The Act of Reflective Practice
The Emergence of iredale pedersen hook architects

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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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 in 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; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party acknowledged.

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Chapter 1
The Act of Reflective Practice

iredale pedersen hook is an emerging Australian architecture practice with offices in Perth and Melbourne and a rapidly expanding, diverse body of work throughout Australia. From the winery region of Victoria’s Yarra Valley, to the desert of the North Kimberley region, through suburban Perth and the rural edge of Melbourne to remote Christmas Island, the projects are as individual and eclectic as the landscape they occupy. Each piece of architecture seeks to embody a unique design response of innovation and delight. If necessary the works can be gathered in relation to their geographical location, but the projects actually belong to a collection of thematic concerns that evolve and develop. The firm is dedicated to designing effective sustainable buildings with a responsible environmental and social agenda.

The architecture of iredale pedersen hook emerges from a landscape that is dominated by the horizon. In Australia the desert and the ocean operate as constant counterpoints to the occupation of land by built objects. The work shares an understanding of an edge condition that is described by remote locations, incredible sites and the centre of the peripheral.

The practice operates around three very different individuals with three very different approaches to their work, however it proves to be a very complementary assemblage due to the collaborative skills of the partners. Iredale is the artist who draws incessantly and produces beautiful watercolours of the conceptual ideas within each project; Pedersen provides the social conscience for the team as his strong environmental bias is underpinned by a functional elegance; Hook, on the other hand, is direct and pragmatic and seeks clarity in each scheme.

The above passage is the evolving and occasionally edited profile statement that communicates the definition and ambition of iredale pedersen hook architects. It appears on our website, in our self-published books and exhibition catalogues, it fronts up our curriculum vitae, and shorter versions appear in various documents that are present in the international architectural press. What this text attempts to convey is the nature of a small architectural practice from a minor city in a minor country. It is confident and aspirational in its tone and certainly the expression of these qualities alone could be appreciated as Australian, regardless of the rhetoric or the nature of the work that follows. At the core of the research embodied in this PhD is a desire to reflect and identify the manner in which three individuals, young architects, came together and the manner in which their inherent value systems inform and determine the way they produce architecture.

The PhD offers a systematic distillation of the common value systems behind the individuals who comprise iredale pedersen hook architects, identifying the particularity of each practitioner in terms of their expertise, experience and character within the collective and the situations from which the individuals have emerged. The research tracks the evolution of the practice and identification of its architecture through the RMIT Invitational Masters of Architecture by Project program and PhD by Project program, contextualizing the work through the establishment of a network of mentors and peers – not only of the practice but also of the individuals – and ultimately locates the work locally, nationally and globally. When introduced to the idea of the ‘Reflective Practitioner’², the group’s architectural
View across the rolling hills of rural Victoria north of Melbourne from the sheep house.
practice shifted towards an informed point of self-awareness. The research also explores how this shift may expand the character of the work and transform the manner in which the architecture is conceived, described and ultimately produced.

Through research across the PhD and the accompanying Masters by my two practice partners and collaborators, Adrian Iredale and Finn Pedersen, I have isolated the primary concerns embedded within our work and developed a systematic but qualitative method of assessing the impact of these concerns across a selection of iredale pedersen hook projects. Together, the process of clarification, the questioning of our ability to claim authorship, and presence of all partners in each project may offer a qualitative framework for other ‘Self-Curating Collectives’ to establish criteria for exploring the evolution of their work.

As a direct result of the Reflective Practice process, the architecture of iredale pedersen hook has taken a significant evolutionary step where the three individuals have begun to operate in a more cohesive manner and the inherent value system and concerns behind the work are now able to inform the future direction of the architecture. The consequence of this shift has been identified and several recent projects are studied, revealing traces of the infection of characteristics between individual partners across the projects. Subsequently, the mapping of the concerns provides a measure of the delight or disappointment that this hybridisation of talent and ideals may create. The research ultimately seeks to demonstrate that the combination of individuals – in what may be regarded as an unconventional architectural practice operating across the Australian continent with the awareness of a common intent, a shared goal and overarching philosophy – may serve to generate a future architecture of quality.

Footnotes
1 For example it appears in New Trends in Architecture Europe and Asia Pacific 2006-2007 Exhibition catalogue and ‘Australia – Living off the Land’, a+u 07.08
2 Leon van Schaik, Mastering Architecture, p8
3 ibid, p114 van Schaik offers this very useful term in the description of several practices that shall be further identified in this PhD.
Chapter 2
Better: Values that Define a Practice

Immigrant Kids
Adrian Iredale, Finn Pedersen and I met while studying Architecture at Curtin University in 1987. We did not know each other prior to commencing study, but shared the reality of being ‘immigrant kids’. The 1980s in Perth was a hugely profitable and dynamic era of “more millionaires per capita than anywhere in the world.” The fortunes of multi-millionaires Alan Bond, Kerry Stokes and Robert Holmes a’ Court, and the superiority of these tycoons to their ‘Eastern States’ counterparts was a constant source of discussion. Bond’s America’s Cup victory over the New York Yacht Club in 1983 in a boat with a ‘secret design winged keel’ was a fairytale story of triumph against the odds. All this occurred against a background of Government corruption and ‘Bottom of the Harbour’ tax schemes. Ultimately, the stockmarket crash of 1987 lead to the demise of what were significant times of achievement but also flagrant representations of excess. It was a time of great social change in Western Australia. These three suburban boys witnessed the beginnings of a truly multi-cultural society; at the time, delis were owned by Italian families, fish and chip shops were owned by Greeks, Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants made the inner urban suburbs home and a large influx of South Africans made an enclave in the inland northern suburbs. This was ‘White Australia’ in its clichéd form. As white immigrant kids we didn’t suffer the other prejudices that beset our Continental or Asian mates, but we did deal with other realities.

Iredale and I grew up in the northern beachside suburbs of Perth, in Marmion and Ocean Reef respectively. Pedersen on the other hand was from ‘south of the river’ in the suburb of Applecross. Iredale and I were both English and arrived in Perth as children with our families: Iredale in 1971 on a ship as one of the last ‘10 Pound Poms’ from the working class North Midlands town of Doncaster, and my family in 1981, from a village on the suburban fringe of Bristol, on an ‘Assisted Passage Visa’. Intriguingly, our arrivals in Australia date the spread of the Perth suburban sprawl; i.e., Marmion was the edge coastal suburb in 1971 and some ten years later the sprawl had moved 12 km north to Ocean Reef. Perhaps for the English the lure of the beach was unavoidable or irresistible.

Pedersen was born in Australia but his Danish father, who moved to Perth in 1956, held him strongly to the immigrant idea that there was another ‘home’. In an interview with iph published in Houses Magazine in 2006 Pedersen elaborated on this point: “My father was Danish, but I was born here. This idea of someone who’s left home and gone to a new country, a new world, is something we share. We wonder what values that actually brings to a place – whether there is a different kind of relationship to a place, and whether you think that matters. There’s not a lot of blue sky in the UK or Denmark, but here there’s an obsession with horizon and sky. Every time I go to Europe and come back, I realise there’s something quite powerful about it. I would argue strongly that this idea of ‘home’ and the ability to belong to a place, but remain removed is one of the key agendas that the immigrant perception brings to an understanding of place.”

Importantly all three partners attended their local high school, all three excelled in art or ‘technical drawing’, graduating in 1986. All three chose to attend Curtin University’s Architecture
Program rather than the more esteemed program at the University of Western Australia (UWA), making a distinct position even at this point. Curtin was a brand new University, an evolution of the former West Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT) and reflected an aspirant agenda on a distinctively Modernist campus of off-form concrete architecture, rather than the stiff limestone clad buildings, lush gardens and riverside setting of UWA.

All of us were non-architectural in our backgrounds, Iredale's father didn't have a trade when he arrived in Australia and did what he could 'making the best of every situation' eventually working for mining company Alcoa and rising to the position of foreman at Mount Tom Price, the site of Mt Whaleback mine in Western Australia's Pilbara region. He left the mines and settled his family in the northern suburbs, owning several businesses including an ice cream shop at a local market. Pedersen's father was a local shop-front optometrist, straying far from his formal training at the Royal Academy in London. He relocated to Perth due to family tuberculosis and sought refuge in the dry, warm climate. My father, an electrician in the UK who worked on the supersonic jet Concorde at British Aerospace in Bristol, could only get work wiring up fridges on arrival in Perth. He subsequently retrained as a postman, then went back to school to gain enough academic qualification to become a Customs Officer. In each case the central idea behind immigration remained that Australia was a worthwhile place to bring up a family and offered a 'better' life than either England or Denmark did. The direct values that emerged from this childhood experience included the clear idea that opportunities, when presented, should be pursued, and that persistence prevails. On reflection the other aspect that connects the childhoods of the iiph partners is our relationships to water. Iredale and I grew up in the northern suburbs, with the beach and the horizon over the Indian Ocean dominating our lives, while Pedersen's youth was marked by a daily engagement with the Swan River. In effect, expanses of water and the horizon formed a constant for all three partners.

Curtin University and Mentors

Iredale, Pedersen and I entered the architecture program at Curtin University in 1987. At that time it was a dynamic, engaging environment that reinforced the core values fostered by the WA state school system. Our first year classes were dominated by Duncan Richards, a Modernist scholar and local luminary architect educator and historian, and Bill Busfield, himself an English immigrant, Architectural Association alumni and what Professor Leon van Schaik refers to as an Archigram Cadet. Folklore surrounded these two figures. Richards was the 'local' who had worked for Bates Smart McCutcheon and more significantly for FGB Hawkins and Desmond Sands (refer Chapter 4); in the late 1960s he produced a house for his family in the hill suburbs to the east of Perth designed with his landscape architect wife Oline. An elegant structure utilising rudimentary technology, the building had few walls and tested the nature of enclosure in a Western Australian climate. Richards was an enigmatic, but highly generous teacher who, importantly, manifested a sense of confidence in what had happened and what was happening in Western Australian architecture, and the immediate relevance of local culture to an architectural education. Busfield, on the other hand, was the international connection. Educated at the renowned Architectural Association (AA) in London he spoke like a Beat poet, romanticised technology and its potential to change lives and make the world better, and had also produced prototype
houses in the Hills with fibreglass shell walls. Richards and Busfield reinforced the potential of Perth and the opportunity it presented. To Richards it represented engagement with an unencumbered Modernist agenda, to Busfield it resembled a pristine California so often quoted (by Western Australian writers) from Reyner Banham’s Los Angeles: the Architecture of Four Ecologies.8

Through Busfield we were introduced to Dick Donaldson and Geoff Warn, partners in Donaldson + Warn Architects, themselves products of Richards and Busfield, graduating from Curtin’s previous guise of WAIT. They had the added complexity of a close relationship with Peter Parkinson. Architect, occasional lecturer and theatre expert, Parkinson was an intriguing combination of Richards and Busfield; he was very English but in a theatrical, eccentric manner; also an AA alumnus, he had worked for Hawkins and Sands. Parkinson shared an office space with the fledgling Donaldson + Warn Architects practice and they worked together occasionally. Parkinson’s architecture was lean and direct: crisp Modernist buildings produced with an incredible economy of line and documentation. Famously, Parkinson designed a collection of theatre buildings from concrete block at UWA. The documents were virtually devoid of dimensions, relying almost entirely on block coursing and a relentless efficiency of design that embraced the traditional construction technique of blockwork, only slightly modifying it to become elegant enough for a university theatre. Doors and windows were consistent to enable the elimination of a schedule, and the entire specification was reputedly only one A3 sheet of notes. In Parkinson’s agenda this level of parsimony allowed the mute box to take on the distinction and romance of the theatre production; the architecture forming simply the enclosure for the particularity of program. The connection of this work in the lineage of Modernism in Perth architecture is explored in Chapter 4.

Surrounding these key figures was a collection of other players who all shared an unabashed optimism for Perth, but Dick Donaldson and Geoff Warn pursued the task of educating architects with the same rigour of their practice. Donaldson and Warn both worked in London and, through Busfield, were loosely attached to the AA during the critical and exciting years of the school under its then Chairman, Alvin Boyarsky – and, in fact, shared a flat with Christine Hawley (one-time practice partner of Peter Cook and present Dean at The Bartlett School University College London). They existed in an AA realm, going to exhibitions and lectures, “extracting”, as Warn put it to me once, “an education without paying.” Warn left London to drive across America, ending up in the early office of Morphosis in California, “living in their studio while working for them for a brief period. This was a time when Morphosis was designing buildings of extreme frugality, working with the challenge to invent a new architecture out of very little.”9 It was here in Los Angeles that he came to understand and appreciate the ‘ideal’ of Perth, “and, importantly, both were cities where everything appeared possible, arising from a frontier, edge-of-the-world mentality.”10 Warn returned to Perth and got back together with Donaldson who had also returned from London with a new enthusiasm for his home town; in 1985 they established Donaldson + Warn, Architects. Together the architects built a business with the aspiration and professional desire to be an international practice, despite being located in “the most isolated city in the world”. The partners embedded this potential in all who studied under them, and particularly
in those they embraced to become part of the office. The importance of this attitude to the young Iredale Pedersen Hook is critical in understanding our desires to look beyond Perth for points of reference and to understand how international conditions or precedent may be applied in a local context. Importantly, IPH now reverse this agenda, suggesting the potential for Western Australian architecture to be influential internationally.

Following the intensity of these first two years Iredale, Pedersen and I continued to work through the balance of our architecture degrees, remaining in contact with our key mentors. Iredale began working at Considine and Griffiths as an intern under the odd couple of surfing, hard-living Geoff Considine and the more restrained, heritage-focused Phillip Griffiths. Considine’s best work has a fragility and thinness arrived at through the erosion of structure and establishment of weight and counterpoint. Pedersen and I both completed internships at Donaldson + Warn. I chose to stay on and become part of the office while Pedersen began to look far beyond his immediate point of reference for inspiration and focus – to the Indigenous communities of Australia.

**Graduation Projects**

Our three 1991 graduation projects present a prophetic manifestation for future practice. Iredale and I both worked under our old mentor Duncan Richards while Pedersen chose to work with a new staff member at Curtin; an enigmatic American with a particular interest in Dutch architecture: Joseph Buch.

Iredale’s graduation project investigated an appropriate architecture for a marine and coastal exploration centre situated at a site on the beach adjacent to one of his surfing spots. Lucidly illustrated, the project explores a temporal relationship between land and water, drawing on geometries informed but not dependant upon rock formations and shell structure. The materiality informs by noting time and craft in an exterior skin that evolves over time; erosion, due to the extreme nature of the environment, is deliberately allowed to act upon the architecture.

My project reflected on the desire to be somewhere else, but also to raise the intensity of Perth; conveying a desire for Perth to become a real city. I proposed the reconstruction of four blocks of urban fabric, immediately north of the CBD (incidentally just around the corner from the Donaldson + Warn office where he was working at the time). “A slice of another city;” states the catalogue text. “Another time and place containing a populist living working eating sleeping shopping playing, generating a built culture so rich, complex and intense that it challenges the very existence of it’s surroundings.” The project generated a ‘wedge’ of massive built structure that operated as a constructed paradox of two opposing systems. A sympathetic collection of new buildings that responded to the existing street against an overarching framework that sought to unite them, providing barrier to the onslaught of large institutional buildings on the tight morphology of the eclectic small-scale fabric of Northbridge. Focused on the production of very large models supplemented by key diagrams, the project resisted the required prettiness of drawings prevalent at that time at Curtin University, preferring blunt, strong diagrammatic representation of the ideas. Interestingy the dissertation was produced as a magazine rather than a traditional thesis; I later became the Associate Editor of MONUMENT magazine.
Pedersen’s project took quite a different angle, producing what he referred to as a “White Place for Reconciliation” in the form of a museum that was to contain objects that could not be seen. Exercising this paradox into an architectural form and program and grafting it onto a piece of city, Pedersen sought to address the perception of the Indigenous community in urban context. By revealing the elements of misunderstood Indigenous culture this project looks towards a proposition of ‘cultural calibration’ whereby the preservation and communication of the oldest culture on the planet is affected by what is effectively an area of the western city dedicated to culture. So, by placing a cultural construct of the Indigenous community immediately adjacent to the area where high art and ‘white’ culture are prevalent, it seeks to provide a level of paradox but also a point of resistance for Indigenous culture to be equally as present as white culture.

Post Curtin
Following graduation Iredale continued to work at Considine and Griffiths, essentially saving money to move to Europe. He left Australia in 1992 to pursue work, travel and visit architecture throughout Europe. But most importantly he embarked upon post-graduate study at the Städelschule, Frankfurt, studying first under the direction of Peter Cook and then Spanish architect Enrique Miralles. Miralles had a profound affect on Iredale. The contemporary Spanish master tuned Iredale’s evocative formal tendencies and his sense of a non-rectilinear language. After completing his post-graduate studies, Iredale moved to Berlin to work in the office of Manfred Schiedhelm, one of the founding members of Team X. Primarily focused on large housing schemes, Schiedhelm’s practice looked particularly at the way in which large housing might be integrated into Berlin’s existing fabric. Iredale embraced the rigour and potentiality of social engagement in a city that was undergoing massive transformation during this post-Berlin Wall era. Eventually Iredale returned to Perth with a German girlfriend and, using his experience in Berlin, set about researching and studying the particular conditions that affect residential architecture in Perth, such as the backyard renovation, urban consolidation of housing stock and the impact of the Perth lifestyle on its housing. Working briefly with the Buchan Group he quickly moved to establish his own practice on the back of several small residential jobs, operating at that point from his apartment in Melford Court – a classic, 1960s Krantz and Sheldon building in West Perth (see Chapter 4). Iredale later did a renovation of the lobby, staircase and external elements of the public spaces of this building, which became the platform for several redevelopments of 1960s apartment buildings throughout Perth.

While Iredale entrenched himself in the capital’s urban fabric, Pedersen moved to Broome in north-west Australia to work with NBC, the Northern Building Corporation, essentially an Aboriginal-owned organisation that employed ‘white fellas’ to provide professional services for them to produce buildings (see Pedersen’s Masters). At this point he began extending his relationship with Indigenous culture and really seeking to gauge direct experience of Aboriginal communities and came to the realisation that there was an immediate need and an immediate affect. Moving on to engage directly with the communities, Pedersen realised the direct relationship between lack of housing / inadequate housing and the multitude of social problems that were confronting Indigenous Australians, particularly in the more remote areas of the far north-west.
Through NBC he worked on projects in Broome, but more particularly through the Kimberley, directly engaging with various language groups that predominated the area and the individuals who were actually associated with those language groups. He designed several significant projects around Broome and Derby, including a language centre at Halls Creek that was regarded at the time as being an important project in its engagement with Indigenous communities. As he later told Houses magazine: "The notion of rarified design was just not on the agenda. I learned very quickly that one had to tailor one’s design aspirations to a very real context. People’s needs were very real. Architecture can kill people in an Aboriginal community if you design the wrong infrastructure. In the evolution of my path, it was a very different terrain to work within, but it was great. I also delighted in the Kimberley landscape. I’ve always been an environmentalist. To go into that country and see the bush was a fundamental driving force." 13

He continued to work in Broome for another eight years, only really returning to Perth following the birth of his first child and focusing then on independent practice. He worked for a little time in Fremantle but more appropriately maintained his own particular relationships with government departments and communities in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions. At this point he was working on his own house on a ‘battle axe’ type block in Leederville and producing a series of Indigenous housing projects, some of which remained unbuilt, but several of which, specifically in Derby, formed the beginning of iph’s projects in remote communities and were really the starting point in Pedersen’s independent research into the realm of Indigenous housing. (Refer Remotely Sustainable, Pedersen’s Masters.)

Meanwhile, I continued to work at Donaldson + Warn, while teaching at both Curtin University and UWA. However I was keen to seek other professional options – no easy task in a recession-based Perth climate where projects for young architects were as insignificant as the financial remuneration. During this time I also began a friendship with Richard Black who had previously been a colleague at Donaldson + Warn and was now a full-time academic at Curtin University, producing some interesting projects and competitions with fellow academic Stephen Neille. 14 Black had returned from Germany several years prior following post-graduate study in Frankfurt, also at the Städelschule under Peter Cook. Black’s experience with Professor Cook left a lasting impression and fuelled at least a decade of architectural investigation for him. I decided to emulate the common path of young Perth architects going to London and enrolled at the Bartlett School of Architecture as a Masters student under Cook’s direct supervision. My research continued his undergraduate thesis on urban development to explore the particularities of London’s evolution as a city, specifically how its development had been controlled by a series of invisible diagrams that weren’t readily apparent without close examination and rarely read in combination. These diagrams and systems may take the form of bus routes, train timetables, invisible and visible development boundaries, post codes, the memory of a Black Cab driver or protected views through to significant monuments. The study argued that the confinement caused by the orchestrated constraint of these systems ensured that London remained a relatively flat city until the mid-1990s. In this way I sought to gauge the new realities of London and its physicality and importantly the desire of private development to expand the city vertically. Using the analysis of the diagrams to unpack some of the constraints in order to then impose
a new order: an order which responded more effectively to London's planar and geographic topographical relationship to the Thames river valley and looked particularly at the way in which these diagrams might become manifest in an architecture or urban system. So the proposition was for a grid of 86 towers across London with a consistent datum at peak but that projected downwards to the land mass that becomes manifest at the river; i.e., the towers at the river are taller than those at the high points of the city. The aim of this project was to demonstrate the way in which a larger overarching constraint system might begin to play a role in revitalising key components of London providing an 'Urban Acupuncture' to those particular areas (now in the depths of Olympic East London) that suffered damage during the Second World War and to define how a new type of urban system might be manifest onto the evolving city.

Childhood in the aspirational suburbs of Perth in the late 1980s and their early architectural experiences have been key influences on the value system shared by the partners of Iredale Pedersen Hook Architects. As this research will demonstrate, this value system and the particularities of the individuals have had a significant impact on the establishment and the evolution of the nature of the architecture produced by the practice. When placed in the context of the architectural climate and modernist heritage in Perth and located within national and international realm of architectural practice the value system is shaped further.
This is an often quoted phrase and, interestingly, part of the history section of many travel guides trying to reveal the character of Perth; for example, this one from yahoo7, a website connected with the Western Australian-owned 7Network media empire. “In the 1980s, it was said that Perth had more millionaires per capita than any other city in Australia. Huge business empires burgeoned at a rate completely disproportionate to a city of Perth’s size, and soon enough, with the high-profile fall from grace of the beer, yachting, media and art mogul Alan Bond in particular, Perth came to epitomise the consequences of ’80s greed. Throughout the boom and bust, the local Nyoongar population remained relentlessly disadvantaged.” http://au.travel.yahoo.com/guide/australia/western-australia/perth/history.html accessed 14.08.08

Perth became synonymous with this method of tax avoidance due to a high profile case that was tried in the late 1980’s. ‘Bottom of the Harbour’ tax avoidance was a form of tax avoidance used in Australia in the 1970s. Legislation (below) made it a criminal offence in 1980. The practice came to symbolise the worst of variously contrived tax strategies from those times. In its 1986/87 annual report, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) stated a total 6,688 companies had been involved, involving revenue of between $500 million and $1000 million. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bottom_of_the_harbour_tax_avoidance accessed 14.08.08

The ‘White Australia’ policy describes Australia’s approach to immigration, from federation until the latter part of the 20th century, which favoured applicants from certain countries. The abolition of the policy took place over a period of 25 years. It was finally abolished in 1973. http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/08abolition.htm accessed 14.08.08

A term derived from the ten pounds it cost British immigrants to sail to Australia.

‘Coast to Coast’ interview with Narelle Yabuka in Houses magazine issue 53, 2006, p120

Leon Van Schaik, Mastering Architecture, p72 and in his intro to Topography, Richard Black and Martyn Hook. Also Busfield is mentioned in Archigram’s Experimental Architecture, Peter Cook, 1970. Cook and Busfield ran studios between London and Perth with live links via telephone in the late 1970s.

7 quote groundcode goetz stoekmann have you seen it etc it has rarely been discussed I remember seeing a collection of slides of Duncan and Oline as a young family and the house with a stone floor and steel frame with almost fabric like walls.

8 In his 1971 book, Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies, Reyner Banham claimed that “Los Angeles is the greatest City-on-the-Shore in the world; it’s only rival, in fact is Rio de Janeiro, and its only rival in potential is probably, Perth, Western Australia.” This appears in ‘Donaldson + Warn: Operating on the Edge’, Duncan Richards and Geoffery London in the Donaldson + Warn monograph Crossing Midfield, among many. Personally I have used the quote at least three times in various articles.

9 ibid. p22
10 ibid. p22

11 ‘Playing on the Wing of Pragmatism’, Geoff Warn, in The Practice of Practice

12 All three projects appear in a catalogue documenting the graduating projects from Curtin University in 1991

13 Houses magazine interview p123

The above diagram is an early representation from GRC 05 of Iredale Pedersen Hook Architects’ beginnings as a 3 pole practice with the concerns of each partner clearly defined. The upward arrows suggest the movement towards something else, a different type of practice that was a concentration and combination of the 3 positions. The nature of this new idea of Iredale Pedersen Hook was the underlying focus and research agenda of the PhD and two Masters.
Chapter 3
Three-Pole Position: Starting iph

The formation of iredele pedersen hook architects was as much an accidental process as it was incidental. I had risen to a significant position at Donaldson + Warn Architects, playing a key role in the design and documentation of the old Claremont Fire Station and the Goddard House, and had also been part of the design team for the Tree Top Walk project at Walpole. During this time, I also took something of a sabbatical, working with Michael Patroni in Fremantle, which revealed and encouraged a different mode of practice. Equally as successful as Donaldson + Warn Architects, Michael Patroni operated a small but sophisticated practice, embedded in a more intuitive European, responsive, relaxed engagement with architecture, without the formality, structure or administration that existed at Donaldson + Warn, which was occasionally overbearing. I excelled in Patroni’s studio, embracing an environment of good coffee and food and producing several small bars and a collection of residential and hospitality competitions, most notably a major redevelopment of Caves House, a historic pub in the Margaret River wine region south of Perth. As my private work and several small houses and teaching interests at both the University of Western Australia and Curtin University increased, it became increasingly difficult to remain in full-time work, so I went back to Donaldson + Warn with a desire to focus on management and marketing and allow time to pursue personal research and private projects. This ultimately led to my leaving Perth in 1997 to pursue a full-time academic position at RMIT University, Melbourne. In effect I was following Richard Black who had left Perth some 18 months earlier for a position at RMIT and to join his partner Michelle who was working for a fledgling Kerstin Thompson Architects.

Iredale and Pedersen were sharing ideas and the struggles of being young, single practitioners in Perth and began to meet on a regular basis. Hook, while in occasional contact with Pedersen, was now working on building an academic career while also operating as an independent designer producing interior spaces and warehouse conversions in inner-city Melbourne and working on several art-focused projects. At this point, the Perth Zoo issued an expression of interest for architectural services for the Orang-utan Enclosure and other minor works. Iredale, Pedersen and I pooled resources, acknowledging that our shared experience may allow us a chance to secure this major commission (which, as individuals, would have been impossible). Essentially the expression of interest gathered Pedersen’s experience working with Government, on community-focused projects, Iredale’s experience working in the corporate realm, and my experience working on tourist-centred projects, most particularly the Tree Top Walk. We lodged a submission and surprisingly won the competition, beating several large and established Perth practices in the process. At this point, 3 June 1999, iredele pedersen hook architects was established.

iph was formed primarily as a partnership for the Perth Zoo project. I would suggest that in the short term we didn’t really see a concrete future for the partnership beyond that project. However, rapid discussion resonated around the ‘agreement’ that should surround the partnership and define the nature of the practice. The initial proposition was that iph would be a loose collaboration of three individuals (one being in another state) that could share facilities, professional indemnity insurance and, most importantly, offer a collective name and
framework that would allow each of the partners to work on projects individually but also together. The combination of individuals that formed Iredale Pedersen Hook Architects was not and is not a passive arrangement of constant agreement, but is a relationship in continuous dynamic flux. As I point out, again in the Houses interview, “We were very conscious of the fact that everyone had different skills and interests and that these were also very complementary of each other.” Also in that interview, Narelle Yabuka refers to Leon van Schaik’s suggestion (pointing to the Reynolds house as an example) “that by forging together individual interests in poetics, pragmatics and systems thinking, iph create a dynamic that sharpens each other’s partner’s contribution.” She asks, “Does a joint curating approach often take a design somewhere you didn’t expect?” My response was, “Absolutely but the underlying issue is that we deeply respect each other’s design ability and process and we wouldn’t try to obstruct that. We have known each other for such a long time, we know what each partner is good at and call on it when required, but we also constantly surprise each other and ourselves with the way that a discussion or a sketch might appear from another partner months down the track, as if by osmosis.”

Nature of Individuals

Through a realisation that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, an ongoing conversation between the three iph partners began to evolve. As stated in the previous chapter, the value system shared by all three partners intrinsically underpins the work, but it is the particular skills, interests and experience of each personality that begin to dictate the work’s nature, selection and execution – while, I would suggest, expanding the potential of our collaboration. As Leon van Schaik describes in Mastering Architecture, “This young practice is one of a new kind emerging across Australia. A kind that holds lessons for the next generation of architects who aspire to transcend mastery and reach for innovation. Like Terroir, the practice has three partners: one is in a major city and is an academic, one is a rational pragmatist and one is a public voice. The work of these triumvirates seems to develop a level of mastery in a compressed time, perhaps because it is inherently permeable to critique and in a way, structured around an internalised ‘law of small numbers’ diversity of approach. The work develops out of a dynamic difference between the partners rather than out of an alignment around ideas or the personality of one member. The structure of the firms is such that they are resilient in the face of indifference. In a sense they provide their own inbuilt support structures for sustaining innovation, driving each other to further their arguments and supporting the risk-taking which is inherent in this.” While this is a true statement and somehow driven by useful mythology, the reality is that the specifics of the practice lie in a less clearly defined middle ground between the focus of each personal agenda. The particular is critical in the understanding of the whole. As an example Adrian Iredale likes to often declare, “Iredale draws on watercolour paper, Hook draws in a grid moleskin notebook and Pedersen draws on whatever he can find.”

Iredale’s key influences revolve in the Germanic realm of Hans Scharoun, Hugo Haring, Gunther Benisch and Bolles Wilson and his time at the Städelschule. Certainly the influence of Miralles on Iredale’s pursuit of the plan and crafting of geometry, space and materials is deeply evident in his work. For Iredale, multiple drawings, sketches, models — both experimental design tools and finished models of finished buildings — beautiful watercolour sketches that rotate the buildings in his mind,
Pedersen drawing - Broome Bird Observatory design on a postcard to Hook

Hook drawing - pages from Hooks note book, sketch design of 'Dolly' House in Heathcote, Vic
provide a key vehicle for exploring and communicating the work to the client, the practice and, most critically, to himself. His sketches illustrate a search for the line. His continual reading from his impressive library (which, coincidentally, is scarce in theory, as architecture is the architect’s theory) informs a search for space. As a personality beyond his architecture Iredale is an avid surfer who collects Western Australian contemporary art and listens to obscure but excellent Moroccan cafe music.

Pedersen reads The New Scientist, is a member of The Wilderness Society, the chair of a committee to stop the damming of the Ord River in the Kimberley, and publicly challenges Professor Tim Flannery and Glenn Murcutt on environmental issues, specifically in relation to Indigenous housing. He is a Buddhist, a member of the Western Australian Symphony, and listens to Schoenberg and Bela Bartok. He sails and has crewed the Leeuwin ‘replica tall ship’ built in Fremantle, WA. He goes camping, hiking, rock climbing and doesn’t own a television that works properly. His experience in the desert gives him a worldly sense of humility and his direct Scandinavian heritage fosters an engagement with a social agenda and sustainability without the pious attitude often present in Anglo–American culture. His key influences are Jørn Utzon, and Alvar Aalto (a passion he shares with Iredale), both of whom engage a social agenda through a systematic approach. Utzon’s housing at Elsingnor, Denmark and Aalto’s prefabricated social housing solution – the ‘A Houses’ – are key points of reference. In addition to this, Pedersen is enamoured with the work of Ray and Charles Eames; not only for their experimental systemic architecture, but also for their early exploration of how architecture might serve the social good and become an educator to the general public on the beauty and usefulness of design.

For similar reasons Pedersen admires Buckminster Fuller and his belief in design and technological innovation as a way to make people’s lives better. Pedersen also shares Hook’s interest in the early work of British architects, Peter Cook and Cedric Price. Pedersen’s drawings are scratchy, systematic annotations of fact. They resist speculation but the engagement in environmental concerns is implicit, committed and unquestioned.

On the other hand, I rarely draw and, despite the focus in my graduation project on model making, rarely make models. In fact I resist making marks without considered deliberation; when design does occur, it occurs in a decisive, focused manner. Later in the design process a plan or section is rarely reconsidered; a subtle movement or a slight shift may occur, but the key moves always remain. My agenda as an academic extends beyond my connection to the university, I am in effect the written hand of the practice, tracing the conversations of the others and constantly clarifying the point. My influences are shadowed by the precise bluntness of Mies van der Rohe, and early Herzog & de Meuron but compounded by the eclectic, collective nature of Peter Cook (my Masters supervisor at the Bartlett) and the aspect of time in architecture pursued by Cedric Price. The work is also driven by the temporality, directness and straightforward manner of Richard Neutra. I tend toward the diagram and delight in the accidents that may appear in rule systems. In addition I love of jazz, resist camping, do “not do theatre” and strongly engage with international conceptual art.

The three partners emphatically maintain our individualities within our practice as Iredale Pedersen Hook Architects. A keen
observer may trace these points within the work, and further investigation and reflection on the work reveals the nature of the infection or inflection of each partner’s contribution to each project. Through the RMIT GRC Reflective Practice process we have identified that Iredale Pedersen Hook has moved beyond its formation as the combination of individual presence in the architecture towards a new model. This will be described further in Chapter 5 but, as Iredale discusses, again in Houses magazine, “Leon van Schaik’s parameters (Iredale as the Poet, Pedersen as the Socio-Environmentalist and Hook as the Pragmatist) are certainly true as a way of thinking about the practice. Those three poles do exist, but after seven years there is a lot of overlapping in our interests and influences for each other. It’s more a subconscious thing than a conscious thing. For different projects the three-pole position has a different impact.” Pedersen concludes, “The trick is not to make a Frankenstein out of this process, but to create an elegant creature.”

Footnotes
1 ‘Coast to Coast’ iph Houses interview with Narelle Yabuka Houses magazine p123
2 Leon van Schaik Mastering Architecture p114
3 Houses interview, p122
4 well known, well published Australian environmentalist
5 Houses interview p124

Perth Zoo Orang-Utan exhibit redevelopment iph_early sketch design watercolour
Superimposition of Australia over Europe. Use this image in public lectures to describe their work and distance and scale of Australia.
Chapter 4
Locating a Practice

To understand the architecture of iredale pedersen hook, it is necessary to contextualise the work in a local, a national and an international framework of peers and mentors.

Locating iph Locally in Perth

iredale pedersen hook architects emerges from a lineage of Modernism in Perth through its first, second and third order.\(^1\) As it evolves, the modernism of Western Australia becomes more complex, and its intensity resists dilution as it is modified through climatic specificity. The parsimonious nature of Perth architecture particularly through the 1950s and 1960s is as much a result of its Modernist lineage as the impact of geographical isolation and climate. Through my research with Duncan Richards in the early 1990s, on the steel-framed houses of FGB Hawkins and Desmond Sands\(^2\), I suggested that the strong presence of Desmond Sands in the architectural environment of Perth during the 1960s provided a direct connection between the local culture and the origins of European Functionalism. Through the research it became apparent that Sands holds a key point of origin for current Western Australian architectural thought. As Richards describes in the catalogue essay for an exhibition of drawings detailing the houses, Sands travelled to London in 1937 as a young architect and worked for “pioneer Modernist Joseph Emberton” with another young Perth architect Gordon Finn. Richards points out that while “Emberton is not a well-known figure to many today, he was producing important work.”\(^3\) More interesting was the fact that young Sands experienced the work of the exiled émigré Europeans in London, Gropius, Lubetkin, Breuer and Mendelsohn. They also became “friendly with and were influenced by Russian-born Modernist Serge Chermayeff, who for a period in London worked in collaboration with Erich Mendelsohn before both moved onto illustrious careers in the USA.”\(^4\) This collaboration produced the masterwork De La Warr Pavilion at Bexhill on Sea in East Sussex (completed 1935). Certainly the coastal aspect of the project and its ambition to engage light and space, the innovative structural system, the pursuit of a Modernist idea of economy through industrial means and, of course, the panorama over the sea made a great impression on the young Western Australian architect. Sands was filled with an appreciation for its economy in terms of detail and planning, and the transference of technology from industrial processes into architecture. “In Emberton’s view Modern architecture resulted from the application of ‘logic and reason.’” Sands’ interest in Emberton’s position was certainly accepted by an increasingly elderly FGB Hawkins, who elevated Sands to partner on his return to Perth. Sands returned to Western Australia in 1951 primarily to start a family, but he also returned with the intention of raising the standard of the architectural profession in Perth. Sands wanted to take the opportunities he believed Perth could offer and embrace them, evolving Hawkins and Sands’ office to the professional standard of Emberton’s office and Chermayeff’s studio. One clear example of this renewed professionalism was the immaculate quality of documentation emanating from Hawkins and Sands that set new levels of excellence in local architectural offices. Inherent in this premise was Sands’ belief that the importance of the architect in Western Australia should be recognised during a very opulent time in Western Australia, where a commitment to new ideas and ultimately a new architecture was seen to enrich society.\(^5\) He took control
of several key components of The Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Western Australian Chapter) and organised meetings between young practitioners such as Gil Nicol, Dennis Silver and Bill Leighton. This culminated in his appointment as President of the WA Chapter in 1959. But the impact of the Sands agenda was cut short by a car accident that essentially forced him to retire. Like Desmond Sands, iredale pedersen hook have emerged in a ‘boom economy’ in Western Australia, like Sands we seek to take advantage of the opportunity that this presents not only to build quickly but also to raise the profile of architecture in WA, and its ability to contribute to the community.

Also at this time a young Duncan Richards worked for Sands, as did Peter Parkinson, along with a young AA graduate Jeffrey Howlett who later left Hawkins and Sands to join Bates Smart McCutcheon and arguably designed the three best commercial buildings in Australia during the 1950s. The first of his triumphs was the MLC Building on St Georges Terrace, Perth completed in 1957 (BSM in association with Hawkins and Sands), which won the RIBA Bronze Medal in 1958. Then he moved to Melbourne to complete ICI House in 1958 at the top of Latrobe Street – a perfect execution of the exploration of curtain walling. In 1961 Howlett returned to Perth after winning a competition with Don Bailey to design the Town Hall and administration building for the City of Perth, later referred to as Council House – an iconic symbol of optimism in Western Australia during the 1960s that, along with the hosting of British Empire and Commonwealth Games in 1962, signalled that Perth had ‘arrived’ as a Modern City. Howlett’s formative training under Sands is manifest in each of these fine pieces of architecture and Howlett and Bailey went on to become a very successful practice producing a large number of excellent commercial and cultural buildings. As described earlier in Chapter 2, Peter Parkinson developed Sands’ economy of architecture and line to an extreme in his own work in partnership with Lex Hill (also a Sands alumnus) seeking to derive very clear rules and points of engagement for the architect, the builder and the building. His Octagon Theatre (1968) at UWA is a masterwork of clean economy in architecture and construction, striving to an economy driven not only by budget but also through philosophy. It also won the RAIA Bronze Medal in 1969. Parkinson’s and Howlett’s work has had particular affect on the architecture of iredale pedersen hook – both directly and through Donaldson + Warn, Architects – in terms of economy of material and in the way a pragmatic appreciation of the existing conditions of producing architecture in Perth has driven a methodology of forging delight from available technology, but not allowing this limitation to limit the architecture.

Operating in the shadows of Sands in the 1960s and emerging to prominent position in the 1970s was Krantz and Sheldon. "Apartment buildings designed by Krantz and Sheldon are notable for their emphasis on reducing each dwelling unit to a minimum, achieved by tight planning rather than smaller spaces; conventional construction combined with rigorous detailing to maximise structural strength of building materials and minimise waste; and the bulk ordering of standard building materials, fixtures and fittings to achieve economies of scale. The results were rental apartments – built for investors throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s – that are utilitarian, minimal and structurally innovative, contemporary and urbane in style and, importantly, affordable to anyone wanting, or needing, to live in the city." Harold Krantz was focused very much
on developer-driven housing with an extreme economy that pushed engineering boundaries. By pushing building tolerances they could maximise space-profit-plot ratio for their clients. But, through this economy, they also sought to maximise the architectural expression of Modernism through very subtle and very strategic means such as the articulation of a necessary balustrade or the slight staggering of balconies up a façade. They were extremely successful, building literally thousands of apartments; whether by coincidence or as a mark of Krantz and Sheldon ubiquity, many years later iredale pedersen hook would renovate several apartments and also make proposals for several apartment buildings that belonged to the golden age of this efficient practice. What’s more, each of the iredale pedersen hook partners have lived in Krantz and Sheldon buildings, so the essence of their frugal, clever planning and attention to maximising the potential of every detail is a part of iph’s core architectural memory.9

The Krantz and Sheldon office also took in a young Polish immigrant architect by the name of Iwan Iwanoff, who would later become an intriguing expressionist architect in Perth. Iwanoff built eclectic but magnificent houses using rudimentary concrete block with an expressive painterly manner. Indeed, Iwanoff’s embrace of simple materials used in intriguing ways demonstrates a key element of the Krantz and Sheldon agenda.10

In parallel to Parkinson’s work in the 1970s was the emergence of a young architect called Brian Klopper who operated primarily out of Fremantle. Klopper’s early houses were very consistent and rectilinear in plan but utilised recycled brick, rough swan timber and hand-crafted steel windows to create an expressive materiality to the dwelling out of common elements. Klopper’s work is distinctly Modernist and would belong in any second-order discussion of Perth and, although of entirely different character, would sit comfortably adjacent to the earlier work by Donaldson + Warn.

Donaldson + Warn are an integral component of the lineage of Perth Modernism. Like iph, the partnership is built on a strong friendship that dates back to their time as students; the character of the two individuals and its presence in their work is distinct and identifiable. Their architecture’s functional origins are evident in that their work is constructed from an assemblage of identifiable components often expressed in exploded axonometric drawings. But the nature of the constituent parts and the manner of their assembly is diverted through the influence of Busfield and the idea of Perth as a new California. Warn’s Masters thesis suggests a search for an appropriate architecture that is resilient to the complacency of a Western Australian attitude towards urbanism and responsive to an amazing climate and relaxed lifestyle. Their work continues to break new ground whether it is their early social housing projects or award-winning schools or the delicate bridges in the forests of the state’s south west at Walpole and inner city Kings Park or even in the recent monumentality of institutional projects at UWA. There is a beguiling clarity to Donaldson + Warn’s architecture and a commitment to challenging the standards of architecture in Perth that has to have emerged from the compound influence of Sands.

Unfortunately there are very few contemporary practices in Perth that engage or understand the tradition of their local context. Certainly Bernard Seeber has a sparsity and restraint in his expression that demands respect in the manner of
Since leaving previous partner Paul Odden, Simon Rodrigues has begun to change and craft a much clearer agenda in both materiality and form. As discussed previously, Michael Patroni has his own form of economy, but operates in a different European sensibility of light, space and deep shadow. But each of these practitioners is a contemporary of Donaldson + Warn rather than iph.

Amongst the next generation of Perth architects attention must be given to Professor Simon Anderson, an architect who operates from a base as an academic from the University of Western Australia, and has embraced the everyday aspect of Perth Modernist tradition but looks to filter that through a canon both affected by and critical of suburban Perth, particularly the detail of a suburban project home embracing the standard a palette of ‘double brick’ walls and tile roofs. Joe Chindarsi provides a clear counterpoint to iredale pedersen hook where the architecture is emergent in a more pictorial manner and driven by stylistic engagement. CODA (directors Keiran Wong and Emma Williamson) represent a more expressive line through practice currently best represented by their own house; a collage of parts that has a high level of experimentation with colour and materials technology but still uses ordinary items – for example expanded metal usually found on security screen doors – as ‘formwork’ for casting tiles for cladding. Despite winning several major commissions in recent years their potential remains untested and unfortunately their architectural ‘wit’ present in many competition projects fails to materialise in built work.\(^1\)

mOrq is an intriguing comparison with iph as a tripartite Italian practice originating in Rome with two partners in Perth and one remaining in Rome. Andrea Quaglia was drawn to Perth for the windsurfing and decided to stay for a while working for Michael Patroni; he remained, picking up a couple of local projects through surfing mates, and the Perth arm of the practice was formed. Work grew quickly and Quaglia convinced his Italian partner to relocate to help out with the growing volume of work. Both now also teach at UWA. Their housing projects oscillate between Fremantle and Margaret River and have an intrinsic quality of experimentation without expectation – obviously more relaxed than the apartment fit-outs that continue in Rome. The ‘operable’ nature of the spaces due to the compact nature of the projects in Rome have been replaced by ‘operable’ programs in Australia where the young architects now have the space to exploit multiple uses in the same space. The influence of Patroni is easily identified with simple, direct planning but the architecture has a more refined sensibility with regard to detailing. In terms of materiality the lustre of the Italian projects has disappeared in Perth, but the simple timber cladding or Colorbond sheet steel is still being treated with the respect and precision that was used for ‘precious’ materials (stone and plaster) in Rome. Of particular interest is a house under construction for a builder that uses large curved concrete culverts as ‘found objects’ to construct a coffered ceiling to a rectilinear dwelling.

Like iredale pedersen hook each of these young Perth practices embraces the lineage of Sands, with evolutions along particular lines of discourse, but the fact remains that the threads of European Functionalism can be traced back to its heart.
Australian Architectural Triumvirates

Locating iredale pedersen hook beyond their local context into an Australian and international network can occur on two levels: one level which identifies parallels in structure, i.e., multiple members of a collaborative group with distinct roles, ‘Self-Curated Collectives’\(^1\), and a second level wherein there are international and local practices pursuing similar agendas and thematics through their architecture. On a national level the history of threesomes in architectural practice is significant in many successful collaborations. The most international Australian practice Denton Corker Marshall (DCM) would certainly hold the pinnacle, and historically Bates Smart McCutcheon or Grounds Romberg Boyd command great respect. Mitchell/Gurgolia&Thorp rose to prominence as the architects of New Parliament House in Canberra, and on a corporate level certainly Bligh Voller Nield or Johnson Pilton Walker are important. The combination of the partners in these previous generations of threesomes has forged a defined structure wherein each practitioner, each partner within the threesome, has a very specific role. In the case of DCM for example, Denton is the diplomat, Corker is the contract man and Marshall is the design genius. However the emergence of Ashton Raggatt, McDougall (ARM) in Melbourne suggests there is a different way for three partners to operate successfully. “They have launched and maintained a stream of architectural innovation that has transformed the way in which public architecture is conceived in Australia.”\(^1\) Ashton certainly has a more active role in the management of the practice but this does not preclude his engagement in the design of projects. Raggatt is certainly an intense creative force but his contribution to the discourse and public perception of the practice is implicit. McDougall is the most ‘public figure’ in the practice due largely to his role as editor of Architecture Australia. All share leadership within the practice and foster a community of willing individuals who are supported and who develop the discourse that surrounds the dynamic and everyday agendas of the office. They are three individuals who share a common vision for architecture to contribute to a social good. Lyons follow this collective leadership model in a unique manner where the three founding partners are brothers. It remains difficult to identify who dominates the design agenda but certainly Carey Lyon is the prominent public figure with his former role as National President of the RAIA. Corbett Lyon’s work with the Venturi’s suggests a clear design lineage in the work and Cameron Lyon is engaged with the technical resolution of the architecture. With the rapid expansion of the practice additional directors with shared concerns have been appointed and add to the complexity through a consistent appreciation of the practice agenda.

In Perth, Cameron Chisolm and Nicol (CCN) represent a historic example of the triumvirate partnership and more recently Jones Coulter Young formed in this model, where Jones was the designer, Coulter the contracts man (until his sudden death in 2000), and Young the businessman. The practice has moved past this structure but a formal context remains. iredale pedersen hook resist the traditional model and certainly are committed to continued establishment of a business model where design is NOT handled by ‘one hand’. Each iph partner falls into a particular operational role in terms of marketing and management of the business, but primarily each is a designer, each is able to manage part of the practice, certainly each is able to run a contract and the pure resistance to being pigeonholed into a traditional model of collaborative architectural practice is an ongoing source of energy.
Terroir follow a very similar structure to iph where the three individuals are operating across multiple cities. In Terroir’s case Gerard Reimuth operates the Terroir office in Sydney, Scott Balmford directs the Hobart office and Richard Blythe commutes between Launceston, Hobart and Melbourne. They fulfil a situation where they, to use van Schaik’s terminology “have a member embedded in the academy (Blythe), a member embedded in construction (Balmford), and a member who acts as public spokesperson (Reinmuth).” While parallels between iph’s and Terroir’s structures exist, the architectural concerns appear divergent. Perhaps Terroir’s evolution in Tasmania, and in particular Hobart, has generated an overwhelming embrace of landscape and the manipulation of site as the primary preoccupation of the work. Iph responds to the horizontality of the Western Australian landscape, while Terroir responds to the dramatic topography of their edifices. It is no coincidence, I would argue, that Reinmuth operates well in Sydney where the dominance of dramatic landscape – either the harbour, the beach or the mountains – is present in the mind of all architects as an aspect of architectural practice that must be addressed. They also share an appreciation of material and detail with iph and take similar opportunities in the operative requirements of architecture as a generator to form and space. Peppermint Bay or Hazards resort suggests that ultimately their work is more picturesque than that of iph but Terroir’s distinction, explored through their recent book Terroir: Cosmopolitan Ground, is the manner in which they begin to question their operative language through a philosophical agenda.

Brisbane-based M3 Architecture have a practice model that has evolved from a studio-based environment derived from an internship educational model at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Like iph, each of the founding directors of M3 (Michael Banney, Michael Christensen, Michael Lavery) studied together, shared an educational structure and experience and graduated in the economically challenging time of the early 1990s. On the surface (according to their website www.m3architecture.com), their structure appears to follow a more traditional model where each director holds key responsibilities regarding the design and procurement of the architecture; one apparently deals with fees, another design management, etc., but I would suggest this is more for the satisfaction of clients and a strategy to engage each partner in the process of each project. That is, a partner might be present under the guise of fee bargaining, but the reality is that their involvement is intrinsic to the design process. Therefore in a similar manner to iph, each member of M3 is active to a degree in all projects but the directors adopt a lead role as determined by the project. Unlike iph and Terroir, M3 have focused on institutional projects and their involvement in the academy appears much less to do with teaching and more to do with practice. Primarily due to the experience of several directors prior to the formation of M3 the practice shifted quickly from small residential projects, taking a substantial leap

National Peers

Iredale pedersen hook were recently described as ‘fringe Gen X’. While we refute the fringe and favour ‘card carrying’, we would agree with the Generation X title as useful in locating the work internationally and identifying our peers in a national context. Interestingly all our respected peers in an Australian realm are also ‘triumvirates’; Terroir in Hobart/ Sydney/Melbourne, M3 Architecture in Brisbane and NMBW in Melbourne.
into educational and institutional work. Residential projects appear merely as a step towards engaging larger projects rather than as a particular interest in the domestic. Like iph, M3 shares a commitment to exploring materials and using constraint systems derived from construction technology to generate unforeseen outcomes. For example the manipulation of ordinary brickwork in their UQ Micro Health laboratory developed in collaboration with artist Ashley Paine: “This piece was conceived as a counterpoint to the sterile building interior derived from strict codes, mathematical formulae and safety regulations, and was approached as a textured skin of broken red bricks – a contextual link back to the predominantly red brick campus, and suggestive of the artistic process as unknown, imprecise and irrational.”

The architecture suggests a desire to be contextual but also to generate delight from a simple process demonstrating the understanding of a construction technique. Within this realm, though, is arguably their strongest alliance to iredale pedersen hook where the key expression of the architecture is derived through essentially ‘cheap optical tricks’. They seek to create the spectacular with inexpensive elements. Their work is evocative and expressionist, but it uses very simple parsimonious materials and means. A particularly successful example of this is the QUT Human Movement Pavilion where gradations of transparency and colour across a façade (and subsequent implication on the quality of the interior space within) are achieved by varying the application of fibreglass sheet and painted aluminium blades. Similarly the façade on the Brisbane Girls Grammar School Creative Learning Centre is highly articulated by the multiple repetition of slightly different louvres creating a strobing effect in a dense façade. The façade of Innocent Bystander by iph uses a repeated photograph of the vineyard associated with the winery to articulate a large blank façade. Simply painted on with an impregnating pigment, it is a cheap effective solution that also repels graffiti. Like that of iph, M3’s environmental agenda appears grounded in recycling and dealing with materials in an intuitive manner. However, what they appear to lack is a committed social agenda and an understanding of how their buildings might contribute to the fabric of Brisbane beyond the realm of the campus or client.

In Melbourne NMBW provide an interesting parallel to iph. Again, a collaboration of three individuals, with NMBW we have with an ‘embedded’ academic working together with two architects ‘embedded’ in practice, all located in Melbourne; Nigel Bertram, Lucinda McLean and Marika Neustupny. Like the directors of iph they all studied together (at University of Melbourne), graduating in 1991, and, just like iph they left their home town to pursue agendas overseas. Neustupny and Bertram went to Tokyo where Nuestupny completed a Masters at TiTech with Atelier Bow-Wow and worked with SANAA’s Kazuyo Sejima; McLean travelled to Frankfurt (to study at the Städelschule just after Iredale was there) and then onto Berlin. The personal journey of each has a defined impact on the architecture produced by the office but the work is heavily grounded in the local vernacular of Melbourne architecture as a result of the partners’ experience in the offices of Edmond and Corrigan, Lyons (Bertram), Peter Elliot (McLean) and Maddison (Neustupny). More significantly their contribution to Melbourne’s architectural discourse through writing, publishing and teaching, predominantly at RMIT, has firmly established them in Melbourne. NMBW is arguably as quintessentially Melbourne as iph is quintessentially Perth. Bertram in particular worked for Corrigan on RMIT’s Building 8 and at Lyons on a
series of early TAFE Colleges and, importantly, collaborated with Shane Murray in an academic context at RMIT. In each project the production of architectural expression is derived from straightforward means or, as Bertram puts it, “finding delight within the crude vernacular.”20 This attitude is evident in NMBW’s work, but it has been refined through a Japanese sensibility. The material and even the ‘heritage’ of the detail is still rudimentary but the manner in which it is placed or fixed is careful and particular. Bertram describes this as “part of an ongoing conversation about detailing.” The detailing in iph’s work is not as deliberate, but the essence of a considered treatment of everyday materials is vital. Also the two practices share a committed investment in the domestic realm as a site for architectural research. The award-winning renovations by NMBW bear strong resemblance to those of iph, both in embracing constraint and in clever planning. In particular the parallels between the North Fitzroy renovation and that of Dunedin Street make a striking study. A recent NMBW project for a residential extension in Elwood established a fence as a basis for the investigation of a residential boundary condition, extending the formal and material qualities of the fence to become a façade for the entire dwelling. In a recent renovation in Perth, iph derived the tectonic qualities of a hip roof form of the existing dwelling to extend and wrap the roofline up and around the addition grafted to the rear, creating a similarly responsive gesture to the suburban fabric.
Locating iph Internationally

Seeking to connect iredale pedersen hook beyond an Australian context leads primarily towards the emergence internationally of a field of young architects with concern for social and environmental agendas. I would suggest that these mostly Gen X practitioners embrace key aspects of Modernism that advocate a contribution to a greater good, and are doing so in a way that rejects the preciousness conveyed by figures commonly associated with a strand of contemporary Modernism such as John Pawson, David Chipperfield, Peter Zumthor, Steven Holl or even Herzog de Meuron. This is not necessarily a rejection of fine detailing in lieu of the un-detailed. Rather it suggests a more ‘why would you bother when you could do this?’ attitude. Within this there is both a potential to reject commerciality and a realisation that an idea or collection of ideas can profit more than the individual. Publications such as Bruce Mau’s Massive Change and Design Like You Give a Damn serve to reinforce this position where design is presented as a key partner in strategies to resolve climate change and provide effective solutions to poverty. While the rhetoric contained in these publications is at times overwhelming, primarily due to its American ‘gun-ho’ attitude, the base premise is certainly a fundamental element of the iph agenda. But beyond ‘giving a damn’ we are seeking appropriate methodologies and techniques to produce an innovative, striking architecture that is responsive to this agenda without being slave to it.

Though almost a generation removed, Abalos&Herreros (A&H) provide a key point of reference. Self-proclaimed pragmatists, the Madrid-based architects embrace an acceptance of systems and delight in manipulating these systems. They acknowledge landscape as a ‘recursor and a precursor and an embodiment of architecture’ but, as with iredale pedersen hook’s concerns, they do not view the relationship between landscape and architecture as passive. It is more a contributory presence. In fact A&H state that locating architecture within a place facilitates what they describe as a “complete redescription of that place.” Furthermore A&H describe an interest in ‘poor’ materials. For them the ‘povera’ comes primarily from the way in which the materiality of architecture may begin to communicate a level of social engagement, so that you attempt to engage with a populous simply by making buildings out of materials that they understand. They discuss the notion of a hybridity in material but their environmental agenda follows what would also be considered to be an emergent line where the architecture is not submissive to the environmental systems but rather an active participant. In fact the architecture drives those environmental systems with rigour and intensity.

Of particular interest is the Valdemingomez city-dump recycling plant in Madrid. It is an architecture derived from a direct interpretation of the linear process of its program collected under a large elegant roof with a resolved industrial aesthetic. This project holds direct comparison with the iph Innocent Bystander winery in Healesville, where the winemaking process is laid out across the site then contained within a simple industrial shed of steel and concrete where the robust detailing has been pursued to a higher degree of refinement. A&H state that linking economy and ecology through aesthetics, “we seek an architecture that transcends time and space, which takes us by surprise by being simple, universal, felicitous, cheap and intense. That’s the garden we see spreading before us and that’s the emotion we want to capture.”

The architecture of iredale pedersen hook also bares a direct
relationship to the work of Atelier Bow-Wow, a Tokyo-based practice established by Yoshiharu Tsukamoto and Momoyo Kajima in 1992. As with NMBW, Atelier Bow-Wow have a focused engagement with residential projects as a site for research, to which iph is entirely empathetic. While the scale of the sites in Tokyo is smaller Atelier Bow-Wow’s manipulation of constraint and its exploration of architectural and construction methodologies to maximise delight is parallel with iph’s testing of strategies through their renovation projects and small houses. Most importantly they have developed a collection of devices and ‘thematics’ through which they may describe and continue the research from which their architecture emerges. The thematics describe a collection of concerns that have evolved over time from intense research on the city and identification of conditions that exist in the everyday life of the city. The architecture is a response to operating within those constraints and testing limits through innovation, rather than being submissive to them. Tsukamoto and Kajima both hold teaching positions at TiTech and University of Tsukuba respectively, and the collaborative nature of their practice extends to their studio members and into their teaching laboratories. Their insightful publications also suggest a pair of architects who are engaged and aware of a spatial understanding and a social awareness; but communication of this aspect of their work has to date been limited to their art practice – a series of clever sometimes mobile installations that provoke discussion of popular culture as an implicit tool in the articulation of architectural discourse. iph have recently completed a project as part of the Perth International Arts Festival, an interactive ‘billboard’ that sought to reveal the ‘ghosts and dreams’ of the city. Rather than providing a ‘Vision of Perth’ as requested by the curator we simply presented a series of unrealised visions and demolished architectural gems. Like Bow-Wow iph intend to continue to observe the city in a critical and engaging manner and find vehicles to comment on what we discover.

Despite my continued engagement with the architectural climate of Britain, living in London in 2006 and 2007, teaching at Brighton University and my friendship with Cjlim, at the Bartlett School of Architecture and What architecture’s Anthony Hoete, my ability to identify peers there is highly limited. While as a practice we are interested in the work of Block Architecture and can identify threads of similarity in direction, their work remains untested, hampered by the chance to build in the UK. It is surprising that, confined to interiors and the odd residential renovation, Block Architecture have not sought more work in Europe. Their embrace of materiality and blunt detailing is a clear point of reference to iph, as is their clarity of planning. But we can find greater parallels in a more established practice, DSDHA, where husband-and-wife team Deborah Saunt and David Hills appear to engage with the social structure of Britain that emerged after a very intense period of a Labour government. DSDHA have a range of projects that draw upon significant ‘self-start bottom-up processes’ with an agenda to create architecture for social good, primarily in the area of education. They have been very successful at manipulating the opportunity of Government regeneration projects in urban centres to produce an architectural response that also engages with the community. While a world away from the challenges of operating in the Western Australian desert, DSDHA shares with iph the experience of detailed consultation in deprived, struggling communities. DSDHA have produced several award-winning buildings that deal with schools and education centres.
For example, the John Perry Children’s Centre in Dagenham is a ‘children’s studio’ depicted as a clean shed manufactured from economical industrial materials with whimsical moments and clever shifts in scale. In doing so DSDHA and iph share the belief that people’s lives may be improved simply through the insertion of quality architecture that lifts the calibre of a place. Power is engendered through architecture, “[creating] buildings to last, in tandem with regeneration solutions with long-term economic and social value.” DSDHA also describe the imaging of sustainability so that the architecture itself evolves not necessarily from the systems that are engendered with it – the architecture is actually part of the sustainable systems. This is evident at Paradise Park Children’s Centre, a catalyst building to kick-start renewal of a run-down park. The architecture is strong yet simple in its formal qualities. But by focusing the building around a vertical hydroponic garden thermal mass is derived through a green wall and the activities of the childcare centre are activated through the way in which the sun strikes elements within the space during the course of the day. Thus the building actively engages with sustainability rather than reacts defensively to it.

Finally, the practice with which Iredale Pedersen Hook has perhaps the closest similarities is New York-based Lewis Tsurumaki Lewis (LTL). While dialogue between the two practices is unexplored, LTL eloquently describe the basis of their agenda as an ‘Opportunistic Architecture’ “We seek opportunistic overlaps between form, space, program, material, and budget, teasing design invention out of the rich potential latent within the restrictions and limits that frame architecture.” They ask the question “What if the constraints and limitations of architecture became the catalyst for design invention?” Their recent monograph Opportunistic Architecture collates the concerns of their architecture into what they describe as ‘five interwoven tactics’. Intriguingly this description accords with iph’s architecture, which we explain later as a ‘Field of Concerns’, a five-point methodology developed independent of LTL’s manifesto.

The notion of constraint is strong in iph’s architecture whether found in the devices engaged to operate in suburban Perth, or the extremes of climate and culture in remote housing for indigenous communities or in the embrace of the wine making process as a determinate. Also LTL describe the idea of ‘Paradoxical Pleasures’ through one of their tactics. This has a direct relationship to Iredale’s proposition of the constructed ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ relationship in his residential work and the establishment and ‘articulation of conflicting phenomena’. Like iph, LTL maintain a committed environmental agenda and contributed to several exhibitions, particularly in the realm of housing. The delight in ordinary materials that underpins the work of iph is identified by LTL and extended to the point where the architectural studio adopts commissions within their own projects to produce remarkable elements from the repetition of “inexpensive and readily available materials... aggregated to produce complex composite surfaces.” Like iph, the three partners – twin brothers Paul and David Lewis together with their friend Marc Tsurumaki – resist the desire of others to categorise them, insisting that each partner is “deeply involved in each project.” Where primarily LTL is focused on the ability to understand a series of considerations together so that, when placed in a situation for opportunity, an evolution may occur strategically. As with all the international peers cited above LTL also hold teaching positions at Princeton, Columbia and Parsons. The academic realm supports the ability to remain
experimental, to remain propositional and current and to allow the practice to extend its dialogue.

In summary, Iredale Pedersen Hook belong to a growing community of national and international emergent young architects who are seizing Modernism as an opportunity to return to key concerns of clarity and materiality. These practices embrace the manner in which a third-order Modernism is actually reintroducing a social agenda that has been silent and is now evolving through the veil of sustainability to provide an essential role for the future architect.
Footnotes
1 Leon van Schaik discusses these orders in Intersitial Modernism.
2 Hook, Martyn and Richards, Duncan. The Experimental Steel Framed Houses of FGB Hawkins and Desmond Sands Architects, Perth: Curtin University, 1993. The accompanying catalogue for an exhibition at Perth Institute of Contemporary Art in 1993 as a record of research into a collection of steel framed buildings produced by the office. Two of the four case study projects remain however both are poorly maintained and have been significantly modified.
3 ibid. p7.
4 ibid. p8.
5 From an interview conducted with Sands in 1993.
6 Richards notes that Sands was largely responsible for organising the Empire Games Village Competition, a highly influential competition which celebrated modern residential architecture in Perth.
7 Brew, Peter and Markham, Michael. Jeffery Howlett Architectural Projects, Perth. The University of Western Australia, 1992. The School of Architecture at The University of Western Australia has produced a number of excellent small publications and exhibitions documenting modern architecture of the 1950s and 1960s in Perth.
9 Iredale lived in Melford Court, Pedersen lived in Sunny Mead, and Hook lived in Kingsway Gardens all in West Perth.
10 Very little documentation of Iwanoff’s incredible work exists. While at MONUMENT we produced several ‘Classic Houses’ special issues that sought to document two of the houses, and several others have been covered in other magazines but the only serious text that exists on his work is a small catalogue produced by Duncan Richards. A monograph is well overdue.
11 A memorable example is the CODA proposal for a giant six-pack as a marker on the road from Kalgoorlie to Perth. Big Journey / Small Buildings: inhabiting a drawn out landscape; an exhibition of projects as part of Habitus conference Curtin University 2000.
13 Ibid.
14 Review by Romesh Gondewande of Cottesloe SLSC.
16 QUT (Brisbane) and UTS (Sydney) both offered courses where students used to complete architecture degrees through a practice-based internship.
17 This opinion became evident during M3 architecture’s first presentation at the RMIT GRC in May 2008.
18 Both ijp, Terroir and NMBW continue to use residential projects as a testing ground for ideas that appear in non-residential projects.
19 www.m3architecture.com accessed 22.07.08.
20 Comments from a Melbourne tram stop conversation, July 2008.
22 Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist in 2G No. 22, p127. “But we discovered the possibilities of working with the material we had at hand, offered by industry or commerce. Not necessarily to invent new systems, but rather to manipulate existing technical, construction, spatial and commercial systems.”
23 Quote from 2G essay.
25 Communicated most effectively in Bow-Wow from Post Bubble City.
27 www.blockarchitecture.com accessed 28.07.08.
28 www.dsdha.co.uk accessed 28.07.08.
30 Thanks to Le Corbusier’s Five Points of Architecture, perhaps.
31 Opportunistic Architecture, p174.
The New Trends of iph model framing the Pratas landscape
This diagram from GRC07 represents the shift in the way that the Reflective Practice has allowed iredale pedersen hook to reconsider the nature of the practice from a stiff organisation to more holistic cohesive collaboration.
Chapter 5
The Shift from a Three-Pole Position to a Field of Concerns

The research embodied in this PhD seeks to understand the manner in which Iredale Pedersen Hook has evolved beyond a collective of individuals to form a more cohesive unit, where the collaboration has become hybridised and the identification of authorship of each partner has become less important and less obvious. Through the Reflective Practice process, the contribution of each individual has become significantly more blurred and at this point the work has moved beyond the ‘three-pole position’ – where individuals took on the respective roles of the ‘poet’, the ‘environmentalist’ and the ‘pragmatist’ – into what we now refer to as the ‘Field of Concerns’.

A Different Doctorate
In October 2004, at the instigation of the IPh partnership, I began the ‘invitational’ Master of Architecture by Project at RMIT University. With Professor Leon van Schaik, I had been intermittently working on a PhD by Project, at that stage titled ‘Selection Criteria: The Operation of Constraint within the Architectural Design Process’, for several years. My thesis was that the imposition and embrace of unreasonable constraint in architectural practice forced design decisions and, consequently, outcomes that would not be possible without the constraint. In fact, I proposed, the architecture was empowered by the constraint rather than derivative of it. ‘Selection Criteria’ attempted to track constraint manipulation through personal projects, teaching practice and the work of Iredale Pedersen Hook architects. However, the presentations of the research always left many things about the projects unmentioned; unable to be discussed without the presence of the other partners’ work. And, certainly, while the operation of constraint was a key part of the projects, often it was a minor part and the more intriguing point was how the constraint interfaced with multiple concerns usually embedded in the collaboration of the other partners. At one particular review a highly frustrated critic, Ranulph Glanville, barked, “Surely that [operation of constraint] is not the only thing that is going on in that project [the Sheep House] ... just look at it.”

Certainly, the attempts to describe the architecture in these terms provided very limited room for discussion. It was at this point that Iredale and Pedersen invited Professor van Schaik to visit the Perth office and ‘review’ the work in situ. This review took the form of an exhibition in the laneway adjacent to the IPh Perth office, where the entire catalogue of Iredale Pedersen Hook projects to that date was assembled: models were displayed on recycled doors and borrowed tables that acted as low plinths, walls of photographs and trace drawings were placed over shop windows and diagrams were laid under trees. Professor van Schaik, as if a flaneur of the IPh micro-city, wandered through the assembled material in delight, making connections and associations about the work that would have been impossible to make in another context. This was the initial defining moment in the research for both Masters theses and marked a distinct change in direction for this PhD. In viewing the body of work of over 200 projects, it was incredibly apparent that the practice was no longer operating as a collection of individuals, but, instead, the emergent trend of true collaboration was deeply embedded in the architecture.
A PhD and Two Masters, or ‘A Zed and Two Noughts’ (with thanks to Peter Greenaway)

The research then began to unpack the practice and ask difficult questions about the nature of the work and the nature of the collaboration between the individuals. Iredale and Pedersen began to diagram the projects produced in WA into what they referred to as ‘Constructing Families’ (refer to diagrams over the next pages and Iredale's Masters, page 12). The Constructing Families chart was the first attempt by the practice to define associations between the array of projects completed by iph in the six-year period since its inception. Read left to right in a chronological order, the chart uses ‘parti’ or ‘tattoos’, as they became known, to measure the projects’ response to recurring ideas or themes: geometry, place, time and craft. Hence, ‘families’ of projects were able to be collected for further interrogation and reflection. I began to draw from this chart and diagrams to structure an overarching framework, collating projects through formal thematic concerns instead of individual authorship.

Simultaneously, iph was invited to take part in a group exhibition of young architects – ‘New Pavilions for Architecture’ – at Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA) that responded to the request for a proposition of a 1/3-scale pavilion in a gallery that should “embody the idea of the practice”. For me, this also offered a chance to move away from the didactic treatment of ‘constraint’. Essentially driven by the Melbourne office of iph, the project provided a challenge to explore and communicate for the first time the nature of iredale pedersen hook’s practice. In this project, my interest in imposing an ‘unreasonable constraint’ onto the project facilitated the actual spatial exploration and, rather than simply being an excuse or consequence, it provided a clear strategy from which to generate the project. As described in the exhibition catalogue, “The response to the request for a 1/3-scale intervention, the pavilion is simply nine sheets of construction ‘form ply’ plywood, which are assembled to define three spatial conditions and identify three horizons. It seeks to achieve its aim through minimum fixing, allowing the single material to facilitate its own structure with the intention that sheets are able to be returned to the supplier for sale and reuse. A Miesian construct of Eames’ thought, the pavilion evokes a sense of temporality and suggests it may be waiting for potential evolution.” In fact, this project represented the final discussion about constraint as a means to an end and, in effect, signalled the end of ‘Selection Criteria’ as a PhD thesis.

In the wake of the MUMA show and with renewed enthusiasm generated in part by Constructing Families (but also by what had now become a significantly more collaborative project), I embraced a new direction in the research, transforming it into a process that was inclusive of the whole practice. Tracing linkages through work predominantly authored in Melbourne, back to projects completed prior to the formation of iph and then further back to projects completed while I was at Donaldson + Warn and Michael Patroni, I sought to find a new ‘family’. This line of investigation developed the Constructing Families chart, but also identified the contribution of individual experience to the evolutionary process of a practice. That is, how might an idea remain present and how might that idea evolve when placed in the context of the collective collaboration? The study concentrated on plan form; the Long Plan, the Nested Plan, the Tilted Plan and the Tight Plan, essentially ‘cousins’ to projects explored on the Constructed Families chart.
Assembly Diagram of MUMA Pavilion
IREDALE ADRIAN PEDESEN FINN

CONSTRUCTING FAMILIES: This drawing is an attempt to collect and understand a body of work, 6 years and almost 150 projects. Mapping becomes the means to remain as a linear examination related to time but shall develop in to alternative orders as ideas and families are further explored and refined.

GEOMETRY: Falls in two main categories: one which is predominately passive and contemplative (containers) and one which denies preconceptions of cartesian geometry.

A PERSPECTIVE

CONTAINERS

HINGED

ELASTIC

OBLIQUE

FRACURED/FOLDED

PLACE: With projects in all areas of Western Australia; inner city, suburban, edge, rural, desert, far north, deep south; 'Place' suggests methods for responding to site.

DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE
Simultaneous opposites

VERNACULAR
Familiar/made unfamiliar

CONSTRUCTED
ISOLATION

INTROVERTED

FRAMING

TIME: Architecture as a means of selective documentation, preservation and reinterpretation. Time, place and event-captured and revealed...immediate time (present)

ANIMATED

SEASONAL

PRESERVATION

RE-INTERPRETATION

DOCUMENTING

ETERNAL

CRAFT: We believe in a craft embodied in place, a low tech inventive approach which explores the ordinary in unfamiliar ways and achieves complexity within a mode.

ROBUSTNESS

UNFAMILIAR

RESTRANIT

ECONOMY

DELIGHT

TIME CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE
1999
2000
2001
2002
...by which project diagrams may be grouped and explored within a format that permits relationships to emerge. A series of families are created within initial groupings of... geometries (elastic, a-perspective, hinged, folded...), form is discovered.

...finding potential and re-interpreting or transforming in often unfamiliar ways combined with the study of opposites (Dr Jekyll + Mr Hyde) creates unexpected so...

...time-animated, time-eternal, time-less, seasonal time...

...vastly of means. Restraint, robustness, economy and delight= 'well crafted'.........................

2003
Based on ideas of: Geometry, Place, Time and Craft. Additional sub-groups are then defined using project by project investigation: elastic, containers, hinge, a-pet...
perspective, introverted, Dr Jekyll + Mr Hyde are some of the initial findings. This initial response places the diagrams in a chronological sequence, it is not intended

GEOMETRY

- Perspective
- Containers
- Hinged
- Elastic
- Oblique
- Fractured/Folded

PLACE

- Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
  - Simultaneous opposites
- Vernacular
  - Familiar made unfamiliar
- Constructed
  - Isolation
- Introverted
- Framing

TIME

- Animated
- Seasonal
- Preservation
- Re-Interpretated
- Documenting
- Eternal

CRAFT

- Robustness
- Unfamiliar
- Restraint
- Economy
- Delight
The Long Plan

The Long Plan as a typology for investigation begins with the Goddard House produced with Geoff Warn at Donaldson + Warn. The house is structured around a long ‘rammed limestone’ wall that runs along the east-west axis and serves to anchor the dwelling as if it has been built around an ancient ruin. The wall orders the site, and most importantly orders the circulation through the house, drawing the procession through the full length of the building on ground and first floor. The slight deviation at the eastern end of the wall serves to suggest a notion of enclosure. The house is also orientated around a shipping observation tower on a small but steep hill immediately to the north.

The ideas embedded in this project were explored at a similar time on a small project, The Long House, in the Northern suburbs of Perth when Hook was still working for D+WA. Here the materiality is much simpler – timber windows and a little timber cladding – but the proposition of a linear structure to order the dwelling and the structure remain the same. This time the view is internalised across a swimming pool capped with a band of neighbouring trees.

At the Sheep House, completed almost ten years later, the spine of materiality has been swapped to the south side of the dwelling, this time in a manner more responsive to passive solar design, ensuring north light in every space. The linear wall of concrete panels forms a spine of circulation on the exterior to enter and the interior to move through the house. In this case the anchoring to site is achieved through two stone fireplaces that also serve to frame the views of the rolling landscape.
Innocent Bystander Winery was designed and redesigned over a five-year period within which the Sheep House was designed and constructed. While not a residential project, it still draws on the long plan to achieve its architectural intent. In this case bands of program are stretched across the site in a linear manner, cut and capped by the cellar door (refer chapter 6 for a detailed description). The linear assemblage is just this, read in a different sectional relationship, but the device of the procession is maintained both for public and for the wine making process. Four massive concrete walls of varying degrees of permeability define the nature of the east–west journey, where the public may view the wine making process as a linear composition. The public view is across an open deck, out to engagement with the street.

Designed at a similar time to the Sheep House, Giant Steps House (GSH) returns to the formative plan of the Goddard House. A massive bluestone wall is proposed for the north façade, but this time its primary role is protection from the harsh winter and summer weather conditions that challenge occupation of the spectacular but exposed site. The wall is curved to act as if it has been lifted from the camber of the site and embedded. Entry is from the protected south side but the wall rapidly appears in the interior circulation defining all movement through the dwelling. Presented as a thick object with deep reveals, the wall’s materiality is the defining aspect of the house, framing views to the north across the valley and views east to a national park. A third view acts as a direct counterpoint offering a solitary tree to the south.
The Nested Plan

This plan typology begins Warehouse9 — a warehouse apartment conversion I completed during my first year in Melbourne. The nested plan is a simple strategy based around Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth House, where the servicing of the space, indicated in dark tone, is compressed into a tight, compact volume and then the careful locating of the volume seeks to define new spaces, indicated in light tone. In Warehouse9 the servicing is locked into a cheap box with bathroom inside, storage on either end and kitchen on the front; the placement of the box then defines two smaller spaces that could be used as bedrooms and liberates a very large volume for living. Heights are minimised within the box to allow the top of it to be used as a study. The project was driven by an incredibly small budget and hence maximum return was required from all elements in the space.

A similar strategy was employed across two levels several years later at Mason Street where an apartment was added to the roof of a photographic studio. Again, servicing was compressed into a tight volume allowing other spaces to be maximised, but in this project the section became the critical device. The residence and the studio were considered as one with the bedroom volume upstairs, compressed to maximise the height of the studio ‘shooting’ area. Then, conversely, the kitchen area of the studio was compressed to allow the living space upstairs to be generous in volume and still meet local authority planning constraints.
In the unbuilt Phac Loft, two bathrooms were inserted into the service module but this time the floor plan was considered in terms of a series of bands of materiality that defined program: a strip of bedrooms, a strip of servicing and dining, then a strip of living and a strip of balcony. By codifying the space through material we sought to liberate the functionality of the reasonably small volume.

Finally in McArthur Place we return to a warehouse conversion, this time the multiple elements of service module are used to define two bedrooms around two rear courtyards and create an extensive network of storage so that rooms are defined by walls of joinery rather than plasterboard; these do more than hold clothes or divide space. In section the rear floor is elevated to deal with serving and plumbing. Again, the compression in one part of the dwelling liberates a huge space – this time with a northern aspect towards a park.
**The Tilted Plan**

This typology draws on the interests of geometry in the Constructed Families diagrams in a series of renovation projects. These involve the manufacture of an ordered geometry or the rectilinear structure of the host building is revealed. Once the order is established the new insertion disrupts that same space. In each case the journey through the space is engaged directly with the disruptive element to reveal the intent of the architecture to the occupant of the space. This typology begins with the Old Claremont Fire Station, completed while at Donaldson + Warn, where the old heritage building is stripped back to its original red brick form and circulation is clarified. The new order of the space is then disrupted by the insertion of an ‘egg’-shaped plywood-clad boardroom that redefines the interior volume and provokes intrigue on the exterior.

This continued in a more subtle manner at the Tiger House in Subiaco, completed prior to the formation of iph. In this case study a plywood-clad darkroom is inserted into the centre of the rectilinear addition to a Victorian house for a photographer. Building on the paradigm of the old dwelling (central corridor with rooms on either side) the plywood form gently nudges into the line of sight as one enters the old house through the front door, glancing your vision across a new courtyard.
The more dramatic insertion of a curved wall at an addition in Bluff Avenue, Victoria translates the renovation into three dimensions. The existing 'lean-to' was removed, taking the house back to its original state, then, in line with perplexing heritage legislation, “the addition was not permitted to protrude past a 5-degree angle from the lowest point on the front façade.” This constraint was then embraced in plan and section defining the imposition of 5 degrees as the base geometry of the new dwelling. This proved beneficial, opening the rear volume to an imposing existing tree.

An office fit-out in Flinders Lane in Melbourne continues this discussion in plan and materiality. Again the existing shell was cleared and new elements – with multiple, but related geometry – were inserted into the space. Each element was distinguishable in terms of its materiality and program, compounding multiple inflections through the space from the point of entry.
Tight Plan

The focus of the tight plan emerges from a line of research into the use of insulated concrete panel technology as a low-cost, effective solution to affordable mass housing. Built around a series of RMIT Architecture Design Studios and Technology Seminars, the projects utilise the dimensionality of the construction technique and manufacturing process. The Holiday Boxes are a collection of compact dwellings that could be utilised initially as weekenders during prototype phase and then moved into mass production when refined.

The dimensions are based around the ability to transport a concrete panel effectively and install it on an economical crane; i.e., 6000 x 3000. The plans engage with the strategies explained in the nested plan but extend the material technology into the consideration of prefabricated units for kitchens and bathrooms as well as insulation self-spanning roof sheeting, which eliminates the need for secondary structure.

The research is currently under development with a chain of industry partners and the ambition is to apply for an ARC Industry Linkage Grant in 2009.
iph - Resort Box 01

iph - Resort Box 02
New Trends Exhibition, Patras
New Trends in iredale pedersen hook

In 2006 iredale pedersen hook were invited to take part in the ‘New Trends of Architecture in Europe and Asia-Pacific’, an international travelling exhibition with the aim of “creating opportunities to share ideas and experiences between Europe and Japan [and later the Asia-Pacific region], through organizing annual exhibitions and symposia from promising architects in Europe and Japan to be held in Tokyo and in the European Cultural Capitals.” We were asked to state and demonstrate our ‘agenda’ and, as part of the contribution to the exhibition, iph wanted to continue the line of discussion that was raised by ‘New Pavilions for Architecture’. We wanted to investigate how a component of the exhibition could be transformative and therefore used the opportunity of the touring exhibition to make an original piece of work that commented on the practice, its methods and the nature of the research being undertaken through Reflective Practice.

What emerged was a development of the Constructing Families diagrams into a three-dimensional spatial form. The silhouette of the diagrams was cut from ply squares of a dimension prescribed by the exhibition organisers as the base dimension of a model for transport (a generative constraint). These squares were then slotted together in the manner of the Eames’ House of Cards. This transportable object had the potential to be reconfigured at each location of the touring exhibition. No instructions were provided, thereby allowing the exhibition conveners at each venue to interpret the work as they saw fit. Or, if iph were in attendance, we would reconfigure the model as a response to the particularities of each place. In effect, the model was the realisation of a set of concerns for an architecture that was transportable and adaptable to any situation or condition, but implicitly linked to the practice; it became a prototype of how to collate and communicate the underlying ‘agendas’ of the practice.

In parallel with the New Trends exhibition and anticipated international exposure, the iredale pedersen hook website was also developed to reflect the new trajectory of the research. As an ongoing experiment, projects are collated by location and proximity to the city rather than type or program. As I explained in the Houses interview, “The location idea simply came from the fact that we have done work in a wide range of climatic conditions and the architecture attempts to communicate the nature of that condition. It seeks not to be derivative, but contributory.” Thus, the website provided another site for reconsideration and assessment of the work produced by the practice as an outcome of the research. As did the production of a small, self-produced publication for distribution at the New Trends exhibitions in Greece, Tokyo, Melbourne and Perth. This carefully curated document extended the ‘office profile’ into a mini-monograph or ‘iph phamplet’. And, in line with the initial request from New Trends, we sought to describe for the first time the composition of the underlying ‘agendas’ of the practice’s work; these five short statements of intent that embodied the value system of the practice became known as the ‘Field of Concerns’.
**Field of Concerns**

Deep involvement in the development of Iredale and Pedersen’s Masters theses allowed me to map and gauge the nature of the transformation of the practice over several years, culminating in each biannual Graduate Research Conference (GRC).

During 2007, with the particular mind of the academic in the collaboration, I used my experience critiquing architecture students at RMIT to help hone and clarify the direction of the research, focusing the emerging thematic categories in the practice’s work and refining the ‘agenda’ from the iph pamphlet. This resulted in a collection of diagrams produced for GRC07. The resounding conclusion to this line of investigation was that the practice had moved beyond a ‘three-pole position’ and was now acting in a different way, with a shared and communicated understanding of the concerns that were driving the practice. The triangular prism of the poet, the socio-environmentalist and the pragmatist had evolved to form a common ground of operation and investigation – a circle that was declared the ‘Field of Concerns’.

The stiffness of the ‘agenda’ had dissipated and a level of equality had been achieved. In this new configuration, the ideals of the practice became clearly articulated as falling under the banners of ‘Recalibrating the Suburbs’, ‘Referential Landscape’, ‘Environmental Construct’, ‘Means of Economy’ and ‘Social Sustainability’.

The intent of the Field of Concerns is to provide both a framework through which to reflect on the work and communicate the ideas embedded in the practice, and a canon in which to develop new work; a self-assessment tool. The scope of the Concerns is both general and specific; it allows the consciousness of each partner to exist on an equal level within the work, and provides a constant reminder of aspects of architecture agreed to be important to the collective.

**Recalibrating the Suburb**

Iredale pedersen hook have produced a collection of projects that explore the issue of the densification and urban regeneration of Perth’s older suburbs. We are interested in the transformation of housing in the Australian suburbs that allows an old dwelling to re-engage with the north, opening to sunlight and climate and responding to new ideas of lifestyle and exterior living. The alterations and additions seek to exploit what the old house provides, using what is there to generate a new architectural language with the intention to recalibrate and adjust the suburb to embrace a new lifestyle.

**Referential landscape**

The projects serve to read the Australian landscape in a way that is not obvious or complacent. Each project constructs a reality that is apparent in plan, recounts a story or perhaps reflects a cinematic approach to space, aspect and journey. The projects also explore a Western Australian idea of duration and time, where the length of journey is not consistent with its duration; the idea of the collapse of time in the Australian landscape – a wide-open road and broad horizon under a huge blue sky.

**The Means of Economy**

Our architecture explores notions of economy in material and space. We challenge the premise that architectural quality must be expensive and instead seek to do extraordinary things with ordinary means and materials. The construction method and detailing of projects responds to ideas of utility and pragmatics driven by remote locations, robust environments and stringent budgets. We do not believe that the idea of economy equates to ‘cheap’ – it embodies concepts of restraint and parsimony through appropriate selection of materials, considered dimensions of space and design solutions that embrace constraint.

**Environmental Construct**

Environmentally sustainable design is commonsense, not a luxury, and should be common practice for all Australian architects. At Iredale pedersen hook we believe sustainable design must be achieved by applying the concepts of energy efficiency, lifecycle costing, waste management and careful selection of materials to produce design solutions that address ‘triple bottom line’ auditing principles. ‘Greening’ does not have to be expensive: it is a matter of appropriate action rather than technological innovation. Rather than framing our work around the ‘ESD’ tag, we view sustainability as the embodiment of our ideas and the core agenda of the practice. Its manifestation is apparent in all iph projects.

**Social Sustainability**

Iredale pedersen hook embrace the proposition that development of community is the only way that society can effectively move forward. Community demands an architecture of respect and restraint; not restraint of ideas or expression, but restraint on the imposition of inappropriate architecture on an existing condition. Our work seeks to explore the development of respect for place, people, context and the collective inheritance of built fabric and natural environment.

Footnotes

1 Professor Ranulph Glanville is a hyper intellect and exceptional critic involved with RMIT GRC since its inception.


4 www.iredalepedersenhook.com

5 I discovered later that Abalos&Herreros also categorise their work in relation to place.

6 Around one hundred copies of the 80-page A5 landscape ‘phamplet’ were distributed during the exhibition. It has been subsequently updated with new work and images and reprinted, with another sixty in the public realm.