the practice of m3architecture

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Declaration
I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Benjamin Vielle
date: 26 March 2010
Leon,
for the invitation in the first instance,
for the buoyancy you provide and the critique you facilitate,
for making us a part of the “community of learning”, and the
generosity and care surrounding educating in this way,

thankyou.

Leon, Richard and Martyn,
for attending our grc’s with such frequency and enthusiasm,
for your clear and consistent critique and feedback,
for enabling us to better understand ourselves, as we
continue our practice in architecture,

thankyou.
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PERSONAL STATEMENT

It is a humbling experience to be invited to reflect on the “mastery” of our practice: m3architecture. When Leon invited us (Michael Banney, Michael Christensen, Michael Lavery and I) late in 2007, I had been with m3architecture for 9 years, initially as a staff member during my student and graduate years and as a partner in the practice since mid 2006. At the time, the invitation seemed premature in my own practice life. However, in retrospect it was the perfect framework for clarifying the nature of the practice which I had contributed to, and my position within the collective as an individual moving forward.

Prior to this process, I had described the practice via long form descriptions of project work or via “safe” and generic concepts such as “diversity” and “project specificity”. The rigor required for presenting to a panel of colleagues and academics at RMIT illuminated the deficiencies in these early methods of describing the work.

I value the late night discussions with my partners (Michael, Michael and Michael) where we debated points of common ground and difference, discussed the work of the practice and the means by which we practice architecture together daily. Our periodic presentations of this reflection at the graduate research conferences fuelled our debates, at times with confusion, but also with great clarity and direction, due to the generous comments provided by Leon, Richard, Martyn and other distinguished panellists.

There was a moment of clarity which occurred in the last half of 2009 when we found a voice for our practice which was a shift away from the problematic text based methods of explanation we had been using. The use of the poster, as primary communicator served us well. Like our project concepts, the posters were baggy enough to allow room for interpretation, whilst also specific enough to illustrate the essence of the practice. Extending this technique beyond the practice to our own idiosyncrasies we have since developed posters which provide a glimpse into the interface between the collective and ourselves as individuals practicing in the collective. These are seen on the opposite page and are developed in Chapter 3.

Looking forward, I believe that this new voice gives clarity to the next phase of practice, and also forms a good base from which to further develop my idiosyncrasies in practice.

Ben Vielle
ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

In embarking on research into the practice of m3architecture various abstract analytical tools were used as summarised in Chapter 1. What emerged was a way of capturing the territory between thinking and building in a series of posters, illustrated in Chapter 2. These in effect became m3architecture projects in their own right, and will form the substance of the forthcoming exhibition.

Although the central focus of this research is on the work of the group, Chapter 3 contains personal reflections. The intention of this portion is to provide additional colour to the complexion of practice established through Chapters 1 and 2.

The Appendix is a catalogue of the projects referred to frequently through the course of the research.

The document provides readers with several ways to understand the practice of m3architecture. Through the search for a voice, the struggle and uncertainty common in the process of practice can be felt. Then, through the projects themselves, a sense of the physical results of practice can be seen. The individual reflections bring readers closer to personal imperatives, and then the posters are a collective voice.

But as a genuine reflection of practice itself, it is thought that the greatest level of understanding of the research will be through a complete reading of this document.
CHAPTER 1
the research of practice
The review of the productivity of 14 people across nearly 10 years revealed substations, domestic decks, complex laboratory projects, administration and office fitouts, stage sets, kitchen refurbishments, Christmas cards, day surgeries, new houses, masterplanning projects, learning centres and memorials.

The projects were presented case by case, devoid of overarching rationale or thematic approach. The search for meta-narratives, latent qualities, consistent themes, inconsistencies, and outright contradictions began, to better understand the ideological basis of the practice.

“...try to find value in everything...” Martyn Hook

“The economic materiality I also thought was really interesting...” Sand Helset

“I’m interested in you four as what you see as your practice...” Adrian Iredale

“...material logic was the only thing I picked up each of you talking about.” Martyn Hook

“Four observations...... (1) movement ...I drove past it on that freeway and went shit look at that.... (2)situation serendipity...taking a situation and reconstructing it, (3)effects... generated by careful work through situation and opportunity; (4) situation poetic...bring those things together in a more profound way.” Richard Blythe

“you were looking at a very particular component of that situation and beginning to map and try to understand...” Richard Blythe

“I see your architecture as user generated architecture” Tom Kovac

“You have a particular technique with a specific social messaging, and its got a particular participation in architecture.” Tom Kovac

“...shared adversity...echoes of decency seemed to push through all the way...” Leon van Schaik

“...people who have spotted the subversive humour which is behind it...” Leon van Schaik

“...there’s a very straight-forward realism...where you just say the world is pretty messed up, but there’s something we can do with the least possible interference...” Leon van Schaik

BACK CATALOGUE

(opposite) Back catalogue, images from selected projects
A process of dissection began. Themes were identified and their recurrence was observed in both people and projects. This established a basis for understanding and communicating similarities and differences. It also illuminated the complexity of finding and communicating links between people and outcomes in an objective way. In hindsight, it served mainly as a means to an end, rather than as an outcome in its own right. Nevertheless, through repeated conversations centred around themes, a fluency in communication developed, as it became apparent that subtle shifts in terminology, or adjustments in the level of detail of an exchange, can be the difference between meaningful dialogue and misunderstanding. Projects were organised into groups and discussed thematically, the start of non-project based description.

The taxonomy offered a way of understanding the collective as a blurred complexion of individuals. Importantly, it was apparent that the most notable outcomes occur with the involvement of many. Nevertheless, in parallel with the group taxonomy, individuals began to better understand and speak to their own preferences, peculiarities, and influences on projects and other members of the practice.

“I thought it was an amazing exposition of the impossibility of making a taxonomy of architecture...It was completely absurd...” Jeremy Till

“The objects were described as a consequence of a way of thinking...” Jeremy Till

“...you’re very good at looking sideways, at seeing things from the side and seeing opportunities as opposed to dogmatically asserting a process.” Jeremy Till

“...go back to the idea of value and take that word very seriously...” Jeremy Till

“...the relationship between the objective and the subjective ...is going to slowly get drawn out in a really nice way” Stephen Collier
Whilst there has been individual representation in the course of the Masters, the focus of this research is that of the collective. Therefore the extent of individual reflection has been limited to the extent necessary to form an appropriate level of understanding of the group dynamic. During this time, each helped the other, revealing simultaneously something of the helper and “helpee”. Notably this process formalised differences between people which to that point were only intuitively understood.

This level of self-consciousness focussed the search for the collective voice.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

"I think the most revealing aspect of each one of you as individuals was how you chose to introduce yourselves. Yours was very text based Michael, yours was filled with images that resonate with you..." Sand Helsel

"...I think you’re the Thunderbirds, so each of you plays (with) this particular kind of vehicle that you bring to a situation, and the kind of disaster that is occurring is the project, and you each kind of fly in with your particular skill sets, and then...things happen" Martyn Hook
An understanding was emerging around finding ways for ‘architecture to participate in a project situation’. The “participatory” nature of the work of the practice had been demonstrated and seemed clear. However, the method for establishing a “project situation” remained latent.

In the search for a communication method that relayed something of the predilection for experience over matter, the socio-political complexion of the group momentarily overtook the architectural agenda. This prompted reference to the necessity for professionals to speak from within their discipline to their horizon, and then to see where it may touch or overlap the boundaries of others. The use of Hagelian dualities was also called into question, as a means of justifying a position.

Nevertheless, the “complexion” was recognised and there was a collective refocussing on the architectural imperatives.

“The mastery it seems is built on the carefully acquired capacity to ‘intensify situations’ making them more themselves. This drives the multiplicity of the architectural propositions, which do not repeat, and which do not build or consist of a kit of parts...that are reassembled around each new situation” Leon van Schaik

“...intense and direct personal experience in some instances and social experience in another...a series of architectures about places of personal and social pleasures......dependent or engaged with a material connectedness.” Richard Blythe

Further reflection redefined the understanding of practice around situation and process. First, the identification of a situation particular to a project. This is deference to the idiosyncrasies peculiar to circumstance. Second, the deployment of tools common in the work of the practice. Together they describe the idiosyncrasy of the practice. The end game was understood to be an architectural outcome offering intensified experiences, particular to a project.

Once again the complexion was evident but the terminology and communication remained unresolved.
The search for an appropriate means of communication yielded an approach biased toward visual information, with written or spoken supporting material. Posters, which could be understood as projects in their own right, contained provocative images suggestive of modes of practice. The specificity of the message was the very means by which it was communicated.

What evolved was a series of posters that capture the territory between thinking and building. They also provided a structure for accompanying written or spoken word.

“The seminal literary critic IA Richards argued it like this: what we look for in any creative work or its analysis is specificity that surprises. Without this what you summon up in your audience (and indeed in yourself) is a ‘stock response’...he cites a poem by DH Lawrence in which we as adults are put in the situation of imagining a building with massive columns from the ceiling of which emanate booming sounds. It seems improbable until we realise that this is the memory of being a four year old child under a piano...” Leon

(opposite) Poster, image by m3architecture
CHAPTER 2
m3architecture
INTRODUCTION
The images in this chapter define the mental map of the practice of m3architecture, and the territory between thinking and building. In each instance, the accompanying text offers a ‘way in’ to the image. In moving between images it is intended that connections be made between them, so as to build up an impression of the complexion of the practice.

The images can be read together and apart. Together, they position the practice in macro terms. Apart, they delve into preoccupations and technique, as an overlay upon project outcomes. This enables an understanding of both practice and project simultaneously.

The images are projects in their own right, the process they describe deployed in their making. They are loosely divided into three categories. The first three describe a preoccupation with influences external to the practice, a propensity to find quintessential characteristics of project circumstances. The last ten represent techniques and tendencies observed within the practice. The fourth image is a go-between. It represents a design facility that enables two-way traffic between project idiosyncrasies and practice idiosyncrasies.

The interpretive nature of this overview of practice fits with the non-linear, non-formulaic nature of work in progress.
DEFINING A STATE OF AFFAIRS BY SEEKING SPECIFICITY THAT SURPRISES

He is Howard Rourke - quintessential architect. She is Dominique Francon - dressed for cocktails. This is Fountainhead Revisited. It is a mix of occasion and architecture. He holds the finished drawing of the m3architecture paper wall project, and she looks on intently. The paper wall project sits in the background, binding the image together with a sense of earnestness and celebration. The paper wall drawing sits on the drawing board - work in progress.

Paper is working medium, communicator and spatial effect. It represents architectural projects and the architectural profession. The drawing sheet was used to build the paper wall stage set literally and referentially. The project fixes upon the opportunity of a project designed by architects, for architects on a night celebrating architecture - the RAIA Queensland State Awards.

The stage is set.
DEFINING A STATE OF AFFAIRS BY SEEKING SPECIFICITY THAT SURPRISES

Ghosts fill the room sitting at their old desks, now used as black out “curtains” on the walls.

In this space at University of Queensland built in the 1940’s, there was to be a gutting and refitting; a gutting of the curtains, built in desks, built in bench seats, the tiered floor, and the old blackboard; refitting to make it a flat floor seminar room.

The endearing quality of the built in desks was noticed, followed by the coincidence between the window proportion and that of the desk. Hence the initiative to place the desks on the walls on rollers as black out “curtains” – desks became curtains, floor became desks, seats became ceiling panels. These elements feel vaguely familiar and curiously at home. The desks (curtains) in the open position appear like deep reveals. Light through the windows skims their surfaces highlighting decades of marks;

“QUESTION EVERYTHING”
“WHY?”

Aged surfaces possess traces of former use. Marks made intentionally or otherwise gather incrementally and can contribute to an endearing, un-designed quality; something that only time can yield. They possess mysteries as to the time, event and author. They allow us to imagine these circumstances, and imagine the ghosts of bygone eras.
DEFINING A STATE OF AFFAIRS BY SEEKING SPECIFICITY THAT SURPRISES

Members of the Architectural Association masquerading as (living) buildings gather to mourn dead buildings while real buildings at work in the CBD merge as one with the headstones of the city of the dead.

On the fringe of the CBD, until recently there was a Skate Arena. A developer had an application to remove the building and build units. The council in their response to the application made the development unfeasible by requiring the retention of this existing building. Shortly after, the building was burnt to the ground and a man was convicted of arson. Motivated by suspicion and disgust, it became apparent that an anagram of SKATE ARENA is ARSEN ATAKE. This serendipity was the kernel of work that followed.

When requested by the Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane to design a temporary stage, an enormous grave for deceased buildings was proposed. On one side of the headstone were the names of buildings, chosen for their cultural significance in Brisbane; Festival Hall, Cloudland, Bellevue Hotel, Skate Arena, The Victory Hotel. On the reverse side of the grave, were the letters scrambled; “FesiBlllIlY”, “land ValuE; “HOTEL LEvVELEd”, “ARSoN ATACK” and “CURE THE HOT HOTEL” as though these buildings had defaced their own grave. In the same way as the heads of the Architectural Association gather at the grave, the grave produced at the Gallery of Modern Art was a place for public gatherings; a stage for the opening and closing of the exhibition and live music performances. Across the course of the exhibition thousands of people went there, performers sang and danced on the grave. Fittingly and symbolically, at the end of the exhibition this new place for cultural gatherings was demolished, sent to the grave itself, to rest in memorial with the buildings it represented.

The work was part of the exhibition entitled “Optimism”, and encouraged a review of past behaviour, to inform looking forward and determining what is regarded to be “of value” in our cities and communities, particularly in fostering cultural continuity.
This is an advertisement, a label, a metaphor, a reality and a diagram of a diagram. This is what happens when you welcome a Titan shed into your architectural world and allow it to take over the formal language and the construction logic of new work. It brings with it an architectural position on the “non-architectural” in accepting the unacceptable.

In the sequence of images this panel mediates between “defining a state of affairs by seeking specificity that surprises” and the subsequent panels. The former, illustrate an interest in unearthing quintessential properties or peculiarities inherent in a project. The latter define practice idiosyncrasies, and the way in which they might be deployed.

Moving between the two modes is a non linear process. There is an awareness of the kind of architectural techniques preferred in certain circumstances, as opportunities through coincidence or specificity are sought (and vice versa) – as familiar techniques are used to orchestrate a way in, coincidences or specificity are sought to provide opportunity.

At some time in most projects, a diagram evolves; a drawing, a piece of text, or a conversation. It is usually formalised to assist in communicating the core idea(s), so as to involve many people in the process. These diagrams tend to be particular enough so that they are useful and provocative, yet baggy enough to allow room to move, and room for many to contribute.
2.1.2 Barcaldine Tree of Knowledge Memorial concept diagram (images by m3architecture)

2.1.3 Barcaldine Tree of Knowledge Memorial view into canopy (photo by Brian Hooper)
2.1.4 Brisbane Girls’ Grammar School Creative Learning Centre east facade concept diagram (image by m3architecture)

2.1.5 Brisbane Girls’ Grammar School Creative Learning Centre east facade (photo by Bovis Lend Lease)
This is a sequence starting with a flat line, working through various states of life and back to a flat line. It is reminiscent of the output of a diagnostic tool. It describes the building accurately both physically and conceptually; physically as these are 60 cross sections of the Tree of Knowledge Memorial, and conceptually, as the exterior, represented by the first and last sections, is understood as a sarcophagus (death), whilst the interior is understood as representational of the original tree canopy (life). Yet the project was never represented in this way. It was often conveyed in plan – a 60x60 grid of 125x125 timbers with a level fixing the height of each stick. This representation makes the project appear deceptively simple.

This is delightful as well as useful; delightful in the duality of simplicity/complexity, and useful in conveying information to industry.
3.1.3 Paper wall A1 sheet unit (image by m3architecture)

3.1.4 Paper wall assembled 16 sheets wide by 10 sheets high (image by m3architecture)

3.1.5 Brisbane Girls’ Grammar School Creative Learning Centre west facade view between aluminium screen and striped wall (photo by m3architecture)

3.1.6 Brisbane Girls’ Grammar School Creative Learning Centre west facade interference pattern (photo by Jon Linkins)
3.1.7 University of Queensland Micro Health Laboratory bolster cut bricks (photo by m3architecture)

3.1.8 University of Queensland Micro Health Laboratory bolster cut bricks assembled as brick veneer (image by m3architecture)

3.1.9 Nudgee College Tierney Hall mirror laminate used to create a kaleidoscope unit (photo by m3architecture)

3.1.10 Nudgee College Tierney Hall kaleidoscope unit repeated to form walls in an auditorium (image by Candela Studio)
EXTENDING CONVENTIONAL WAYS OF MAKING

In a scene reminiscent of Alice in Wonderland, three grown men gather in front of giant origami crafted by two small girls. For m3architecture, this incongruity is encouraged. In this instance it occurs for two main reasons; first taking “child’s play” and elevating it to centre stage, and second, taking a traditional fine scale craft and using its principles, but extending its application.

In the practice of m3architecture there is interest in convention, and making it visibly expressed and acknowledged, as well as extended or broken as required.

In the paper wall project, each A1 sheet is a folded unit. The particular fold utilised is common in origami, and was used as it produced collapsible modules. The drawings on the sheet illustrated the fold for individual units as well as the assembly of the whole wall, 16 sheets wide by 10 sheets high. Origami of this scale is unexpected and there is unorthodoxy in a wall made of frameless paper. When front-lit, the clean, prismatic three-dimensional, “finished” qualities of the surface were emphasized. When back-lit, the wall took on a lantern quality and revealed the drawings through the translucence of the paper. This revealed a pattern, a counterpoint to the front experience — a paisley-like interconnected pattern – the “workings” of the wall. In traditional origami, the path to the folded outcome is often undecipherable in the work itself. In this case it was formalised, laid bare and enjoyed as an integral part of the process and outcome of the wall.
4.1.3 (R)AIA Christmas Card as envelope (photo by m3architecture)

4.1.4 (R)AIA Christmas Card as message and instruction (photo by m3architecture)

4.1.5 (R)AIA Christmas Card as origami ornament (photo by m3architecture)
4.1.6 Australian National University Burton and Garran Hall bicycle shelters, steel pipe and fence couplers used to build a frugal shelter (images by m3architecture)

4.1.7 Armstrong Residence broomsticks and plumbing pipe couplers used to form stair balustrade (photo by m3architecture)

4.1.8 m3architecture office stair stringer used upside down (photo by Shannon McGrath)
DETAILING TO SUBVERT THE PHYSICALITY OF BUILDING MATERIALS

What happens when sold timber masquerades as a velvet curtain? What happens when the reality of the timber is still vaguely familiar, but with an overwhelming sense of curtain-ness? The perception is neither of timber or velvet, but of something else. This relies on a near transformation of the timber. When completely transformed it becomes the other thing and the intrigue is lost. With too little transformation, there is a chance that the prosaic will be too apparent. There is enjoyment in enabling others to access the subversion through the revelation of “truth”.

Used in the joinery pieces for the Brisbane North Eye Centre, standard timber sections are used alongside one another, capped at the ends to hide their cross sectional realities. In revealing only the front face, the thickness of the building element is unable to be known. Visually, it could be the thickness of a curtain. This is contradicted through the solidity felt through touch. From the waiting area, patients “see” the joinery fascia. There is interest in how these elements are perceived or “seen”, particularly in the context of the eye clinic. The difference between what is “seen” and what is understood, is a means of generating engaging qualities in architecture.
5.1.3 University of Queensland Micro Health Laboratory brick work (photo by m3architecture)

5.1.4 Nudgee College Tierney Hall kaleidoscope effect used on auditorium wall (photo by m3architecture)

5.1.5 Nudgee College Tierney Hall kaleidoscope effect used on auditorium wall (image by m3architecture)
5.1.6 Armstrong Residence mirror wall dissolves the building edge into landscape (photo by Jon Linkins)

5.1.7 Brisbane Girls’ Grammer School Creative Learning Centre west facade (photo by Jon Linkins)

5.1.8 Paper wall stage set, origami wall (photo by Ian Wilkinson)
HYPING BUILT CONVENTIONS

Often, existing built environments are conventional and unremarkable or even undesirable. Sometimes the most effective intervention is to reinforce or hype existing qualities, rather than to conquer. It is possible to elicit a new sense of appreciation of the formerly undesirable quintessential properties of space or surface, by teasing them out to illogical conclusions.

The image depicts a laboratory interior requiring an uninterrupted corridor. The 1960’s institutional building grid was also ever-present. Hying the combination of these two elements by exploiting the effects of perspective, results in a highly memorable spatial quality.

Two of the characters from the 1960s television show ‘The Time Tunnel’ are seen at the end of the two-point perspective, further exaggerating the effect already present in the space, by defying the vanishing point. In the actual fitout, the perception of this vanishing point is enhanced by a series of concentric linear rectangles painted on the fire exit door. When the viewer stands off centre in the corridor, the difference between the true perspective of the corridor and the fake perspective of the fire door is apparent, resulting in the feeling that space bends at the junction between both.
6.1.3 Queensland University of Technology Human Movement Pavilion, extension to a “Titan” shed (photo by Jon Linkins)

6.1.4 University of Queensland Science Learning Centre, personal lighting (photo by Jon Linkins)

6.1.5 Gold Coast Arts Centre fly tower clad with convex traffic mirrors (photo by m3architecture)
6.1.6 Volbroker tenancy, electrical cable trays used to construct screen (photo by m3architecture)

6.1.7 Nudgee College Tierney Hall plaster keystone used to clad ceiling (extract from Aussie Plaster Products catalogue)

6.1.8 Nudgee College Tierney Hall plaster keystone used to clad ceiling (image by m3architecture)
DISPLACING OBJECTS
What happens when you put a velvet curtain beside an eight lane bitumen arterial road? The disjunction is remarkable and provocative. The luxurious qualities of the curtain are heightened in this diesel laden environment. This immediately encourages questions to be asked of the unorthodoxy of the curtain placement “What is it doing here?” When there is cause to be provocative, displacement can be a useful device.

In this instance, the curtain is the façade of Brisbane North Eye Centre, which displaced a cinema. Conceptually, the project draws together the former use and the current use, the former a theatre for movies and the latter a theatre for day surgery. The displacement of the curtain from stage to street is a gentle reminder of things past.

In the practice of m3architecture, this technique is recognisable in materials and finishes, as well as building elements at a variety of scales. The displaced object illuminates the idiosyncratic elements which define the state of affairs for the project.
7.1.2 University of Queensland Steele building seminar room, desks displaced onto wall as window shutters (photo by Jon Linkins)

7.1.3 Nudgee College Tierney Hall plaster keystone used to clad ceiling (photo by m3architecture)

7.1.4 Nudgee College Tierney Hall plaster keystone used to clad ceiling (image by m3architecture)
7.1.5 Gold Coast Arts Centre fly tower clad with convex traffic mirrors (photo by m3architecture)
8.1.2 Brisbane Girls’ Grammar School Creative Learning Centre west wall facade (photo by m3architecture)

8.1.1 Brisbane Girls’ Grammar School Creative Learning Centre west wall facade (photo by Jon Linkins)

FINDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE COEXISTENCE OF PRAGMATIC AND POETIC CONDITIONS

The work of MC Escher commonly works with perpetual motion or eternal connectivity as well as impossible perspective. Viewers are drawn into these images through their apparent tangibility only to find dead ends, upside down/inside out 3D impossibilities, and then retracing ones mental steps to see where things stopped making sense. The magic and wonderment of Escher’s spatial constructs is uncommon in our rational world.

However, what can be found in projects are occasions when the most prosaic or pragmatic response to very objective requirements result in such peculiarity or unorthodoxy as to be surprising. This illustration is Brisbane Girls Grammar School Creative Learning Centre social space. The school is located on a very complex sloping site. The building traverses 8 storeys of terrain. It was desirable that each floor level have a relationship with the corresponding ground level. This in itself resulted in 3D complexity. In addition to this, the most convenient paths of travel and socialisation opportunities for students were able to be reasonably predicted. These considerations added a further layer of complexity to the scheme. The result is idiosyncratic and a rather ‘Escher-like’ or ‘Hogwarts-like’ spatial condition.

In the process of design, particularly in design and construct procurement, there is often a need to be seen to be “rational”, “objective”, “pragmatic”… It is a common practice to position architectural strategies through pragmatic frames of reference, aware that the primary perception will be otherwise; in this case, from pragmatic beginnings, to a space which is peculiar and complex, with eternal connectivity facilitating the churn of circulation and socialisation on a daily basis.
8.1.3 Brisbane Grammar School Learning Hub, historic fig tree canopies used to describe a facade line (image by m3architecture)

8.1.4 m3architecture office stair stringer used in reverse (photo by Shannon McGrath)

8.1.5 m3architecture office forecourt concrete plates which map the existing terrain (photo by Shannon McGrath)
8.1.6 University of Queensland Steele Building seminar room existing desks (photo by m3architecture)

8.1.7 University of Queensland Steele Building seminar room existing desks transformed into window shutters (photo by Jon Linkins)

8.1.8 University of Queensland Centre for Marine Studies, modified existing fabric and new fabric is identified (photo by Jon Linkins)
LIFTING THE ORDINARY OUT OF THE PROSAIC

Bricks are to project homes what project homes are to urban sprawl. This contributes to the perception that in the building industry, perhaps there is nothing more ordinary or prosaic than the common brick.

Nevertheless, it is still possible to look to a common brick for cues, to open the brick up to new possibilities both literally and metaphorically. It is also possible to see the potentials alive within the brick, and begin to work with bricks in a very different manner. The complexity of the extruded interior of the brick is a lost quality. Through bolster cutting bricks, and laying the bricks cut side facing out exposing the extruded surfaces and the hand made cut, there was a shift in the perception the capability of bricks. The resultant building sits in the context of 1970’s brick buildings which are in themselves entirely prosaic, now lifted by the new work.

The image represents the brick and the building as inseparable elements. It depicts the building as a veneer to the brick. It illustrates what is possible in commonly prosaic brick veneer construction, by looking beyond the veneer of the brick itself.
9.1.4 University of Queensland Science Learning Centre, rejected steel plumbing used to support lighting (photo by m3architecture)

9.1.5 University of Queensland Science Learning Centre, rejected steel plumbing used to support lighting (photo by Jon Linkins)
9.1.6 Queensland University of Technology Human Movement Pavilion extension to existing “Titan” shed (photo by Jon Linkins)

9.1.7 Queensland University of Technology Human Movement Pavilion teaching space references the form of the existing “Titan” shed (photo by Jon Linkins)

9.1.8 Think Brick About Face Competition indicating use of locally sourced brickwork to re-create a Fred Williams painting of the Australian landscape (image by m3architecture)
ENCOURAGING MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS

Is this a dress overtaking a building or a building clothing a model? What is the relationship between the dress and the façade? Is it to do with this being the façade of a private girl's school? Or on the contrary, is it politicising modelling in the context of what has been regarded by some as a feminist private girl's school? Is it offensive? Is it humorous? Is the façade pattern and that of the dress fabric coincidental, and their coming together in this image purely for the sake of making this point?

And what about the façade itself? “...what is that about, and can someone please tell me what it's made of, and by the way, where are the motors hidden?” “Is it some kind of visual reference to op art?” “Is it some kind of cheeky reference to parts of the female anatomy?” “Is it inspired by 1960’s fabric patterns?”

The façade is that of Brisbane Girls Grammar School Creative Learning Centre. It’s pattern is caused by the overlay of a sunscreen over a striped façade, resulting in visual “interference” and a motile effect when the viewer is in motion. Whilst the final pattern was deliberate(d), and takes subtle cues from a neighbouring building of significance, it stops short of explicit physical reference. Other than acting as a sun screen, its primary purpose is to engage commuters and people on the adjacent playing field – people in motion.

It is geared to its audience, children and adults alike. If the expected reading of architecture is too cryptic or narrow it tends toward exclusivity. If it is too direct it may be accessible to many, but its engaging quality can die quickly. A balance between these poles is sought along with an understanding of the audience, with the hope of achieving engaging and enduring results, with different meanings for different people.
10.1.5 Arsen Atake Gallery of Modern Art stage set, grave stone to dead buildings (photo by Jon Linkins)

10.1.6 Arsen Atake Gallery of Modern Art stage set, grave stone to dead buildings defaced to indicate the cause of their demise (photo by Natasha Harth)
10.1.7 Cook’s Landing Site National Monument Competition, sculptural objects placed off shore which align to form the figure of the moored Endeavour (image by m3architecture)

10.1.8 Barcaldine Tree of Knowledge Memorial external view (photo by Brian Hooper)

10.1.9 Barcaldine Tree of Knowledge Memorial internal view (photo by Brian Hooper)
The saying ‘the elephant in the room’ refers to an issue large and present, but unspoken. In this illustration this is an elephant in the room, or, with the understanding that the pavilion has a mirrored wall, an elephant standing just behind the viewers right shoulder, a disturbing and confronting thought in such a small domestic garden setting. There is a preference for finding the elephant and working with it, making it visible and formalised. Often this resides in the “state of affairs” we choose to work with. But it also affects how visible or legible we make the “state of affairs”. In this case it was a client’s pre-occupation with a rear garden resulting in a pavilion designed to extend the perception of landscape from common paths of travel. The inclusion of the elephant in the image, references the saying, and contributes to the wilderness quality of the garden. In making a chosen state of affairs explicit there is a will to connect people with the architectural imperative.

MAKING THE CHOSEN STATE OF AFFAIRS EXPLICIT

11.1 (opposite) Making the chosen state of affairs explicit (photo by Shannon McGrath, image by m3architecture)
11.1.1 Brisbane Grammar School Learning Hub, historic fig tree canopies used to describe a facade line (image by m3architecture)

11.1.2 University of Queensland Steele Building seminar room existing desks transformed into window shutters (photo by Jon Linkins)
11.1.3 Arsen Atake Gallery of Modern Art stage set, grave stone to dead buildings defaced to indicate the cause of their demise (photo by Natasha Harth)

11.1.4 University of Queensland Centre for Marine Studies, modified existing fabric and new fabric is identified (photo by Jon Linkins)
FINDING HUMOUR
There is a problem with either the humour or the recipient when a joke needs to be explained.

12.1 (opposite) Finding humour
(image by m3architecture)
12.1.1 Queensland University of Technology Human Movement Pavilion, speculative scheme to build an addition to proprietary green letter box (photo and image by m3architecture)

12.1.2 University of Queensland Chemistry building level 6 corridor experience (photo by Shannon McGrath)
12.1.3 Arsen Ataka Gallery of Modern Art stage set (photo by Joanne Bell)

12.1.4 Magnetic Island development, “this is a handy cove and a well situated grog shop” translation of nautical flags (image by m3architecture)

12.1.5 Think Brick About Face Competition, image of a wall made of brick depicting an image of brick walls (image by m3architecture)
CHAPTER 3
idiosyncrasies
INTRODUCTION
Chapter 2 is a representation of ideas and techniques commonly held in the collective practice of m3architecture. The relationship between individuals and the collective is complex. Techniques and themes are used by different people in different ways, and to different extents.

Chapter 3 provides an insight into the predominant imperative of the individuals. These personal accounts add colour to the complexion of practice already described in Chapter 1.
occasional (n)
1. a particular time, especially as marked by certain happenings
2. a special or important time, event, ceremony etc
3. the ground, reason, or cause of some action or result

It is possible to talk about “occasion” in three ways. First, an occasion facilitated by physical things (similar to definition 1). Second, the result of small actions (but sometimes profound nevertheless) or large events experienced throughout our lives (similar to definition 2). At the confluence of both, an impetus or occasion for architecture can be found (similar to definition 3).

Crudely, $1 + 2 = 3$ (occasionally!)

(low level afternoon sun penetrating deep into the kitchen) + (making dessert for dinner) = (the bowl placed knowingly on the bench because it refracts light beautifully at certain times)

The crucial part of the equation is the living act; (making dessert for dinner). The action in 3 enriches the experience of 2, through the power of 1. Nevertheless, in an hour the sun will be gone and the bowl will be in the cupboard. In three hours dessert will be gone too. Yet the memories will remain, but not of the bowl or the bench, ordinary things in isolation. The memories that endure cling to the collective experiences of the living act. The particulars of the contingent forces at play; sun, bowl, pears and laminate fade. Yet a sense of the occasion lives strongly in memory.

This approach in architecture sets up a particular relationship between the living act and the physical object. It also establishes a propensity to deal with materials in certain ways. Paradoxically, a foremost preoccupation with the “non-physical” requires an equal preoccupation with the “physical”.

When architecture is approached in this way, “occurrence” is frequently redefined as “occasion”.

MICHAEL BANNEY

(opposite) Occasion, photo by m3architecture
MICHAEL CHRISTENSEN

.........there’s a hole in the bucket - is this a problem? Certainly, if there is water in it and containment is required. But even if this were the case, there is an even bigger hole in the top, and the water will evaporate anyway. And the bucket could be knocked over so let’s not panic about the hole just yet, and regardless, let’s think about what the water is for, and how quickly it needs to be used and, by the way, is it actually water and.........

.........and perhaps the instability of a leaky bucket is desirable anyway. Perhaps it is not a problem if you know how and when to top it up and if the drips are used carefully. Perhaps the bucket can be placed and left to its own devices at times and be of great value, allowing other things to occur. Maybe there is something powerful about a vessel that offers useful containment and constant change simultaneously. If we can value the contained, and understand the speed of the leak, we can define what we might be able to do with it. No, no, this is not a problem, in fact perhaps we can patent this object and propose it for use as.........

.........as an analogy for the architectural profession, or an architectural practice or even an architectural project. Yes, the leaky bucket, perpetual instability, the need to be “carrying the can” at times, and “in it” at other times. The need to “stir the pot”, or “put a lid on it” momentarily. The need to “jump in boots and all” from time to time. The need to put the “finger in the dyke” periodically, but not for too long or the water will be stale and.........

.........and then it would be a regular bucket, entirely useful but not as useful in this case as a leaky bucket. But maybe if we were to look more closely at the big hole in the top of the bucket we might be able to find.........
A gesture as simple as painting a line on a large blank wall can transform an inanimate object into a formidable opponent, transfigure an urban laneway into an arena for competition and transform friends into cheering members of a crowd. At a very basic level this kind of intervention seeks engagement between the individual and the built form. At a stroke this painted line suggests: possibility, latent opportunity, a challenge. As a gesture this elevates an understanding of the inanimate above the singular and the passive. (The wall is no longer just a wall.) There is a personal interest in the specific possibility suggested by the white line painted judiciously on a selected wall. The built form should actively participate in the various relationships that exist between user and object (built form).
Early morning: the carny arrives at the show ground with his Zipper trailer in tow. Within 5 hours the carny raises the boom, assembles the cages and tests the ride. The Zipper is the tool of his trade, tailored to his mechanical skills. He understands and maintains every nut, bolt, and cable in the structure / machine. The efficiency of Joseph Brown’s design is evident in the neatly packed semi-trailer which transforms into the base of the ride when assembled.

A few coloured lights attract the thrill seeker. You pay the carny and board the two person cage. A frugal safety device: the logical result of securing two bodies in seated position. Steel pipe, mesh and plate: the rough physicality of the cage adds to the fear of the occupant - all part of the experience. The ride starts up. It is at once scary and exhilarating - an intense experience beyond the everyday. The ride stops. The same ordinary cage and rudimentary machine that provided the thrill returns you to ground with brutal efficiency.

What if architecture was like the Zipper? A craft which is delicately balanced between, functionality for the carny and embellishment to support the experience of the thrill seeker. In practice it is a useful analogy, leading to solutions which can be explained rationally: using functional devices to support intense experiential concerns. This desired balance leads to a honing of craft which is focused on the primary architectural act.
APPENDIX 1
selected projects
The original house is post war on a steep site with mature dense vegetation. As a south facing slope surrounded by trees, there was very little access to sunshine in winter. The deck, (stage 1-1998), is a remote structure to intercept winter sun. From the house it is a desirable destination – warm in winter and leafy in summer.

Stage 2 brief required two rooms for two young adults – daughters of the ‘client’. A concept was developed whereby two client groups were established; father daughter; mother daughter. As it was accepted that the length of time each daughter would remain at home was impossible to predict, each room was designed to be a bedroom at first, and then an office and studio for mum and dad respectively when vacated by the daughter(s). The concept signified the importance of this critical period in family life – the co-existence of 4 adults on the cusp if diminishing. It also gave opportunity to reflect on the changing needs of parents and children.

The conceptual framework saw the evolution of 3 main spaces.

- A room in the garden
- A room seamlessly part of the house
- A connecting space

Other significant issues included; the treatment of the surfaces of the garden room to multiply the perception of the landscape, the preservation of the feeling of the open undercroft, reaction to the ‘build in under’ which too often is hampered by excavation and retaining costs and results in inhospitable spaces with disregard for the excavated edge(s), the introduction of an element to establish a release from the undercroft in two directions and suggest the existence of cut earth in the remaining sub floor area; traditional ‘social planning’ with public spaces breaking down into semi-private, private, and very private.

The three interventions (deck, undercroft, garden room) occupy the backyard in very different ways, influencing each other and the existing house, establishing new micro-contexts.
1 bedroom / studio
2 laundry
3 bathroom
4 stair
5 undercroft

lower floor plan
1 entry
2 living
3 stair

section

0 1 2 3 4  5m
section

1 bed
2 bath

0 1 2 3 4 5m
Squat the world! Occupy abandoned space! Rent is theft.

In Loving Memory

The old meatworks next to the Mater Hospital. I spent there with friends till Feb '85. We lived in the lockout-room part of the complex and also the empty house next door (you had to climb through a trap-door here to get inside). Someone stole the copper piping one night and we, the teenage I had to climb on top of the thirty foot roof without my legs fell through. Luckily Dave caught me. The next morning directly above the boiler room I had a pink t-shirt in the dressing room once. A young person dancing in a room that stinks of death.

In Loving Memory

Her Majesty's Theatre

LAVATORY FROM ELIZABETH ST TO KEMBERTAV

The nicest gift my mother ever gave me was a toy theatre. She would put her children to bed and then I would go in to the dressing room to watch the show. The curtains would rise and I would see the grand stage. I would feel like a king when I was on stage. I would imagine I was the king of a world where no one could hurt me. It was a world I created for myself.

"Cloudland"

In Loving Memory

I attended my very first school dance at Cloudland aged 6-7 years old. My mother had let me wear my cousin’s "Little Bo Peep" costume for the event. My mother re-modelled the dress into a 'princess' dress on the way out of the door. My father-a baker—had the idea to thread 2 chrysanthemum wire (not hangmen in the barn to make a hoop! I felt like a princess after that!

Angie Finn, 22nd November, 2008.

In Loving Memory

I remember the first time I visited Yagaba and marvelled that I, as an immigrant in 1976, was so welcomed by the Queensland public. It was a magnificent building like a wedding cake with internallyconsiderate and generous. I am grieving that I will never be able to get in there again. Today I say goodbye to the people of Queensland and Queensland welcome here.
ARSEN ATAKE

This stage was a catalogued piece for the GoMA exhibition entitled Optimism, to facilitate a broad range of events. The connections between live acts, Brisbane, politics and architecture were drawn upon, and distilled into the idea of a grave stone commemorating the deceased cultural buildings of our city.

The piece has 2 sides; one with the true fonts of the deceased carved into the face – a place for public reflection. The other side faces the metaphorical burial area - on this face, the names of the places are mashed, like the collective memory of these places, skewed by the politics and emotion surrounding their removal. The text is akin to graffiti – a defaced gravestone. The irreverence of this is perpetuated by performers such as Ed Keupper dancing on the grave. As the backdrop to live acts, media events and tv broadcasts, this side of the gravestone is an act of willful propaganda.

This Brisbane place for public gathering was destroyed on Monday 23 February 2009. The events and connections made during its life now reside in memory. It is possible to lament the passing of buildings from various points of view. Perhaps the most powerful is the affect upon the idea of cultural continuum – the idea that the physical can connect people through time.

The legacy of this project is a collection of “In Loving Memory” cards. Immediately adjacent to the work, visitors to the grave were invited to write to the family (all of us) of the deceased (things past) as one would in the passing of a loved one. Thousands of cards were collected including;

“The old tree on Coronation Drive and behind – the Arnotts Biscuit Factory. The smell – oh, that smell!”

“Go ask some indigenous people what parts of the land they miss before you cry about the Shingle Inn etc………….. Spew”

“Bellevue Hotel R.I.P. no thanx to J.B.P”

These fragments will be collated and used to reflect upon the cultural and social effects of physical discontinuity in the hope we may learn something about ourselves as we move forward with ‘inevitable change’.
Feasibility
Land value
Hotel leveled
Arson attack
cure the hot hotel

elevation

[1m | 2m]
The proposal promotes cycling by siting the structures at the main entry. The bike shelters incorporate a lightweight structure and brick façade appropriate in the context of the predominately brick Burton and Garran Hall forecourt. The frugal structure reinforces the notion of economy present within the culture of cycling, whilst also being suited to the construction skills of available maintenance staff at Burton and Garran Hall.

Detailed from galvanized tube using proprietary couplers, triangulation is used to generate structural economy. There are two layers of protection: a roof and a chainwire outer surface that gathers and stretches conforming to the triangulated substrate. A creeper is proposed to overtake the chainwire, resulting in a faceted green landscape behind the “Canberra Red” brick wall.
BARCALDINE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE MEMORIAL

Barcaldine’s Tree of Knowledge Memorial re-instates the amenity of the original tree and the tree’s role as a public place.

The building has several civic roles. Re-instating the plaza around the tree re-establishes the location as a place of public gathering. The presence of the building creates a gateway to Barcaldine as it forms part of the railway station’s entry sequence. At the scale of the highway it acts as a signpost and at night as a lantern for the town.

The scale of the structure and the form created within, is based on the extent of the tree’s canopy between 1890 and 1905. The shape of this internal canopy is defined by approximately 3,600 individual timber members. All timber is recycled and third party certified for chain of custody.

The project re-instates a place of public gathering, the extent of the original canopy is re-defined, gentle movement is again visible overhead and with shadows on the ground, the amenity of the original tree is regained. With the relic tree looking on, old stories can be told and events remembered. As an experience, this is also a place where new memories can be created.

photos by Brian Hooper and Jon Linkins
reflected ceiling plan
M16 nut and locknut and 40 dia washer galvanised finish.

Painted a/s rail. 18 dia round holes at 300mm centres on topside of rail along length of rail.

M16 thread tapped on 16sq rod.

18mm square holes at 300mm centres on underside of rail along length of rail.

16sq rod

6CFW all around

Bird proofing

Steel saddle with eye connections for bolts. Saddle made from M12 rod.

Eye connection 1x M12 bolt and nut and 40dia washer, galvanised finish (1 washer at timber, 1 washer at nut, to both sides).

125 x 125 x 1800 timber

Timber chamfer - paint face

Typical hanging detail
This new six-storey building for Brisbane Girls Grammar School (BGGS) brings together the Art, Music, Drama and Technology facilities of the prominent inner city school, into a single Creative Learning Centre (CLC). The centre also accommodates significant new social spaces, hall, performance and exhibition rooms, and kitchen / refectory.

Conceptually, the project is understood as an open-ended exploration of the notion of ‘making connections,’ in response to the social, educational, inter-disciplinary/collaborative, cultural, civic, functional and creative roles and aspirations held for the building. The idea of making connections can be understood at many levels of the brief and design, with new connections being made within the building, between disciplines, between the new CLC and the rest of the school, between BGGS and the adjoining Brisbane Grammar School (BGS), and between the school and the city.

The building is conceived as both two halves, and as one whole. The eastern wing of the building, containing public spaces, gathering points and circulation, is designed around a central vertical void that contributes significantly to the social spaces in the school, and has a strong relationship to the existing landscape. Its outermost edge is carved out to maintain views from, and create a connection to the school’s foundation buildings sited on Gregory Terrace. This gesture has also created the ‘K’ shaped columns that have become an iconic image of the new building. The western wing on the other hand is a horizontally layered, user appropriated, series of flexible spaces for teaching and learning. The horizontal expression of this wing meets the vertical language of the eastern wing at the central void – a dynamic space of circulation, social encounter and informal learning.

The search for ways to ‘make connections’ is hoped to continue beyond the design of the facility itself, and into its use and occupation, as staff and students find ways of collaborating and using the building to its full potential. As such, the approach avoids a definitive or complete conception of the project, allowing the project to be defined and redefined by its successive groups of occupants, enabling others to make connections of their own. This flexibility and promotion of user-determined outcomes encourages independent thinking - a fundamental tenet of creative practice.
1 creative learning centre
2 loading dock
3 music terrace
4 main site entry
5 running track
6 kalinga avenue
7 bain staff centre
8 macgrassie sports centre
9 gehrmann theatre
10 tennis courts
11 gehrmann block
12 science block
13 carpark
14 east wing
15 administration building
16 administration plaza
17 west wing
18 carpark
19 communications centre

site plan
level 1
co-curricular music

level 2
classroom music

1 balcony
2 teaching/practice rooms
3 string/orchestral rehearsal
4 store
5 recording room
6 terrace
7 band orchestral rehearsal
8 choir rehearsal
9 music classroom
10 void
11 deliveries/dock
This scheme was prepared for an invited competition for Brisbane Grammar School’s (BGS) new Learning Hub. As the first major building on the historic school campus in decades, the project was significant in redefining the school’s image and campus facilities for the 21st century.

Two issues were identified as greatly important to the scheme, and were to influence many aspects of the design planning and detail.

1. The site, and most notably, the significant existing landscape and historic avenue of fig trees on the chosen site.
2. The pedagogical aspirations of the brief.

At its broadest level, the design responds to these two issues in a single strategy. The minimisation of the building footprint establishes minimum landscape disturbance and enables maximum internal connectivity between the briefed functions. The result is a compact and lively series of social spaces, surrounded and defined by the landscape context.
1 plant
2 archive
3 theatre
4 foyer
5 it
6 it lab
7 server
8 pre-tertiary studies
9 office
10 archive office
11 archive research room

level 2
1 office
2 existing building
3 boarders' lawn
4 study
5 deliveries
6 plant
7 collection
8 publications
9 book returns & handling
10 prof. dev. library
11 foyer

level 3
BRISBANE NORTH EYE CENTRE
The Brisbane North Eye Centre is a two-storey building and specialist fitout for an eye clinic and day surgery above retail tenancies. Previously site to The Dawn Theatre (1928-2005), this project explores ideas of context and place and is part of a move to deliver healthcare in less clinical environments. At the time of developing the design two environments stood out as appropriate references: the site's previous use as a picture theatre and the single residence. The plushness of the “picture theatre” and the comfort of the domestic are translated into this project through unexpected detailing techniques and material use, to create a new place suitable to the context of site and the delivery of healthcare. Examples of new detailing techniques include the use of commercially available domestic timber trims such as: cornices, handrails and picture rails. Clustered in continuous runs, whilst still vaguely recognisable as timber trims, these elements take on a “curtain” like feel. This outcome references both the domestic condition and the theatre. This is visible particularly in joinery pieces such as the reception desk and in joinery located at the transition between wall types. Colour plays an important role in this project. Warm colours and soft transitions dominate public areas. This approach increases the sense of domestic comfort, adds to the sense of the theatre and reduces high levels of contrast, common in more clinical fitouts, to create an environment which comforts the patients’ eyes. For the meeting room, a high contrast palette is used to provide staff a break from the visual softness of the centre’s public areas. The east facing screen continues the curtain motif. This gesture positions the building as a form of signage on Gympie Road. On the street, at the scale of the pedestrian, brickwork detailing and a pressed metal soffit reference local conditions and provide a connection to the original Dawn Theatre awning. The typology of the two storey shop / office is revisited in this project. Appropriate climatic solutions are sought through the extension of the upper roof and the separation of the screen from the wall. This allows the quality of the public space to be improved by increasing connectivity between the street and both levels of the building.
1 carpark entry
2 carpark
3 proposed building
4 existing building

site plan

10  5  10m
1 rain water tank
2 dirty linen & garbage
3 store
4 server
5 void
6 foyer
7 lift
8 pwd amenities
9 planter
10 female amenities
11 male amenities
12 entry
13 retail tenancy
14 footpath

floor plan level 1
1 board room
2 office
3 consult
4 waiting
5 amenities
6 entry
7 lift
8 store
9 void
10 reception/records
11 optometrist
12 consult
13 pre-screen
14 ffa
15 pre/post operation
16 recovery
17 theatre
18 decontamination
19 cssd
20 fields
21 courtyard

floor plan level 2
The original house at Patrick Street, Milton (circa 1900) is a small workers cottage (refurbished in the 1960s) on a small site (253sqm) in a small street. The masterplan approach for this project was to preserve the existing small scale relationship between the house and site whilst adopting a strategy for heightening the latent connectivity between the street, site and internal space of the house.

The stage 1a entry forecourt mediates between the internal dwelling functions and the public urban functions of Patrick Street by providing space for a vehicle to park and for neighbours to meet. A window seat projects into the forecourt acting as a filter between domestic and urban activity, allowing occupants to survey the street and capture winter, morning sunlight. The retained portion of the original verandah is redefined as a children’s nursery clad with fiberglass acting as a lantern to the street.

The stage 1b rear yard landscape is divided into a utility yard on the south edge and a play / entertaining space on the north edge. The utility yard contains drying space and a covered external workshop which doubles as an intimate external dining space. The play / entertaining space connects to the internal living space via a deck which is shaded by a pre-existing overhanging tree.

The stage 2 internal alterations take the form of a number of built insertions in the retained primary structure of the house. These insertions engage with the environmental character (sunlight/shade, warmth/coolth, aspects) and existing physical character of the space (structure, surface, construction) whilst also accommodating necessary functional artifice. This technique allows seemingly incongruous functions to coexist side-by-side to maximize available internal space. The insertions are broken down into the following elements: the urban / domestic interface, the northern edge, the bedroom filter and the utility wall.

photos by Shannon McGrath
1 yard
2 workshop
3 deck
4 service yard
5 utilities
6 kitchen / dining / living
7 bed
8 study
9 nursery / spare
10 carport / forecourt

floor plan
east elevation

north elevation

section

1 kitchen / dining / living
2 bed
3 utility
4 service yard

0 1 2 3 4 5 6m
Memorial has the capacity to raise one set of (cultural) values over another. Rather than promoting a specific ideology, this proposed memorial seeks to engage the visitor from their own perspective, and to provoke thought, to add richness and personalisation to the experience of remembering.

Monument, memorial, community.

To find relevance today in the landing of Cook at Kurnell Point, we can look at Cook’s arrival as the beginning a new journey. That is; where Cook’s journey arrived, collectively ours begins.

It is right to reflect, to question and to appraise our own journey. (Individually/Collectively) It is also important to look forward, to chart our journey’s course and where necessary, to take the opportunity to re-align ourselves.

All Australians are invited to write about journey. Each of these stories and hopes are then folded into the form of a paper boat and an envelope, posted and collected at Kurnell Point. On the anniversary of Cook’s arrival the paper boats (biodegradable) are released, en masse, at Kurnell Peninsular.

This is a unifying act that is a symbol of both diversity and community. This idea takes the opportunity to reflect on our path to this point and to plan our way forward as a larger connected group, to generate new paths and to start new journeys.
A Meeting: a Moment

The moment Captain Cook stepped ashore on Kamodd petimbaan (the future of Australia changed). This proposal for the Captain Cook Memorial attempts to mark this significant event in history - a moment, a meeting - within a place, design and spectacle. It lives by becoming part of the moment, of arrival, the appearance of a ship at sea, and the first meeting of two cultures at the Kamoor site.

The site and its medieval cultural relics, located on a remote and largely uninhabited island, is a place where, for the first time, the European maritime world intersected with the Asian/Melanesian/Pacific world. In the wake of Captain Cook's visit, the island became a stopover for seafarers and traders, who left behind objects and alien artifacts, marking an important moment in the history of the region.

In this way, the memorial sits at the heart of this moment and cultures meet. It is a place where the past and present intersect, where the memories of Captain Cook and his crew are honored, and where the legacy of his voyage is preserved for future generations.

The site is a place of great significance, not only in terms of history but also in terms of culture and tradition. It is a place where the stories of Captain Cook and his crew are told, and where the memories of those who have visited this place are preserved. It is a place where the past and present meet, and where the legacy of the voyage is celebrated.

The memorial is a reminder of the importance of these events, and of the role that Captain Cook played in shaping the course of history. It is a place where the story of Captain Cook and his voyage is told, and where the memories of those who have visited this place are preserved.

The site is a place of great significance, not only in terms of history but also in terms of culture and tradition. It is a place where the stories of Captain Cook and his crew are told, and where the memories of those who have visited this place are preserved. It is a place where the past and present meet, and where the legacy of the voyage is celebrated.
Memorial has the capacity to raise one set of (cultural) values over another. Rather than promoting a specific ideology, this proposed memorial seeks to engage the visitor from their own perspective, and to provoke thought, to add richness and personalisation to the experience of remembering.

This proposal for the Cook Memorial marks this significant event without judgment, opinion or glorification. It does so by returning us to the moment of arrival, the appearance of a ship at sea, and the first meeting of two cultures at Kurnell point. Sixteen sculptural objects, just offshore, remind us of how unusual the appearance of a European ship at sea must have been for the indigenous people of the area. Likewise, the dark concrete sculptures evoke the new and unfamiliar forms of the Australian coast and landscape for the arriving Europeans. The outermost object marks the location of the moored Endeavour, while the smaller pieces track a path to the shore. Looking back from the point at which Captain James Cook stepped ashore, the sixteen sculptures align to form the Endeavour. At this point, the moment of landing, more than 200 years hence, becomes a new moment at which the image of the ship becomes visible for visitors today. These sculptural works play with notions of perception and perspective. They are experienced as both a figurative image of the Endeavour, as well as a collection of strange and phenomenal landscape objects scattered in the shallows.
What is a surface that can evoke a sense of the (performing) arts in the cultural context of the Gold Coast? There are many clichéd interpretations of the culture of the Gold Coast. In this proposal there is no attempt to provide a definitive take on this issue. Rather, this approach is intentionally evocative and ambiguous. As such it is possible to read the outcome in any number of ways and with potentially polarized opinions or emotions.

Convex mirrors are arranged in a radial pentagonal geometry. This particular pattern has been devised as it is able to be set out mathematically, yet it possesses a dynamic quality due to the coincidence of the radial/pentagonal grid. It is proposed that the circles which set out the mirrors be painted on the fly tower in three shades of charcoal paint. The result is a filigree under-layer to the mirrors themselves. Together, the mirrors and paint redefine the tower in a way that is both singularly expressive and complex within itself. It is thought that the surfaces would be spot lit in the evenings using white and coloured light to good effect.

Through its mirrored surfaces, the tower will reflect its physical surroundings in round miniatures. From one direction this will be the lake and the towers of Surfers Paradise, and from the other, the distant mountains. It will be alive in some light and recessive in others.

As such, it will mean different things to different people. It will have its matinee mood and its night life. To some people it will recall mirror balls, sequins and glomesh... To others it will appear progressive, contemporary and fluid... It may also appear to be theatrical, jewellery-like, or as a new art piece... It may just have a subliminal effect in tuning peoples experience to the occasion of visiting the arts centre. In any case it walks the fine line between serious and folly without condescension, slapstick or conservatism.

These interpretations oscillate between high and low culture. Rather than determining for others any single view of what the culture of the Gold Coast is, the scheme attempts to provoke other people to find connections between the façade and the cultural landscape of the Gold Coast. Both literally and metaphorically the proposal reflects the physical context and personal interpretations of the Gold Coast back to the viewer.
The site is a remnant residential building sitting within a semi-industrial precinct of Brisbane’s inner-city. The industrial context is accepted as it exists, and is introduced onto the site and into the downstairs public spaces of the office, in contrast to private working spaces upstairs.

The additions and alterations are created out of spatial, architectural and social agendas, rather than precious attitudes to materials and the existing built fabric.

The office operates as a place for the development of the individual, and for the collaborative development of design, theory and practice. Individuality is the cornerstone of the practice, yet through collaboration, the acts of individuals become blurred. In this context, boundaries and definitions are explored. The result is a sequence of spaces that are linked/separated via ‘threshold’ detailing to reinforce the organisation principles in the practice.

Thresholds exist at a number of levels; individuals, pairs of individuals, working office/public office, office building/site, site/street, street/suburb, suburb/city. As well as joining/separating, these thresholds attempt to make sense of the peculiarities of the remnant building and its equally peculiar surroundings in the following ways;

A folded concrete plate sits off the building’s undercroft, separated by a margin in local bluestone. A visitor steps off this mannered palette of local materials into the undercroft’s entry alcove.

The undercroft explores scale, comfort and pleasure within the context of the industrial. The undercroft is a transition space that insulates and filters the outside world from the studio space.

Dark turns to light at the level of the upstairs floor finish. The planning of the upper floor working area operates in varying degrees of collective and individual privacy, as an expression and requirement of our architectural process. At the communal core of the scheme, all old walls are removed to make way for the common stair and collaboration table. Nevertheless, the individual rooms retain their identity through the use of deep thresholds over the head of the corridor openings and across the central spine. There remains a sense of entering sequential rooms, maintaining the identity of individuals along this path, as well as one of the collective.
existing upper floor plan

1 stair
2 store
3 driveway
4 carpark
5 office
6 entry
7 tea room
8 bathroom

existing lower floor plan
MAGNETIC ISLAND DEVELOPMENT

This mixed use development on Magnetic Island, off the coast from the North Queensland city of Townsville, continues the recent development of a new commercial heart for the island at Nelly Bay. Located adjacent the ferry terminal, the design addresses two key views of it, and responds accordingly with two different external treatments.

First, from the ocean approach to the island, a southern view of the building reveals the ‘inside’ face of the unit party walls, that are designed to both cut out summer sun as well as focus views to the south. These are proposed to be clad in granite, reflecting the geology of the island. From a distance, the building appears as a singular mass sitting between the green water and stone/green landscape of the hill behind.

Once at the ferry terminal, the ‘outside’ face of party walls are revealed. These faces are not visible from the ocean but present back into Nelly Bay now very much a commercial hub. Here the grain of individual units is revealed, and each party wall is painted with a letter from the nautical flag alphabet. These flags spell out a message taken from Robert Louis Stevenson’s Treasure Island – ‘this is a handy cove and a pleasant sittivated grog shop.’ This comment is made by Billy Bones as he surveys his new surroundings in search of shelter, prospect, and adventure.

The flags also add vibrancy to the commercial heart of the Bay, and are located above the commercial component of the development that includes numerous tenancies, and appropriately, a new pub beneath the text ‘grog shop’.
There are three primary spatial contexts which define the Purton building. These are: the exterior expression, the laboratory space and the circulation spaces.

The exterior expression of the building in the campus is governed by the Nudgee College colour strategy for the external building appearance which was instituted in 1973. This strategy seeks coherence between buildings on the campus through the use of consistent colour (Dulux Nudgee Cream and Red). Understanding the need to render the building to remedy decaying brickwork it is proposed that the primary exterior faces of the building accept a “Nudgee Cream” finish.

The laboratory space is a controlled setting used for focussed inquiry by didactic or practical means. This suggests a neutral space free of distraction where the activity of science becomes the focus (i.e. experimentation and display).

The circulation spaces (stairs and corridors) are spaces of transition. Transition between the exterior expression (real world) and the laboratory space (controlled context of scientific enquiry). Both of these contexts are colour neutral environments (cream and white/black respectively). To illuminate the experience of transition, contrast is sought between the two neutral environments and the transition space. i.e. a vibrant/complex/stimulating coloured/textured space.

In education, scientific inquiry creates a dynamic world view for a student, with each new inquiry shifting previous perceptions. i.e. What the student learns in the laboratory transforms their world view and in turn their world view shapes their further inquiry. The transition spaces (stairs and corridors) between the two spheres (real world and controlled laboratory) can illuminate this dynamism by heightening the shifted perception of space when viewed in the context of another space. Coloured dots screen printed on the glazing in the corridor creates an interference of colours causing the viewer in the lab to see the colours shift in the corridor space.

It is said that boys learn more effectively via self discovery of knowledge through experiment rather than by didactic means. In keeping with this the building is not deterministic in its message.
NUDGE COLLEGE TIERNEY HALL REFURBISHMENT

This project establishes an engagement between the existing geometric and suggestive building forms outside, and the insertion of the new theatre & drama rooms inside.

Rather than ignoring or trying to overwhelm the existing building (which was neither affordable nor practicable), this approach works with its somewhat strange and unique collection of external forms. More than this, the existing forms generate the new architecture and interior experience of Tierney Hall.

This approach can achieve continuity (and intensification of these forms) from outside to inside, and a fit between new and old parts of the building. The notion of continuity is not intended to suggest a copy of the existing forms or materials, but the initiation of a dialogue with them.

It can also reconcile the theatre as an architectural type, with the existing building’s architectural language of strong, simple geometric forms. These formal and decorative strategies are intended to be used in a playful, mysterious, atmospheric and space-making ways – that is, as a ‘theatrical’ re-interpretation of the exterior.
1 drama studio
2 drama link
3 north foyer
4 lobby
5 ticketing booth/bar
6 stage wing north
7 main drama theatre
8 amenities lobby
9 pwd amenities
10 male amenities
11 female amenities
12 cleaners
13 comms/security
14 south foyer
15 storage
16 auditorium

level 1 floor plan
level 2 floor plan

1  north mezzanine
2  north plant mezzanine
3  sound booth
4  auditorium
5  south mezzanine
6  store
7  south plant mezzanine
north elevation

east elevation

south elevation

west elevation
The brief was to utilise materials made available by sponsors (colorbond and laminate), with an undefined budget (some thousands of dollars) and assembled by a volunteer contractor. The theme promoted by the RAIA Qld Chapter President was the ability of architects to produce accessible and affordable design. Installation was limited to two hours.

Several observations were made: whilst donated materials were at no cost to the institute, they were at a cost to the industry and the environment; utilisation of building materials and a contractor spoke more of ‘building industry’ (as opposed to the architectural profession); two hour installation time was a limiting issue; the president’s agenda was fundamental.

The aim was to produce temporary architecture depicting an architectural process – the inception of ideas, presentation of ideas, experimentation with ideas, and the manifestation of ideas into a spatial effect. The A1 paper sheet was chosen as an appropriate building unit to represent the architectural profession. A wall as a backdrop was concluded as an appropriate subject. The A1 sheet was used to prepare concepts and drawings, showing how to make the wall using the sheet. Drawings were used to make the wall physically and provide all necessary documentation for its construction. The front face was faceted, clean white and geometric. When front-lit, these properties were explored. When back-lit, the printed working drawing and folding process used to make the wall were revealed – colourful, organic and enigmatic. Two lighting modes were used to signify formal and informal proceedings.

Paper was the communicator and building unit, concept and spatial effect, illuminated with light exploring its attributes and exploiting its richness.

In 2005, the wall was built for a second time, as a backdrop for a wedding in Melbourne.
plan above hanger

plan through paper

front light elevation

back light elevation

| 0 | 1 | 2m |
QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY HUMAN MOVEMENT PAVILION

The brief was for the low cost provision of amenities, one teaching space, stores and a covered outdoor space. The site provided was adjacent (but some distance from) an existing green Titan shed on the main playing field adjacent to the rear campus entrance.

The first formative decision was to “accept the unacceptable.” This meant working directly off the end of the existing shed, as opposed to making a new building entirely removed from it as briefed. This allowed us to present the complex of facilities as a single entity, and work with the relatively inexpensive construction technique of the Titan shed. This was done with a continuous billboard-like white fascia that tied the new and old parts together, providing a deeply shaded verandah edge to the building. The green ‘camouflage’ colour of the existing shed was continued across the new additions, and into the interior, merging it with the landscape at the edge of the field, while the more conspicuous white fascia floats above.

From this point, design considerations turned to the visual quality of the building, and its perception from and across the green playing field. While its construction technique is simple – even crude in its detail – the perception of the hovering white fascia from afar could become bold, playful and experimental. Hence, visual artist Dirk Yates was invited to collaborate on the project due to his work and interest in issues relating to perception. This collaboration began in the conceptual phase of the project, enabling the integration of both disciplines into a singular expression.

Through this process, the fascia evolved to include a number of references to perception, and in particular, the perception of time and movement in sport. In the same way as many traditional sports pavilions include time pieces to measure the duration of a game, or the speed of a race, the Human Movement Pavilion fascia illustrates the passage of time in hours, days, months and seasons. Through translucent panels that glow green in varying intensity over the days and months, and shadow-casting elements that specifically catch the summer sun, the passing of time is made visible. Other fascia elements are designed to appear white in the frontal and long-distance perception of the building, yet reveal their hidden yellow colour as one moves around and across the field at oblique angles. In this way, the building engages with the passing of time, and with the physical movement and play on the field.
1 existing sporting oval
2 human movement pavilion

site plan

0 50 100m
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
CHRISTMAS CARD

The design of the RAIA 2005 Christmas message seeks meaning in the engagement between the sender and recipient to lift the ubiquitous Christmas card out of the ordinary. The tactile opportunities of the communication method and the ability to communicate design matters representing the RAIA’s work were inherent in the brief. These aims are pursued with the strengths of traditional mail;

- Traditional mail contains a string of tactile moments that can be heightened for both the sender and recipient. The choice of implement for writing is made deliberate and thoughtful marks are therefore encouraged. The acts of sealing and unsealing the envelope are specific. Recognition of something that is not received every day is apparent. The tactile nature of the folded paper is explored. Standard expectation gives way to pleasant surprise with the first glimpse of the message. Hidden greetings and personalization lie within.
- As the envelope unfolds the message in card form becomes central. The generic message of the card then gives way to personal greetings which are more like a letter. The letter can then be made card again.
- As the greetings and the sequence of events fades, there is opportunity to study the print. (Further joy is in the detail.) It is then possible to understand that the messenger has provided for uses beyond the simple conveyance of a greeting. Display is possible as is activity and even further transformation. The card can be transformed into a small icon of the Christmas season.

This last act gives the card (now a christmas star) an opportunity to move the engagement beyond the sender and recipient into new communications between the recipient and 3rd parties, previously unrelated to the communication chain.
wishing you a wonderful CHRISTMAS from the queensland chapter of the ROYAL AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE of ARCHITECTS display fold star fold m3architecture © private communication
SMALL AUSTRALIAN PROJECTS TEA TOWEL
The roast chicken in the oven says, amongst other things: ‘Welcome home’, ‘Sunday roast’ and ‘You’re part of the family’… a family and kitchen icon.
When asked to design a tea towel for Small Australian Projects, we understood the context of the tea towel in many homes across the world, was one of dressing up the oven door.
Based on these 2 observations we asked the question: what more would you want to see on or about the oven, than a chicken 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

SMALL AUSTRALIAN PROJECTS MILLPOND MIRROR
m3architecture’s collaboration with a specialist glass forge has allowed the characteristics of glass to be stretched to their limits in the design and production of the millpond mirror for SAP. The mirror expresses the liquid properties of glass, capturing the moment a still pond is disturbed. The result is unique in that no other clear or mirrored glass piece in the world is known to have convex and concave curves in harmony with a continuous flat surface, in a repeatable and stable format. This design represents a concept piece supported by the most innovative techniques in glass forging.

Functionally the piece provides multiple opportunities:
• A makeup mirror and dress mirror in one.
• As furniture, the mirror has the capacity to magnify and highlight feature pieces such as; a vase of flowers, a sculptural piece, or the light and intensity of a candelabra.
• The piece is able to be integrated with wall linings and cladding.

Each mirror is forged by hand and as such each piece is individual. Traces of this innovative hand made process are visible in the peaks of the ripples.
THINK BRICK ABOUT FACE COMPETITION
‘Home Game for the Local Hero’

For this invited competition, we were asked to explore the theme of colour use in brickwork. Our scheme proposed a community shelter (including a roofed seating area, BBQ facilities and a basketball half-court) set on a park between suburban homes and a local shopping centre. It is intended to offer residents a place for formal and informal gathering, and uses colour to provide a new reading of the Australian (suburban) landscape and the mass-produced brick veneer homes that dominate much of our post-WWII suburbia.

The proposal has five key elements constructed in brick, including two walls that re-construct the works of well know Australian artists – namely the landscape paintings of Fred Williams and the suburban imagery of Howard Arkley. Underpinning these references to the Australian built and natural landscapes is a conceptual and pragmatic framework that defined our strategy for colour use. Most notably, we attempted to reinforce that bricks are earthly and that colour is region specific according to clay deposits. To further emphasize the point of regional specificity, we chose bricks offered by a single local manufacturer which led to a number of important project outcomes. First, it illustrated the potential of a limited colour palette to achieve a range of graphic outcomes and to carry conceptual content. Second, it demonstrated these possibilities for colour without relying on bricks transported over large distances – a common practice in Australia with a significant environmental impact. Finally, it sought to initiate a region specific architecture emerging from the colour possibilities of locally made brick, reinforcing a sense of place in the homogenous expanses of suburbia.

The scheme was awarded joint first prize in the 2008 About Face Awards.
UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND CENTRE FOR MARINE STUDIES LABORATORY

A stated brief requirement for the Centre of Marine Studies (CMS) laboratories refurbishment, “achieving an extremely low capital cost”, had a defining effect on the design approach and outcomes for this project.

Strategies normally employed for insertion works to conservation structures are utilized here in a subversive way to express both new and old and to make comment on specific budgeting and procurement processes. An architectural expression rooted in the principles of heritage work is used to draw parallels and highlight differences between the issues of cultural value and minimising capital cost. Material normally regarded as expendable and prosaic is redefined as precious.

Junctions of existing and new are expressed as are the building technologies used to put them in place. The new is defined and dated by a single colour palette that creates vitality against the existing finishes and at the same time marks a larger pattern of insertion, re-use and the history of past functions.

Parallel with this theory the re-use of large portions of existing built elements and fittings allowed for tangible environmental savings.

Economic rationalism has dominated political and social landscapes for some time. Here the management technique is turned to the users advantage by providing unexpected, interesting and responsible outcomes. It is also hoped the work encourages debate about the visible signs of current value systems within the industry and at large.

It seems appropriate that a discourse questioning accepted industry practices and values should occur within a University environment, an environment sustained by rigorous research, questioning, debate and review.
level 3 floor plan

1  student laboratory
2  coral laboratory
3  fish laboratory
4  pc2 aquaculture laboratory
5  clean / wet laboratory
6  histology
7  radiation room
8  post-doctorate office
9  office
10  amenities
11  glass wash
12  cold room
13  freezer
14  foyer

reflected ceiling plan

floor finishes plan
UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND CHEMISTRY BUILDING
LEVEL 6
As just one in a series of major laboratory refurbishments throughout the University of Queensland’s chemistry building, the concept for the project was to establish an identity and image for the user group on this level, among the proliferation of new and necessarily white labs. This was achieved by enhancing the existing corridor that runs the entire length of the fitout, dividing laboratories from research offices, and by applying a striking black and white striped graphic to this circulation space. The graphic forms an exaggerated perspective upon arrival at the floor, and a distinctive backdrop to both the offices and laboratory spaces that flank it.

photos by Shannon McGrath and Jon Linkins
1 office
2 corridor
3 pwd amenities
4 research laboratory
5 equipment room
6 plant
7 chemical store

floor plan

10 5 10m
UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND MICRO HEALTH LABORATORY
The building is the result of a masterplan by m3architecture to accommodate the upgrade and expansion of facilities for the School of Animal Studies at the University of Queensland’s Gatton Campus. This campus comprises approx 900 Ha of agricultural facilities and has historically focused on an agricultural curriculum. It is located in the Lockyer Valley - a significant crop farming district in South East Queensland. The periphery of the campus is rural and the university complex merges seamlessly into the surrounding farms. However, the core of the campus is dense and urban, containing 1970’s brick institutional buildings, mostly planned around a ceremonial walkway. Buildings addressing the walkway are composed of sculptural forms juxtaposed against simple orthogonal backgrounds.

The master planning process illustrated the need for new facilities at the rear of the existing Animal Studies complex, as well as a new pedestrian circulation spine off the ceremonial walkway. In conceptual terms, the new building takes cues from the existing walkway as a sculptural counterpoint to its ‘back of house’ neighbours.

The project brief outlined requirements for a PC2 laboratory facility accommodating 40 students, and became the first built stage of the masterplan, sited prominently on the new pedestrian spine. Consequently, the context influenced the facades, conceived as a counterpoint to both the sterile building interior and neighbouring buildings. The brick skin involved Ashley Paine, and was used to further a series of ‘self portraits’. It is constructed from 2 brick types with a range of bolster cut and laying techniques, with a material link to the predominantly red brick campus.

In the building, science and art sit alongside each other, expressed as parallel yet separate disciplines.

photos by Jon Linkins, image by Ashley Paine
1 prep room
2 student lab
3 cold room
4 plant
5 existing laboratory
6 existing animal house

floor plan

0 1 2 3 4 5m
UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND SCIENCE LEARNING CENTRE

The Science Learning Centre is a new fitout that accommodates non-structured learning and allows a base for first year science students. The science faculty’s objectives required a flexible, personalized space, marketable as a place for young people interested in science, with a memorable aesthetic. The outcome is a new way of socialising and peer to peer learning in which students are afforded flexibility and perceived ownership of university space.

Individual overhead lamps with pull cords allow users to appropriate the space by controlling the quality of light. The aesthetic of these fittings dominates the space, emphasising the individuality of the user and acting as a place-making device.

Non-traditional services runs and fittings encourage inhabitants to question outcomes, part of the scientific process.

The floor and built-in joinery finishes compliment the fernery and jacaranda’s to the north and eucalypts to the south. New glazing and reflective window jambs were added and brick sill’s lowered, enhancing views and the quality of natural light as well as reflecting landscape into the room.

Loose furniture is white, against a dark floor, in order to highlight inhabitants use.
reflected ceiling plan

floor plan

1  tea bench
2  student learning centre
3  meeting room
4  plant

1 1 2 3 4m
The brief for this small fitout was to turn an existing tiered lecture theatre within the University of Queensland’s 1940’s built Great Court, into a flat floored seminar room with loose furniture for flexibility. Creating a non-tiered room was essential – however the stripping bare of decades of layers of detail in favour of new and ‘better’ was called into question.

The proposal identified the elements of the existing fabric which contributed to the sense of history felt within the space. These elements were re-used in utilitarian ways to protect their future. Importantly, the selected re-use also sought to highlight the object or artefact, drawing attention to aspects of the fabric which may have passed unnoticed in the past life.

Hence, the existing tongue and groove floor became new desks, old desks became window dressings, and bench seating became become acoustic absorption on the ceiling. In addition to this, the painted wall datum was preserved, as well as the lighting system, chalkboard and signage.

The old desks were upturned and placed on runners and are free to move on the walls about the space to control light and ambience. In their open position, sitting alongside the windows, they appear as deep reveals. The glancing light highlights decades of graffiti in relief. After installation one piece of graffiti became particularly apparent and appropriate to this project – “Question Everything” to which someone has responded “Why?”. 

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND STEELE BUILDING SEMINAR ROOM

photos by m3architecture and Jon Linkins
VOLBROKER FITOUT
This project was an office fitout for Volbroker, a futures trading company. The tenancy was located on level 27 of the Chifley Tower in Sydney with views to Sydney harbour. The common spaces (tea room and meeting room) are located at the edge of the building to afford the view to all employees. The main trading office is open plan separated from the common space by a screen, constructed from electrical cable tray sections.
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VOLBROKER FITOUT
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