience he is reduced to a diminished human figure within an overbearing expanse:

“The whole scene partook more of enchantment than reality, and as the eye wandered over the smooth and unbroken crust of pure white salt which glazed the basin of the lake, and which was lit up by the dazzling rays of a noonday sun, the effect was glittering,

and brilliant beyond conception...”⁷

This was not a moment of exaltation. Eyre’s perceptual delirium was a conflict between his internal gaze and the external reality faced. Accompanied by an existential angst he makes an account of the Australian sublime⁸:

“Beyond these few facts, all was uncertainty and conjecture in this region of magic.”⁹

Eyre concluded this unknown country as unknowable, the mystery of Australia’s interior further deepened. Alienated, he must have sensed the sky crashing into a “worldless, lostness” feeling of ‘the cosmos itself going into general decline.’¹⁰ The emotional divergence of the eye and mind left Lake Eyre as a ‘region of magic’. Its ‘uncertainty’ and ‘conjecture’ remained – as Maslen’s map originally illustrated – a space of the imagination.

‘Dead heart’ imagery echoed throughout Australian society as a melancholy that put European settlement at odds with a land associated with death, destitution, disorientation and disappointment. Gregory acknowledges this necronationalism¹¹ but contests the status quo as grounds for a future national identity. *The Dead Heart of Australia* is a response to, and a critique of the ‘dead heart’ sentiment, problematising and reconsidering it from multiple angles of science, myth, ethnology, ethics and aesthetics. For this, it provides fertile cultural content for a spatial re-reading of country and place.

2 NARRATIVES OF RUIN

Stories of Lake Eyre variously recall it as a ruin, perpetually at a space at the end of the world. Here the apocalypse – a romantic temptation in itself – is never far. The motives of inland exploration were in anticipation of what Paul Carter described as an ‘Edenic moment’¹² contextualised by a foundation of 18th Century aesthetics¹³ combined with the myopic betrayal that was Australia: Terra Nullius.

Sturt’s experience however resembled an

expulsion from the paradise image. His failed search for the inland sea disappointingly concluded Lake Eyre a dry seabed; remnants of an ancient ocean once submerging much of the continent. He had indeed reached the hypothesised inland sea, but 245 million years too late. Dreams of a fertile centre and metaphors of a national heart were left in ruin as the spectral remains of paradise.

Furthermore, the abandonment of Sturt's whaleboat – peculiar and tedious to carry into the desert – add to this ruin. To Sturt the boat symbolised a specific image for exploration and spatial expansion, a flagship of the British Empire:

“I am to deliver to you this flag... It has floated over every shore of the known world... You have to carry it to the centre of a mighty continent, there to leave it as a sign to the savage that the footsteps of civilized man has penetrated so far.”¹⁴

Sturt's inland expeditions embodied this sentiment but eventually were deemed failures. Firstly, failure to find the inland sea was also a failure of the boat-flag to assert European 'civilisation' over the land's natural order. He concluded to the Colonial Office that any further exploration of the central desert would only 'end in disappointment'.¹⁵ Secondly is the failure of the elemental roof symbolism associated with the boat. The upturned boat at rest is often recalled in folklore as a primordial architectural space, marking a transformation from oceanic travel to ancestral house. But in Sturt's narrative this is lost in ruin. The roof space as a basic unit of shelter and dwelling, destination and human fraternity was treated by Sturt as a space of abandonment and destitution.

This evokes an image of failed 'civilisation' and a failed architectural metaphor. Dead heart would be a reminder of the struggle to occupy a continent whose 'heart' remained deemed as unfavourable for dwelling.

On the topic of Edenic moments and paradise

lost, Gregory recalls a counter-perspective on 'dead heart'. The opening chapter recites an aboriginal dreamtime story told by Dieri, of the eastern Lakes Kopperamanna and Killalpaninna.¹⁶ It recalls the origins of Lake Eyre as once fertile pastures resembling paradise. Its present expansive, harsh characteristics are born out of a dramatic moment in which the area collapses into aridity. It is through and through an apocalyptic tale.

The story outlines an architectonic cosmic structure; giant pillar-like gumtrees supporting an inhabitable, dense, cloudy vaulted sky. This 'cloud', embodying elements of sky, roof and land, rained onto fertile plains below and provided shade from the sun above. Upon the unexplained collapse of the primordial pillars, the lower regions become exposed to a "brazen sky", and the vegetation turned to "thin scrub" marking an age of desiccation. The mythical beasts 'Kadimakara' or 'Kadimerkera' – who once inhabited the upper space only to come down for grazing – were left to roam the lower marshes of Lake Eyre until perishing.¹⁷

Where Sturt's abandoned whaleboat recalls the failed architectural metaphor, this dreamtime story presents the metaphor of failed architecture. It describes a land at the end of the world, in the image of a ruined building.

This ruin is not futile. It describes a reorganisation of the world, an articulation of order arising from collapse. It is a tale of human space coming into being. The sky falls, displaced and transformed into land. Exposed and dry to the sun, it continues to provide water below like a cloud. This accounts for an understanding of Lake Eyre at the centre of a larger Great Artesian Basin¹⁸, draining both surface and subterranean water from all over the immense continent. This story unlocks a secret of human existence and subsistence in the region – Lake Eyre as the tip of an underground 'inland sea' – reaffirming the impossibility of Sturt's dreams to sail his boat on inland waters.

As for the sky that remains, today it is known as 'Puri Wilpanina', or literally "Great Hole"¹⁹. If the

sky is open to infinity then the space of human dwelling necessitates reinstating the cosmic roof as an existential boundary and architectural element for shade, shelter and gathering.²⁰

In this context Gregory poetically considers the possibilities of dwelling in country. With a nod to John Ruskin's aesthetics²¹ he describes the sky as a source of learning and curiosity. It is a communicative enclosure for self-reflection, calling upon an inner touch that evokes the sense of sensing as an exercise in consciousness. Suspended between two endlessly reflecting skies, it is unclear whether his vision is turned up or downward:

"Certainly one of the main charms of the desert is the sky. Never does it look so solid, nor feel so close. Nowhere else do we feel so sceptical of astronomical distances; for as the night wears on the sky seems to creep down closer, until it appears almost within touching distance, and to have wrapt the earth in a celestial peace."²²

Gregory portrayed the region of Lake Eyre not in morbid terms, but as a lively region, rich in natural phenomena and culture. He entered Lake Eyre as a scientist, and in pursuit of the fossilised Kadimakara²³ he also anticipated a 'region of magic'.

3 NARRATIVES OF THE FUTURE

The chapter entitled *The Dead Heart of Australia* describes the geological story of Lake Eyre in varying incarnations of the inland sea. Here Gregory also recalls an 'Edenic moment' describing a "vast inland sea" at least three times the size of the current lake bed, and home to vigorous biodiversity now unknown to the region.²⁴ The Pleistocene era to follow would bring about a combination of climatic and geological change, reducing rainfall and sealing water outlets. The evaporation and debris build up would leave the salt water concentration too high for the "once the living heart of Australia"²⁵. Ruskin's apocalyptic musings come to mind:

"Is this, therefore, the earth's prime into which we are born: or is it, with all its beauty, only the wreck of Paradise?"²⁶

Part allegory part science, Gregory's use of dead heart emphasises an intrinsic value of a land latent with fertility. With similar obscurity as the ancient artesian water below, he points out the region to possess "soil of exceptional richness, an invigorating, bracing atmosphere, and a climate free from malaria... Given but water, that country would be as fertile as a garden... it would be an Eden."²⁷ To Gregory paradise in the Lake Eyre region is a given quality, dormant on first appearance, but nevertheless still present, anticipating and awaiting.

If 'dead heart' is not only a spatial metaphor but an anthropomorphic reflection, the question now begs, whose heart? For Gregory 'dead heart' stood at a crossroad in a discourse on Australia's centre. It has helped to identify the spatial aporia of alienation that condemns the central deserts – with regrettable consequences – as unknowable and peripheral. It has helped describe a condition akin to a lost soul or broken heart.

Gregory then moves beyond the dead heart, revisiting the journey back into Australia's elusive centre – the expanse where lost heroes once set themselves on the wrong way in the right direction.

Even a worldview of expansion would leave us unprepared for an expansion of worldview. With self-reflection Gregory consults the sky-country again to summon the space of dwelling and the architectural imperative – to 'bring near what is far.'²⁸ He contemplates human orientation within the spatial ambiguity that early explorers deemed dangerous and wrong:

"Feeling so close to the stars, and so intimate with them, enjoying the glory of the solitude and silence, even the idea of death in the desert loses its horrors."²⁹

In a 'region of magic' resurrection is possible, real and true: a flood for every fifty years; a land-cloud that rains underground; an invisible subterranean sea; an endless mirrored skyway; a hidden awaiting paradise. The resurrection of a dead heart is akin to recovery from heartbreak,

something of a little death, equal parts a search for the world and search for a heart of hearts:

“...the desert is an appeal to the imagination, an impulse from “the soul that is not man’s soul”³⁰

This appeal towards spatial expansion, of contemplating and transgressing distance, is tied to the internal problem of consciousness, amounting to an ‘impulse’ that will not diminish. German philosopher O F Bollnow describes this psycho-spatial human condition by pairing the excitement of the “immeasurability of space” with the anxiety of an “immeasurability of the soul”.³¹

If this is true then man’s final frontier is ultimately inward – the soul as a spatial condition, an internal horizon, always sensible, always present, always distant, but always coming closer.

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- 8 For the time period, it is possible that early inland explorers of the 19th Century could have drawn aesthetic influence from Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1757.
- 9 Edward John Eyre, *Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia...*
- 10 Otto Fredrich Bollnow, *Human Space*, p223
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- 12 Paul Carter, *Living in a New Country: History, Travelling and Language*, p88.
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- 17 This myth is condensed, summarised from a retelling by John Walter Gregory, *The Dead Heart of Australia*, p3
- 18 The Great Artesian Basin is the world’s largest internal basin and only reliable source of freshwater to inland Australia.
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- 22 John Walter Gregory, *The Dead Heart of Australia*, p161-162
- 23 Provisionally hypothesised as ancient crocodile or diprotodon. John Walter Gregory, *The Dead Heart of Australia*, p231
- 24 John Walter Gregory, *The Dead Heart of Australia*, p150. He describes giant kangaroos, giant wombats, wallabies, bandicoots, marsupial rats, crocodiles, ceratodus, and huge bony fish, “all of which have long since disappeared...”
- 25 John Walter Gregory, *The Dead Heart of Australia*, p145
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CITIZEN PAIN REDUX

INTERVIEW WITH GERALD MELLING

Despite a quantitatively modest body of work, Wellington architect and architectural critic Gerald Melling has had a remarkable presence in New Zealand's architectural field since his immigration from England in 1972. Admittedly it is not difficult to stand out from such an obsequious crowd, but Melling's work is deservedly renowned for its uncommon unity of both charisma and veracity; a unity that was as evident in his notorious Citizen Pain speech or abrasive writing for the National Business Review as it is in the fastidious buildings he now produces with maverick accomplice Allan Morse (a body of work that is notable for its refusal to shirk ethical conversation).

Suffice to say, Melling is not short of a scandalous story. He volunteered his resignation as editor of New Zealand Architect because an architectural practice sued the magazine for defamation due to strong editorial criticism of its work (Melling used the word 'hideous' to describe the near-unarguably hideous Control Data Building in Wellington) and the NZIA decided it had little option but to issue an apology. Melling also resigned as a government architect after being told by the then Minister of Education that his affordable but ingenious designs for public schools were essentially 'too ingenious', and were attracting negative political attention by creating a misperception of unnecessary expense.

There are many other tales, and by the end of the decade Melling had such a reputation for architectural infamy that an invitation to present a closing commentary to the 1989 NZIA

bi-ennial Conference (professional gatherings as notable for their diplomacy as Melling is not) must have been entirely unexpected. As with Stephen Colbert's improbable roasting of George W Bush (after which amateur lip reading evidence strongly suggests First Lady Laura Bush thanked the caustic satirist with an audaciously public 'fuck you'), the general arc was initial audience titters dissolving into breathless silence.

I quizzed Gerald about Citizen Pain and architectural criticism by email:

NS : Can you explain where the idea for the infamous Citizen Pain came from?

GM : It came via the 1989 NZIA Conference Identikit Cities and Victoria University Press's Wellington Buildings guidebook (ed. David Kernohan). The latter was launched in time for the former. The Matey Eighties was all about Developers, Politicians, and Architects giving each other High Fives (leaving the grateful Citizen to admire a brand new city of High Dives). In Wellington, think Michael Fowler (Mayor), Chase Corporation (Developer), and Meddle Warp & Fuckwit as your favourite architect...

At the time I was architecture correspondent for the National Business Review (whose readership was architects' corporate clients), and in order to counterbalance the impending propaganda from both the Conference and the VUP book, I decided to collect these critical pieces and publish them under the title of

BY THE TIME I'D FINISHED, THE STONY SILENCE WAS NOT THE SOUND THAT SIMON AND GARFUNKEL ROMANTICIZED ABOUT.

Mid-City Crisis & other Stories. This was the birth of Thumbprint Press. In the middle of the night before the Conference, a select band of architecture students plastered the Wellington Town Hall environs (the Conference venue) with large posters extolling the virtues of this alternative point of view (they were gone by morning, ripped off the walls by zealous Conference vigilantes). The same good students then hustled the book on the steps of the Town Hall, as conference delegates arrived full of hearty hotel breakfast.

This was the context, then, to a phone call I received from the organisers on the first day of the Conference asking if I would act as Commentator on the imported lectures (the designated person for this task was unable to perform it, I was told). Though enormously surprised by this naive invitation, I gleefully accepted.

NS : How did the event unfold?

GM : The keynote speaker was supposed to be Peter Eisenman, but the great man failed to show. Apparently, he arrived in Los Angeles to discover he'd been booked on a flight to New Zealand in Cattle Class, so he promptly returned to New York in a huff. Delighted by this turn of events, I decided I wouldn't show up either, so - in appropriately thin disguise (a floppy woollen hat) - I announced myself to the audience as Citizen Pain, a last-minute ring-in for Gerald Melling who (a bit like Eisenman) had been disappointed to discover inadequate bookings for the tram down Willis Street,

so had slunk back home up the Aro Valley... I delivered my commentary on the last day of the event, in front of what seemed a full house. Having dutifully absorbed the offering of the various Starchitects, I scribbled my text down in a Cuba Street coffee-cum-muffin shop in the early afternoon, fully aware by then that the invited overseas guests would all be trapped on stage behind me, sitting in an obedient row on hard wooden chairs...

NS : How did it go?

GM : Initially, my developing diatribe produced a few muffled titters and the odd guffaw - in the middle of it, however, I heard a sibilant hissing from the then President of the NZIA (seated just below me in the front row of seats, and being physically restrained by a senior member of the same institution from some sort of spontaneous assault on my Good Citizenship) to "get off the stage, immediately!" By the time I'd finished, the stony silence was not the sound that Simon and Garfunkel romanticized about.

NS : The speech itself is quite light hearted actually, and in evoking Citizen Pain you also make fun of yourself. Why do architects take themselves so seriously?

GM : The mere fact that they take themselves so seriously is seriously comic. As John Cleese famously said, this parrot is deceased! But despite all the posturing and wanking, the architectural profession suffers from low self-esteem. Those architects who describe themselves as mere 'instruments of their clients'

PROFESSIONALISM BADLY NEEDS RE- DEFINITION, SO THAT CRITICISM IS NO LONGER ABOUT STEPPING ON PROFESSIONAL TOES, BUT SOMETHING WORTH SERIOUSLY THINKING ABOUT.

are simply passing the buck when they know they have failed. Architects who are serious about their work – rather than themselves - are prepared to face, and listen to, the music.

So it's the work that needs to be taken seriously. Until it is, learning will be difficult. Professionalism badly needs re-definition, so that criticism is no longer about stepping on professional toes, but something worth seriously thinking about.

NS : What was your experience writing for National Business Review like? What kind of response did you get?

GM : My brief was to write a column which would generate letters to the editor - if nothing else, it succeeded in that! So I was often 'publicly' pilloried by both architects and non-architects. But I had learned from my earlier stint as editor of New Zealand Architect that those who approve of - or even enjoy - criticism remain publicly silent. In private, architects are far more frank in their opinions about the work of other architects - this is legend amongst architects' clients - but not (sadly) self-critical. It's fair to say, however, that resistance to energetic public criticism is not restricted to architects, but is an attitude endemic across all the Arts.

NS : You are in the unique (and maybe challenging) position of being both a respected critic and architect. What constitutes useful criticism in your eyes?

GM : All criticism is potentially useful. The degree to which any criticism can be deemed

constructive is entirely dependent on how it is received. Architects crave to be talked about, but do not want their work to be criticised! It's madness.

NS : What would a Citizen Pain for contemporary times have to say about architecture? Would he still be relevant?

GM : Much the same. And, yes, with just as much relevance.

Gerald Mellings latest book 'Tsunami Box' is available on the Project Freerange website.

WELLINGTON
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PAIN

CITIZEN PAIN



One of the more controversial speakers at last year's NZIA Conference was Citizen Pain, otherwise known as Wellington architect Gerald Melling. While his witty and at times, caustic comments may have offended some, the veracity of Melling's message cannot be ignored.

A One-Act Architectural Drama (Designed to Create a Scene)

The stage is the Auditorium of the Michael Fowler Centre in Wellington. It is late afternoon, Saturday, August 12, 1989. The occasion is the 1989 New Zealand Institute of Architects Biennial Conference, which has — for the past two days — been dramatising the urban dilemma under an umbrella theme of "Idealist Cities — Wellington and the Wider World".

The imported celebrities — their performances now complete — sit obediently on a neat row of chairs facing the audience, front centre stage — Lars Lemp from California (a last-minute replacement for New York's Peter Eisenman who suffered stage-fright at the prospect of Business Class air travel); Ronaldo Guargola, author of the Canberra Parliament; Piers Gough of London; John Denton of Melbourne; and Eugene Kahn of New York.

It is time for commentary. A local architect (Gerald Melling) enters, stage right . . .

Ladies and Gentlemen . . . I have an apology to make. Gerald Melling decided not to come here today. He missed his trolley-bus connection at the bottom of Aro Street, and all they could offer for the rest of the journey was an old bicycle . . . So he went back home in a huff.

This is what can happen when you use America as a role model.

Melling also felt that this conference might benefit more from a critical representation of another kind. So he sent me instead. (Does a woken hat) I'd better explain . . .

When he was invited to be a commentator here, Melling panicked. He immediately called on as many Wellington people as he could find in the time available, and brought them all together. Not necessarily, you understand. Just their voices. And they all had a quick conference of their own.

The result is that debilitating, vociferous, carking and altogether injured encounter . . . is that I am the vehicle for all those voices.

They gave me a name as well as a hat. With all due apologies to Orson Welles, I'm to be known as Citizen Pain.

Now there's no mild headache, let me assure you — come straight to this intelligent hat from the sullied streets of Wellington, battered and bruised in both mind and body, disoriented, disaffected, and suffering from serious loss of memory.

In short, I'm in agony.

Citizen Pain, ladies and gentlemen, is no joke . . . I wuz! (grimaces, holds neck) Ouch . . . I Another tile must have fallen off Mabel's House . . .

You'll forgive me, I'm sure, if I pause occasionally to listen to what all these voices are trying to tell me, all at once. Just as I must monitor your performance, and the performances of your guests, so are the voices monitoring my ability to communicate their concerns to you.

You could say I have a serious identity crisis which — in the circumstances — is

not inappropriate. At least we will understand each other.

But I must — at all costs — listen . . . The ability to listen, the voices tell me (and I hear them) is paramount.

Mind you, the voices themselves are as gaily as anyone in this regard. They've been so busy clamouring for attention inside my head whilst all this has been going on, that they've not listened as hard, or as well, as they might have. In fact, I have to say that some of these voices are just as opinionated and self-serving as some of you are . . .

But that's pluralism for you.

So . . . who are all these voices? Who do they belong to?

Well, there's a cab-driver who thought he was going colour blind until somebody told him that the Plaza International really was just black and white; there's a glue-sniffing street kid who thought he'd finally done it to himself when he came face-to-face with Miles Warren's Leggo mino-piece in Boulcott Street — he swears he'll never touch the stuff again . . . ; there's a scrip clerk who can't stop standing to attention and saluting every time the BNZ Centre lift announces the floor numbers in a thick, Mid-West American accent; there's a carpenter who claims to have worked on this building and is actually proud of it . . . he was quickly shouted down, I'm afraid, by all the other voices . . .

There's the parking-building attendant who sits all day in his gloomy basement cubicle with the cars stacked high above him enjoying some of the best harbour views in the city — he's having trouble with his valves; there are a couple of small business people whose premises have been superceded by mud-floored casual car-hots littered with abandoned bottles, cigarette packets, old newspapers and discarded copies of *Architecture New Zealand*; there's an old bag lady still wandering around town trying to find the Terminus Hotel; and there's the woman from Wadestown who equates what's happened in the city with someone breaking into her house and replacing all her favourite, comfortable furniture with that nasty, hard-edged, vulgar, fast post modern stuff . . . And all done while she slept . . .

There's even an architectural draughtsman in here somewhere, poor sod. In his time, he's been shunted from Stephenson and Turner to Wansen & Mahoney to Morrison Cooper to Craig Craig & Moller to the Houghton Partnership to Ashfield Architects and goodness knows where else . . . He's really confused. He's almost unemployable now, every time he lifts a pencil, his hand shakes in terrible suspense . . .

There's a typist and a telephonist, a painter and a plumber, a doctor and a

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STILLS FROM THE SHORT FILM 'WILD NIPPLE' (2012) BY MARWAN NAHLE,
FEATURING ZANA WRIGHT (IN GREY COTTONTAILS AND ALPINE BOOTS).
SHOT IN LEBANON INSIDE THE 5KM SECURITY ZONE ALONG THE UN 2000
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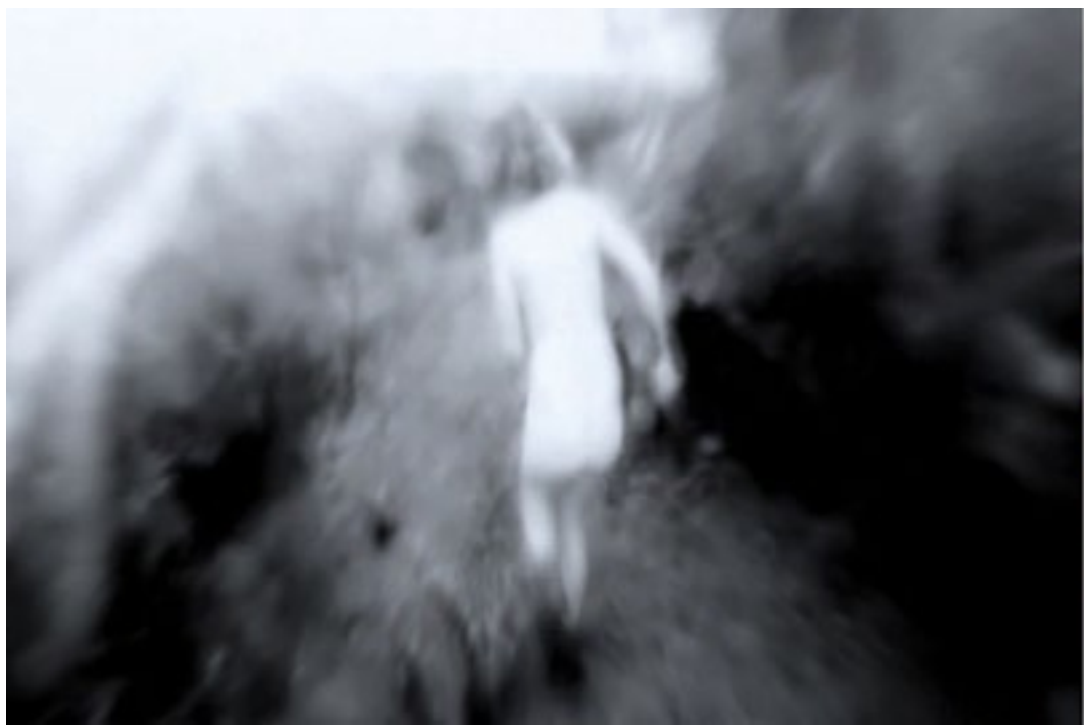
LEADERS OF THE BLIND



R/
PHOTOS BY ZANA WRIGHT.
SHOT IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS AROUND LEBANON, MARCH 2012.



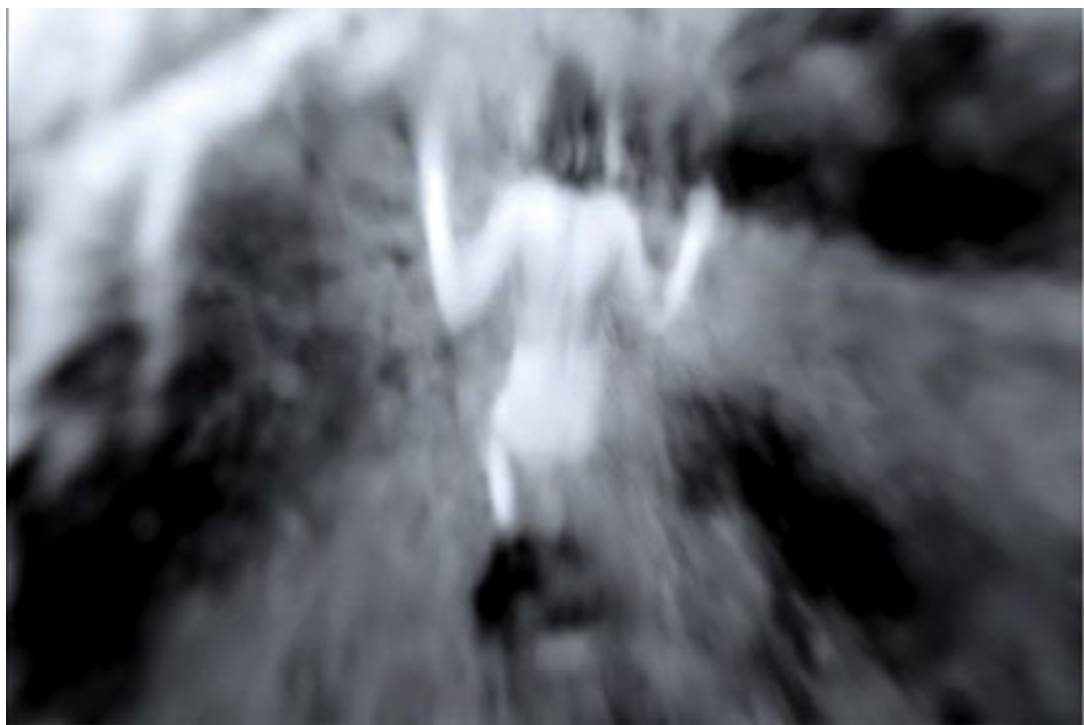




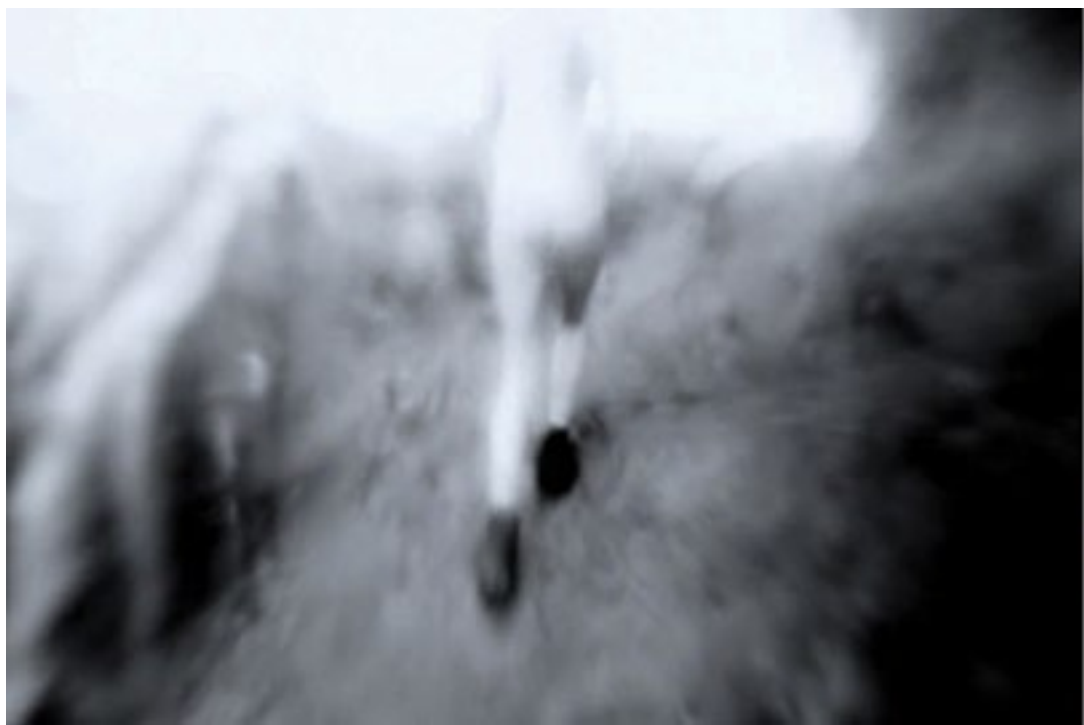
















BACK TO THE FUTURE -THE RISE AND FALL OF ANTIBIOTICS.

BY DR WIN BENNETT

IT is less than a hundred years since Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin and seventy years since wartime needs and American manufacturing expertise made penicillin and later other antibiotic widely available. What was scarce and expensive became cheap.

The impact on medicine was not just to provide life saving treatment for infections previously untreatable - wounds, pneumonias, syphilis and gonorrhoea but allowed a whole range of new activities – new operations, transplantation, and chemotherapy for example with the knowledge that any infections occurring as a result of the treatment could be in turn treated and managed. Even more importantly it brought a brash confidence that transformed how we think about medicine – anything seemed possible.

Now we are threatened with a future in which antibiotics are not available because of strains of bacteria that are resistant to not just one drug, but to multiple drugs at once. A recent Lancet article heralded the discovery of bacteria in India and Pakistan that are resistant to all known antibiotics and has led some to predict that the antibiotic era may be soon over.

What has gone wrong? Cheap and readily available antibiotics were always a devils pact. Background resistance was observed very early on in the antibiotic story and think of this - bacteria the target of antibiotics, make up 50% of life on the planet, they are very old and they multiply very quickly (a new generation in 20min rather than 20 years for humans).

So we are dealing with a huge bioactive mass with potential to evolve and change quickly. Further, bacteria have developed the capacity to spread resistance, not just by inheritance but by horizontal sharing of resistance containing DNA, and our bowels coated with closely packed bacteria (there are ten times as many bacteria in our bowels as cells in the body all holding hands as it were), are a great environment for transfer of that resistance to occur.

What are the drivers of resistance – availability, overconfidence and sloppy thinking has led to overuse. Unfinished courses allow selection for resistant strains. Antibiotic are used in feedstock in industrial agriculture. Modern travel means resistant strains quickly spread around the world. Modern hospitals, full of sick patients, many with their immune systems compromised, act as reservoirs for drug resistant bacteria. Ironically, and unsurprisingly, the same pharmaceutical companies that drove development and widespread use of antibiotics are now reluctant to spend billions on developing new antibiotics only to see the investment wasted by rapidly developing resistance.

What can be done? - regulation, restriction on use, careful husbandry of what we have left may help us prolongs the usefulness of antibiotics. What can you do? - if offered antibiotic ask whether they are necessary, take the full course, don't keep antibiotics at home for next time. Support regulation of commercial antibiotic use and regulation of prescribing. We need to change our way of thinking about antibiotics and see them as an important gift to be nurtured and protected.



FREERANGER
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We would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the future Australian Prime Minister for his imminent contribution to popular culture, to get in while he is still a little bit underground and show we are not bandwagoners, but genuine cultural explorers here at FR. Whilst we know the last laugh will be on us, the prospective "Decider" has been revealing a talent for clumsily (or slyly, your call) insulting minority groups that is, at the very least, uncomfortably entertaining. He's unfortunately a little too silver-tongued to ape like-minded idiot savant and meme producing tour de force George W, and therefore is unlikely to ever acknowledge "how hard it is for you to put food on your family" or take the opportunity to explain the value of life to "children living in, you know, the Dark Dungeons of the Internet". Nevertheless his carefully planted seeds are beginning to germinate into forms that tenderly suggest the mean little fruit they will bear once he takes power.

Abbott's most recent claim to mainstream success was this little poison-plant about the mostly Muslim and very clearly desperate people trying to enter Australia via treacherous seaward journeys:

"I don't think it's a very Christian thing to come in by the back door rather than the front door. I think the people we accept should be coming the right way and not the wrong way. If you pay a people smuggler, if you jump the queue, if you take yourself and your family on a leaky boat, that's doing the wrong thing, not the right thing, and we shouldn't encourage it."

As flagrantly un-Christian as that display of chicanery may have been, it was not without significant hostile precedent. Speaking about a man dying from asbestosis who presented a petition for better care to government:

"It was a stunt. I know Bernie is very sick, but just because a person is sick doesn't necessarily mean that he is pure of heart in all things."

And in response to the inevitable public outrage this caused:

"Bernie is a sick man and obviously he has the moral high ground. Obviously I shouldn't have been as dismissive as I was."

Not an apology as such, but a surprisingly cocksure public statement about morality. Up next, maternity leave:

"Compulsory paid maternity leave? Over this Government's dead body, frankly."

He has actually completely changed his mind on that by the way, but don't think that means women are getting off lightly:

"What the housewives of Australia need to understand as they do the ironing is that if they get it done commercially it's going to go up in price, and their own power bills when they switch the iron on, are going to go up."

Apparently this was meant as criticism of the Gillard government's new emissions trading scheme (a pollution tax that the government states is not a tax), but it also succinctly

describes his own proposed carbon tax:

“If you want to put a price on carbon why not just do it with a simple tax. Why not ask motorists to pay more? Why not ask electricity consumers to pay more?”

OK, so he doesn't really have a stone cold position on many things. But what about that archaic little bit about the ironing, and the outcry that caused:

“It's just people being hypersensitive. But I think in many households it is still much more common to see the woman of the house with an iron in her hand.”

Naturally this also caused some offence, but don't go thinking Abbott's not down with the ladies:

“I just want to make it clear I have never told an inappropriate joke, I've never pinched a woman on the backside and I never make inappropriate gestures to women.”

Phew! And how do you “feel” about homosexuals?

“I probably feel a bit threatened, as so many people do. It's a fact of life.”

Again, some vocal upset. The response:

“There is no doubt that (homosexuality) challenges, if you like, orthodox notions of the right order of things.”

And the response to the outcry that caused:

“Yeah, look, it was a poor choice of words. Look, I think blokes of my generation and upbringing do sometimes find these things a bit confronting.”

Which I must admit is a refreshingly honest admission. He was straight forwardly honest, too, when asked about whether he would continue Labour's policy to reduce homelessness:

“No. The poor will always be with us.”

Which is actually a Biblical quote that is considered by many Bible scholars to be on their most frequently misused list, basically a sentence that contradicts the overwhelmingly and unarguably major Biblical message about taking care of the poor. But that is, at least, consistent with our flagrantly un-Christian opening quote and the theme running through all Abbott's frank truths: the savvy 'I don't care what I say as long as the majority of people like it' life philosophy. And, about this, he is also consistent:

“Misleading the ABC is not quite the same as misleading the parliament.”

And, famously, here:

“I know politicians are going to be judged on everything they say, but sometimes, in the heat of discussion, you go a little bit further than you would if it was an absolutely calm, considered, prepared, scripted remark, which is one of the reasons why the statements that need to be taken absolutely as gospel truth is those carefully prepared scripted remarks.”

All this honesty & truth lead former Liberal Party leader and Prime Minister Sir Malcolm Fraser to describe Abbott as “unpredictable” and “dangerous”, basically willing to say or do whatever is necessary to get power, which is pretty much the definition of a tyrant or, in more puerile terms, a “bad boss”, who, unlike the progressive women or homosexuals hyper-sensitively discussed above, mostly do vote Liberal, and about whom Abbott had this to say:

“A bad boss is a little bit like a bad father or a bad husband. Notwithstanding all his or her faults, you find that he tends to do more good than harm.”

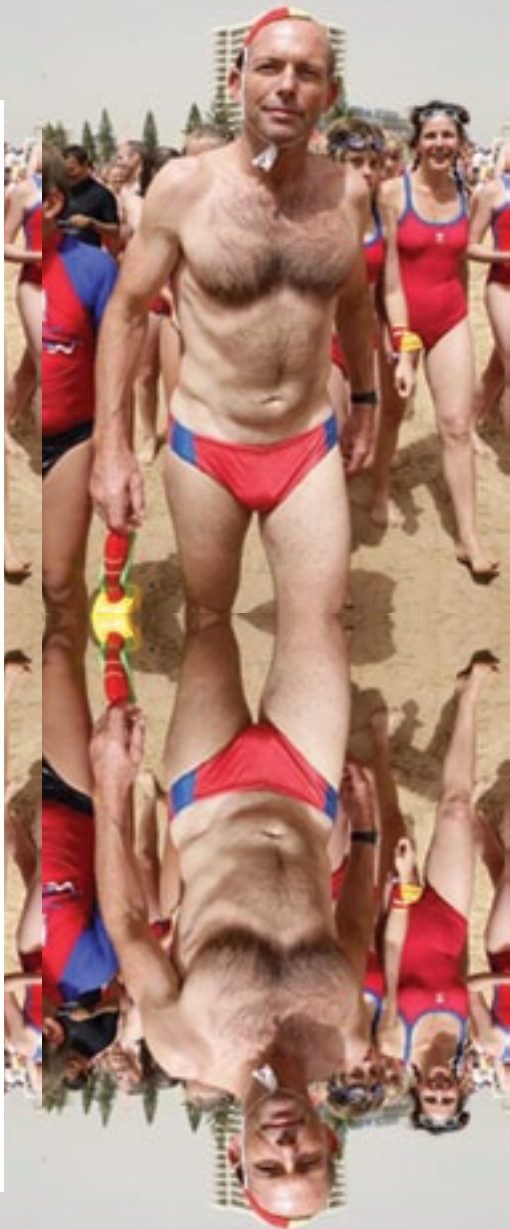
Um.

The point being, this is all suggestive of a juicy type of core psychic fragmentation that manifests as surprising chasms and bridges between what he thinks, what he thinks he

thinks, what he thinks he ought to think and what he actually says or does. The expression of which should see frank Tony transfigured in the unflinching media light into Australia's budgie smuggling Prime Minister Pantsdown. This we predict, unless Jesus, growing tired of all this misrepresentation, intervenes before the big show in November, 2013. A closing quote about Jesus (and, again, immigrants) from the future Prime Minister:

"Jesus knew that there was a place for everything and it's not necessarily everyone's place to come to Australia.

"(But) let's not verbal Jesus, he is not here to defend himself."



BIOS



NICK SARGENT

Originally from Christchurch, Nick is currently living in Sydney and works in teaching and architecture when not being diverted by enthusiasms for cinema and fiction.



IRINA BELOVA

Irina is a graphic designer. She's been spending a lot of time around architects lately, with varying results.

CALEB SMITH

Caleb is quite happy to play the long gag

EMRE OZYETIS

Emre Ozyetis was born in Ankara. Emre works as a research student in a spatial information architecture laboratory.

MARTIN LEWIN

Martin Lewin took a winding road through journalism, graphic design and advertising to one day find himself a communication designer at a global design consultancy based in the UK.

BYRON KINNAIRD

Byron is an artist and writer who lives in Melbourne, Australia. He is a teacher and doctoral candidate of architecture at the University of Melbourne, too.

ANDREA RASSELL

Andrea Russell is a scientist and filmmaker from Melbourne. She is working on the Australian Bionic Eye Project, and completing a Masters of Art at RMIT University. Some of her intellectual passions are visual neuroscience, film and transhumanist philosophies and technologies.

BARNABY BENNETT

Barnaby is Freerange's chief spoon bending egg tamer.

JOHNNY MANZANA

Johnny Manzana splits his time between his estates on Airbnb and Craigslist. When he is not chasing hurricanes, or trussed up in the tropics waiting for the earth to move, he can be found holed up on an A380 with a French mermaid and a bowl of fruit

MARK LEONG

Mark practices at a design-build architecture studio based in Sydney and is a studio instructor and researcher at Victoria University in Wellington (NZ). He has a particular interest in developing new methodologies for spatial practice, incorporating field recordings, architectural ethnology and studies in material culture.

ZANA WRIGHT

Zana Wright trained as an architect between Sydney, Berlin, and Denmark. As a vagabond on the highway of learning, she now uses her education as a platform upon which to travel the world and traverse mediums in her inventions, whilst constantly seeking a harmonious existence with nature.

INGO KUMIC

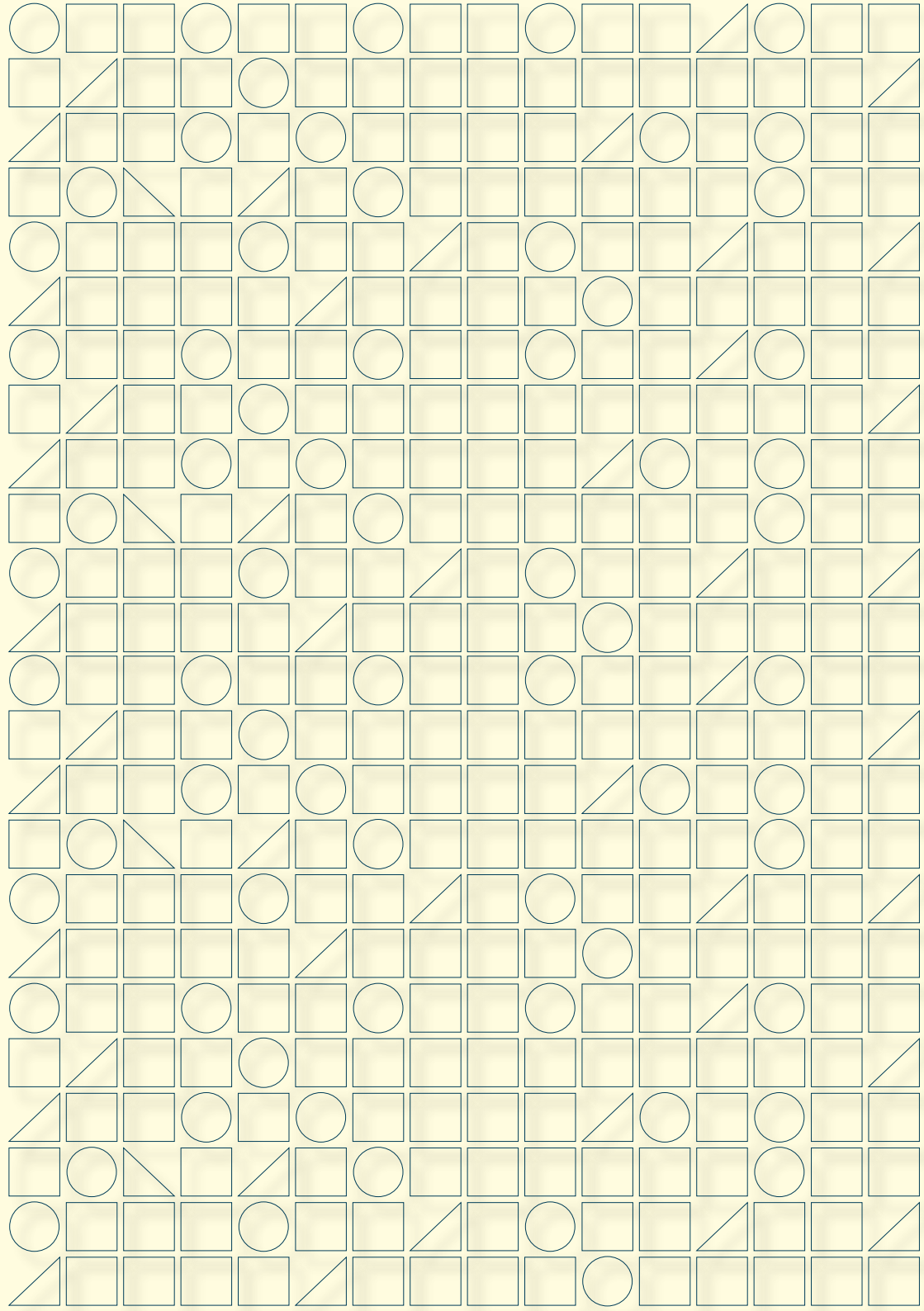
Ingo is a consulting urban strategist. He has worked in Asia, the Middle East and Europe assisting regional and city government with the strategic business of making and managing contemporary cities. He has a PhD in architecture and has been a guest critic in architecture, urban design and planning at the Architectural Association in London and the University of Technology in Sydney amongst others. He is currently Strategic Advisor, City Strategy and Development for the City of Knox in Melbourne Australia

GERALD MELLING

Gerald is a Wellington based architect and writer.

PHILLIP HEATH

A professional working journalist all my life. Until I left The Northern Advocate newspaper in Whangarei in 2007, I was that paper's Chief Sub-Editor for 25 years, in charge of a staff of nine. Until recently I worked for an on-line news site, Locally Informed New Zealand. I have worked for various newspapers and worked for the now sadly gone New Zealand Press Association in Wellington, 1972-74. I worked on a kibbutz in Israel for 12 months, during which time I supplied stories to various media in New Zealand. I now work from home, doing various contract work for organisations.





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