

INTERVIEW WITH HAIG BECK

DATE 11 JANUARY, 2013

RR

00:00:27 There are series of questions - this is the 11th January 2013 and we're at Haig and Jackie's house at Waller Court, Point Lookout. The standard questions, we'll go through first and get those out of the way.

JG

00:00:49 We're interviewing Haig Beck?

JG

00:00:53 Interviewing you is Robert Riddel and Janina Gosseye. Thank you.

RR

00:01:03 The formative years and we're looking at the period 1945 to 1975 and we're aware that you and I were both students at that time and I didn't graduate until '76 and, I - well what architectural qualifications did you gain and from which institutions, is the first question.

HB

00:01:33 Well none from the Central Technical College, where I started in 1963. I left maybe somewhere in fourth year, but I'd missed out a year in between them - I repeated the second year. So, in 1969 I left and went to England, to London. So, it's there I was interviewed by Peter Cook at the AA and was accepted into the Diploma School which is the final two years. Mainly on, I think, on the strengths of a portfolio of stolen architectural drawings from the various practices I'd worked for and every Australians' gift for the gab. Which always amazed the English.

00:02:23 So, I was accepted and I eventually took the position up after I'd gone and worked for the Architects Journal as a trainee technical editor where I worked with Peter Davey and Martiz Vandenberg. Peter Davey went on to become the editor of the Architectural Review and Martiz Vandenberg went on to become the editor of Architects Journals - we all working together in Queen Anne's Gate on desks beside each, under Leslie Fairweather.

00:02:55 And, then we heard that the AA might be closing down and went through a series of these crisis at around that time, and on Martin Pawley's advice, another architectural journalist, I took up the position that been offered to me at the AA.

00:03:12 So, I went on graduated from the AA in 1973 with the Diploma from the AA. Although I failed to hand in my history thesis because I'd never done it. Alvin Boyarsky, who is Chairman of the AA said "Look, hey we can't give you your diploma until you've handed your thesis in and you pay your fees" and it wasn't until about 1981 or 1982 that I finally actually got around to writing the history thesis which I passed.

00:03:49 I'm told that Robin Middleton only gave you a pass or a fail and I got a pass, so it wasn't too bad. By then I could afford to pay the backlog of fees and so, I eventually graduated although the diploma says '73 I didn't get it till '81.

RR

00:04:07 And, what was the history thesis on?

HB

00:04:10 I did it on – by then I was editing with Jackie Cooper, the International Architect, which we were also publishing and I did an issue on French - contemporary French architecture which was really exciting at that point. Enormous amount of building was going on in France because they had a left-wing government and left-wing governments build infrastructure and that's a great moment for architects.

00:04:40 So, there were lots of social housings and the like being built in France and we went across and we did an issue on Paris, and we were looking at French architecture from '67 from the time of the student revolution. And, I wrote a thesis which was looking at the way in which French architecture had been transformed following the revolution in '67 or the near revolution in '67.

RR

00:05:11 And, what are the buildings that you remember from that time?

HB

00:05:14 I must - there's a cut out that needs to come in here straight away. I've always lived in the future and really don't reflect at all very much on my own past. So I don't remember very much.

00:05:31 And, there's another thing to also to take into consideration is they're saying that says that if you remember the '70s, you weren't there. So I can't really say that – you know, I mean, we're now dealing with the '80s, the '70s and the '80s in Europe and I think it's a little bit beyond the scope of this interview so, back I think to ---

JG

00:05:55 Yes. Could I just ask going back, why did you decide to study architecture in the first place?

HB

- 00:06:03 Well my father was an architect that helps. He had been a survey draftsman, doing the survey for Somerset Dam, and he was, this is through 1938 or 1939 and he was 16 or 17 or 18 or something like that and he was living in a tent up on site at Somerset Dam where Somerset Dam finally got built.
- 00:06:33 And his younger brother enrolled in architecture down at would have been the CTC and that's Huey Beck and my father's name is Doug Beck. And, dad would come home of a weekend, the story goes and see bits and pieces, and think "I can do this". So, he enrolled in architecture too. Then the war came up and he went off to be a navigator in the air force. Apparently not a very successful one, they cashiered him, more or less, for health reasons or something, after he got their plane lost several times.
- 00:07:18 But, he came back and he then took up architecture and must have graduated sometime in the – round about '46 or '47 I guess. Because, he built his own house which was, and they were all – there were several young architects at that time – were all deeply inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright and Usonian period, and, so he bought a Usonian house. All the materials that you would find in Brisbane at that time of post war austerity, was appropriate.
- 00:07:58 He swapped a block of land that he owned with his brother. My family had a market garden down in Indooroopilly, near the river, and they just ended up with a block of land out of it. And he swapped a block which was really not much use for anything but had fabulous views down the river.
- 00:08:18 And, he built the house just under the brow of the hill. So, I was brought up inside - my earliest memories are architectural, living in or go to other people's houses and they weren't like our house. We lived in an architect's house and it was brick paved floors and lots of big folding glazed doors – sort of big eaves, swooping eaves and so on.
- 00:08:49 I can remember at a very early age, maybe I was about four and him coming home one afternoon and looking over my shoulder to see what I was doing and I was doing a drawing of a fisherman in a boat and him telling what beautiful straight lines I had and that I would make a great architect and I was cursed from that point on.
- 00:09:11 So, I always wanted to be an architect and I always, sort of, understood what architecture was about because I was brought up inside it within an architectural community – his friends were all architects.
- 00:09:22 I always assumed from being in that background that all architects cooked – you know, it was natural, you know, because every weekend he and his friends would go off to the Roma Street markets and come home and cook Chinese food all weekend. I also assumed, in fact, that architects and all men for that matter, we're exotic cooks at that level as well.

JG

00:09:49 And, who were the architects that your father - - -

HB

00:09:52 I can't remember, look I was a little boy, I was a little boy. Look, I'm not going to be terribly useful for you at this level but I don't forget, I am an Editor and I have been thinking about architecture for a long while, so, I do have some thoughts about modernism in Queensland.

JG

00:10:09 We'll get into that shortly. I thought I might ask just in case, you never know.

HB

00:10:13 Doug Christensen was one of his mates and Col Tesch was another one of his mates.

RR

00:10:20 Right.

HB

00:10:21 And, Col Tesch was – we used to go down to Col Tesch's – Col Tesch was building his boat, which was a Moreton Bay Cruiser, fishing trawler. He was building it down at Breakfast Creek when I was a kid and we'd go down there and sit on the boat ramp while he put on red lead onto the keel or whatever it was. Col Tesch was a good old boy but 6'6" - a big man, a big man and my father was a little man so, I guess it's, you know, it's natural that they'd be good mates.

00:11:06 I know that when I passed matriculation and it was a fluke because I thought - I was convinced that I was going to fail my matriculation. I was lazy at school – I'm not a stupid person but very lazy, particularly in things that don't interest me, and I could never bring myself to apply myself at high school to anything, except English, I thought English literature was wonderful, I had a great teacher. But otherwise, it was just boring and I didn't do any work at all. So, I was absolutely astounded when I got 5 C's for senior.

00:11:45 We lived next door to Ian Gore who was a cartoonist for the Courier Mail and he stays up in Hendra and he bought me home the results at midnight before the paper came out. He could do that, couldn't he? I can remember seeing him and falling over myself thinking 5 C's and I don't have to go back and do another year of high school, thank God.

RR

00:12:05 So, you got Physics did you, which was the requirement?

HB

00:12:08 I got Physics, yes. I couldn't believe it.

RR

00:12:12 I didn't, therefore I could never go past third year until I got it.

HB

00:12:16 Till you got it? Yes. Well that's the way it was but I got 5 C's which meant that there was no way in the world I'd get a Commonwealth scholarship, which was the only way you could afford to go to university then, was you either got a scholarship and you had to be a hard working high performance matriculating student to do that.

00:12:33 Or alternatively you paid the fees. Well, my dad, he spent all his money in the pub. There was no chance of that, he was drinking with Col Tesch and his mates?

RR

00:12:41 So, you said you were in Hendra at that time and not at the Usonian House in Indooroopilly?

HB

00:12:47 No, no, no, we'd been many places. He was – my dad was an interesting man. I mean, he was a very fine designer. I'm sure of that because the house in Indooroopilly was – and, I can remember it in quite some considerable detail, he only built two thirds of the house. It was an inline Usonian plan, I mean, Wright made two types of Usonian plans. He made the L shape which captured suburban sites and he made the linear plans which really date from Taliesin onwards, as a way of making a house that colonises as much of the site as possible and catches the right cross ventilation breezes and so on.

00:13:34 So, the Wright inline linear plan worked very, very well for sites like my father had in Indooroopilly which stuck along the contour underneath the brow of the hill and catching the South Easterly winds that would blow up the river.

RR

00:13:53 Did it get flooded? I mean was it ---

HB

00:13:55 No, no, it was up on a hill. It was up quite high, it must be up 100 metres above the river that point. So he was quite a good designer and when, he'd been in private practice for about three years. This must have been about 1947 because he had a big motorbike – they all did have big motorbikes after the war, had a big triumph and he was going to see my mother in, who was having my younger brother, the birth of my younger brother and he, on a rainy night, the front wheel got caught in the tramp tracks and he went over the handle bar and broke both wrists.

00:14:37 And, that was the end of his private practice because how can you practise with both arms in plaster. But, he was very good, must have been because the Commonwealth Government immediately snapped him up. Even though he couldn't do anything, they gave him a job.

00:14:53 And, he then went on to become a very senior architect in the Commonwealth Government because by the time I was 11 or 12, 1954 - 1955, – he was the senior architect at Woomera Rocket Range and he was administering the construction of all the launching pads for various rocket tests that they were doing in Woomera. He was the senior non-military officer in Woomera. So, when we went to the mess, we sat with admirals and generals, when we went to the mess. It was a lot of fun.

00:15:37 So, he was a very interesting and good architect. And, then he went from the Commonwealth Government to the State Government and he again was a senior architect in the State Government. So, my background is architecture in that sense and always familiar with it.

00:15:59 When I barely passed senior, matriculated, he said, well don't worry, go down to CTC like I did, like he did and the course of architecture down there. And he said, "Anyway, it's interesting because you know you get to work for architects in the daytime, you'll make bit money, you'll be alright." And he was right.

00:16:23 And, I said, "Will you help me find a job?" He said, "No. Go and find your own job." So, fathers were different in those days. So, I then went and plotted the street for most of January looking for a job and couldn't find one anywhere. Maybe one or two interviews a day.

RR

00:16:44 So, what year was this?

HB

00:16:45 This is the beginning of '63 – it was January '63. So come the end of January, he said, Well, how's it going?" I said, "Look I've been to all these architects and I haven't got a job with any of them." And, I said, "Do you think you could do something for me?" "Oh, I'll have a word with Col Tesch." he said. So, then he came back the next day and said, "Yeah, John Dalton's looking for somebody, Col says, so, why don't you go and make an appointment to see John?"

00:17:12 So, I made an appointment to see John Dalton and went in for an interview. John Dalton was in the, I guess the AMP Building in those days?

RR

00:17:27 Corner of Edward and Queen?

HB

00:17:28 Or Prudential or was it just beyond the post office going down river, going east, GPO. Maybe the Prudential, rather beautiful and - - -

RR

00:17:42 It wasn't the Prudential it was the CML.

HB

00:17:43 Well, maybe it was something like that, yeah. So, whatever, and he had a little room, it had two rooms in the back of that building, looking into one of the light wells. It was one of those E type plans that had the light cores in them.

00:18:01 And, I went up to see him and next thing I know I'm being offered a job. Years later, he – John told me that the reason I got the job was because he did two interviews that day and I had the cleaner fingernails. Since I've been boatbuilding, I can't say I've got very clean fingernails at the moment.

RR

00:18:24 So, what about the – coming back to CTC, what do you remember about the people that taught us there?

HB

00:18:34 Well, not a lot, but I do remember first year in CTC was a remarkable experience because there were maybe 130 people and they were – there weren't enough desks to go round and so, is that still working properly, good. There weren't enough desks to go round by any means. And, the windows, as I remember, were all here about maybe about 1.2 metres above floor level, quite high. And, there were people perched with the windows open, people perched up on the windowsills above us, you know, all around there were so many young men. And, they were all men, there were no women at all that I remember, in my first year.

00:19:24 It transpired that most of the people in the room were plumbers and carpenters and painters and so on, whose wives had sent them along to make something of themselves. And, they all fell away, almost instantly. Because, it was a hard routine, it required us to be down there three nights a week and then you had to work pretty solidly, at least every second weekend, and solidly I mean all nighters that went all weekend, most of the weekend too, just to keep up with it.

00:19:59 Then you worked for an architect in the daytime. And, after second year you had to have a job in an architect's office and you had to have qualified, or your matriculation. So, most of those people didn't have matriculation, they'd had years 10 and it just was too much and they all fell away.

00:20:16 So, it soon became a class of maybe 50 or so, and, most of them were – most of those people were people like me. You know, who hadn't got sufficient pass to get a

cadetship to go to the university and as a consequence we were doing architecture this other way.

00:20:41 We all worked for architects in the daytime. It was – the first year was – it was still run as a, very bizarre, it was still run fundamentally as a Bozar school and used many Bozar fundamental teaching techniques. But, it had little bits of Bauhaus ladled in over the top of it. But, it was mainly Bozar.

00:21:09 So, I can remember that we did a series of drafting exercises that took us through, probably two thirds of the year, where we learnt perspective and we learnt basic plane geometry and how to do projections, and all the rest of it and we did a whole series of abstract formal compositions, which, although it was a Bozar tradition of learning the drafting techniques, the actual compositional things that we were doing were based on Bauhaus, not in any depth at all, and towards the later part of the year we undertook our major design project.

00:21:54 It wasn't design at all, in the normal sense, we had to do a rendering of a Greek order, or a compositional rendering of a Greek order. And it had to be done, in those days, on Whatman's, which was properly stretched in the bathtub all taped up and stretched with a little bit of liquid soap in the water to get the paint to flow properly, once it had dried out because the soap was taken into the paper as it dried.

00:22:27 And, then we drew the composition on top of it and the composition had to be an imaginative composition, but, based on a particular order. I did the Doric Order, I can remember and it had to be rendered in a one colour, I can remember I did mine in Payne's grey, but, you could get a tonal variation.

00:22:54 It was a wonderful foundation, in terms of composition, in terms of technique, I'm so glad I did it, very glad. I don't know where the drawing's gone, all my drawings were stolen one year and that's it, went missing is probably more accurate.

00:23:13 Then, second year, we did history. And, history was - - -

RR

00:23:22 Bannister Fletcher?

HB

00:23:23 Yeah, and it was Col Jessup?

RR

00:23:24 Yes.

HB

00:23:25 Col Jessup used to come down and read a few pages out of Bannister Fletcher and it was a very early edition of Bannister Fletcher, as I remember, I mean, the Baroque wasn't even in it.

RR

00:23:35 Finished at the Renaissance.

HB

00:23:37 It finished at the Renaissance, exactly. So, we did pre Egyptian, we did Egyptian, we did Greek, we did a bit of Roman.

RR

00:23:45 Bit of Medieval.

HB

00:23:46 And, we did a bit of Gothic and we did a bit of Renaissance. And, that took two years. And, he didn't quite get to the end of the book, but, that's okay. And, that was history of architecture. The interesting there was that he had a few grubby slides and we were required to take notes, which was good, and also draw notes. What I've always encouraged my students to do, and so, we very quickly had to draw the plan of a gothic cathedral, in a matter of two or three minutes. So, it's a great way of capturing things in your mind, for architecture

RR

00:24:26 Yeah. Well, the examinations required you to draw from memory the plan of a certain cathedral. So, you learned one off by heart so you could just do it.

HB

00:24:37 Building instruction was, we worked, I think the Mitchell was the book that we used, and it was - - -

RR

00:24:48 Or Mackay.

HB

00:24:49 Mackay, whatever, but it was very ancient. And, it was a paperback and all the constructional drawings that they showed you, showed steel work with rivets in it. All the foundations, all the steel foundations for office buildings and things like that were great chunks of steel, all riveted together to make I-beams and flanges and things like that. I mean, it was just so ancient as to be bizarre.

00:25:17 And, of course it had no relevance at all to the way architecture was being practiced by the architects we worked for in the day time because the architects we worked for, generally were doing houses. And, just totally inappropriate. Made no sense to me at all.

00:25:37 And, then we did – I think we did structures, probably a bit later. Maybe in third year or something like that. I can't quite remember, I know I failed, I was no good at structures. Well, I was lazy. I only did things that interested me. But, it was – I can remember going down to, on the first night, having enrolled and enrolling was quite funny because I was working for John Dalton at that point and I had to go down and enrol. And I'd gone home and cleaned up and had taken a tram from, by then I was living in Lutwyche, and taken a tram down to the Valley and got out at the Valley and went to see one of the guys that I'd done high school with, Tommy McKerrell.

00:26:26 And, I said to Tommy, "What are you doing Tom?" and he said, "I'm working in a panel beater, I'm clerking in a panel beaters work." And, he said, "What are you doing?" "I'm going down to enrol in architecture." He said, "Wait a minute, I'll come down with you."

00:26:42 And, that was the basis on which Tommy McKerrell did architecture. So, we went down and we enrolled together. And, while we were going through the enrolment process, we were told that we were to come on Friday night to a smoko, which a smoko is a sort of a supper of sorts, drinks supper, which was being put on by the senior students, by the final year students.

RR

00:27:07 But, more drinking and less smoke.

HB

00:27:08 More drinking and less smoke, exactly. And, we were kids just out of high school, I mean, naive, and at a time when everybody was very innocent and naive. Not like kids now days, with the world turned onto them with social media and all the rest of it. So, I can remember going down and I'm trying to think of who the architects, who it was that came up to me and – no, it's gone out of my head – it may come back, but this senior came up to me and said, "Well, you know, good think you're doing architecture, who are you working for?" And, I said, "John Dalton." And I didn't know who John Dalton was. I was just happy to have a job and I'd been there a week sort of thing.

00:27:50 And, they all fell about, you're working for the master, you know. It was – I immediately had status, immediately had status in the architecture school, I worked for John Dalton and that was somehow beyond anybody's expectations, that they could ever work for John Dalton, because he never had a student before, but, he was very highly regarded, even then.

00:28:17 So, they're my earliest memories of going down to school.

JG

00:28:20 Do you remember any of the projects that you worked on at John Dalton's office?

HB

00:28:28 When I first went to work for John, the first task he gave me was he gave me a plan of somebody's garage, a working drawing of a garage extension that he'd done. And, it was a plan and he said, "I want you to copy that." And, of course, it was full of architectural conventions and I didn't understand it, I had no idea what I was drawing. That was my first, and I thought, boy, I'm going to really screw this up and I was absolutely tense, like you can't believe, that I was going to make an absolute mess of this first project that he'd given me to do.

00:29:02 And, the next morning he came in and he said, "I'm going to show you how to do an alphabet." And, I, to this day, I still show students how to do an alphabet, on that basis, he showed me how to do a pencil – how to sharpen the pencil and how to hold the pencil and then how to do a lower case alphabet and how to set it out and how it was formed, the geometry, the underlying geometry of the alphabet, how it worked and then how to do upper case. And, how to do number, how to do the figures.

00:29:29 And, then he got me to rule up a whole AO drawing board and he had me do, in quite big letters across the top there, press on. Which was – it had a double meaning, because it was not only, press on, you know, work and work and you'll be okay, but, press on was the way you had to hold the pen, how you had to push the pencil down.

00:30:00 So, we did everything with an HB or an F grade pencil. And, the trick that he'd shown me was that, to steady the hand as you start a letter was that you do a little point like this, and then you can move around, the hand was steady, you could trace out the oval shape of the underlying geometry of that, most of the lower case letters.

00:30:25 So, pressing on was the first bit and then you pulled it around and then you pressed on again at the end of that bit. So, every stroke you did, every up and down stroke, started with a press on and ended with a press on.

00:30:38 And, his point was that, not only did it steady the hand, but also it had the benefit, back in the days of blueprints and dye lines, that even if the letter dropped out, where you pressed on would still be there even if the letter dropped out in the printing process. So, you could still read the text by filling in the gaps as it were.

00:31:03 So, that was his way of – he used to do all his working drawings on tracing paper, in ink, and in those days everything was done with, rule was – what are these pens that do this?

RR

00:31:21 A ruling pen.

HB

00:31:22 Ruling pens. So, you know, and you could just align thickness with the ruling pen. retrographs didn't exist at that point. What are retrographs I hear you say. And, then when he came to letter up – do the notes on the drawings, he'd take out his fountain pen, which had black ink in it and he would use a set square and the T square and he would use the set square to do the down strokes and then use the T square across the bottom to get the line in.

00:31:58 So, no rulers, nothing, he just – he'd be doing it with a fountain pen like this. He'd put the fountain pen up over the edge of the – over the lip of the Perspex, lip of the T square so that the set square didn't quite touch the paper and then he's just use that so he never blotted the paper. Fast as anything. He was a fabulous draftsman.

RR

00:32:18 Could he do a sheet of drawings in a day?

HB

00:32:21 That's where I learnt that that's what you should do. Because I know when I finally got fired from Mal Cummings, I was really pissed off, because as I'd shown him, at the point when he was firing me, and I'd been with him for three months and every day I'd done a drawing, and there they were all listed.

JG

00:32:40 So, how long did you stay at John Dalton's office.

HB

00:32:44 About 18 months and while I was there he – when I first went to be with him, he was supervising his own work and he was also supervising maybe John Railton's work, because John Railton had gone off, if it was John Railton, but it was a friend, had gone off with a client's wife and had disappeared to Melbourne, abandoning his practice, and John was left with having to do the supervision on two or three of these houses.

RR

00:33:19 I don't think it could have been John Railton because - - -

HB

00:33:21 No, maybe not, I must be very careful in circumspect there about naming names, because I don't remember. But, I do remember these sorts of events. So, he was supervising his own work and supervising somebody else's, which meant that he was out most mornings.

00:33:38 So, my task really, was to answer the phone and to learn how to letter. And, so, I'd answer the phone, 'Good Morning, John Dalton and Associates,' I was the Associates, and, take a message for him and he'd come in about lunchtime. We would sit there in the afternoon and I had a desk up against a wall with the window looking down to the light well, this way, and he had his desk at right angles to me and looking out through the light well, and he would sit back and talk, while he was working he'd talk. Talk and talk and talk about all sorts of wonderful things.

00:34:27 He was totally self educated, he'd been, as I remember, he'd been an aircraft draftsman, aeronautical draftsman, in Yorkshire and he was a handsome man, really a handsome man. Looked like Cary Grant, or Gary Cooper, you know, cross between the two of them, a really very handsome man.

00:34:56 Suffused with confidence, as only handsome men can be, I guess. Never having been there. And, he would talk about philosophic issues and morality and social obligations, moral obligations, integrity and all these things, which I always assumed was the essence of architecture.

00:35:21 It was only years later that I realised he was going through a bit of a crisis himself because he'd fallen in love with one of his client's wives, and maybe the conversations were having, when I reflect on it, were possibly conversations about his own crisis of confidence about what he should be doing.

00:35:44 But, it shaped me, I just assumed, in fact, I knew a bit about Wright and having been brought up in a Wright eon house at some point and I knew a bit about architecture and then to hear the moral dimension, the philosophic moral dimension of architecture, I thought that's what the hardcore of the program really was. It was more than just design.

RR

00:36:05 So, did you socialise with him at all? I mean, did you go to his home?

HB

00:36:11 Yes. He's – look, he was a, I mean what a fine man, what a fine man, I was so lucky. But, I've always been lucky so that's – when it comes to architecture I've always been lucky, so I was very, very fortunate. Just fell on my feet and he modelled me, he moulded me, you know, I mean it was Pygmalion and I was Eliza. I was definitely Eliza Doolittle.

00:36:46 And so, when the first ball came up, remember when we used to have our architecture balls, the student balls. So, he waltzed me down to somewhere down Edward Street and had me measured up for a dinner suit. So, I'd – my first suit was a dinner suit.

00:37:05 And, so one was always properly dressed. And, we were, you know, long conversation with the tailor as they were getting the suit ready, long conversation about just how the cuffs would fall and where they would fall across the heel, at the heel and so on.

00:37:24 So, I immediately, at this very early age I started to understand that these were the things that were important in architecture. All this, how you dressed and how you looked and how things were cut and what style they were in and so on. Because I was so naive I just thought everybody thought that way, everybody in architecture thought that way, but I was just lucky.

RR

00:37:46 So, was this, the architecture ball you talk about, is that a student event or - - -

HB

00:37:50 This is the student ones, yes, the student ones.

RR

00:37:53 I've got no recollection of those, at that time.

HB

00:37:57 Look, I can remember organising one, which, probably by the time I was in third year by then, sometime later, but, I remember where we were working out what the decorations for the ball, the theme and the decorations for the ball would be.

RR

00:38:14 Do you remember where they were held?

HB

00:38:15 In Lennons, we did one down at the Bellevue, I can remember, you know they were very stylish events. With probably, and some of them were very – I mean, I remember one we did at Lennons which was really well decorated. The committee met and we all talked about what the theme would be and how we'd decorate it on that.

00:38:41 So, we were going to have a Roman theme or we'd have – and, I can remember somebody joking that we can have, we'll have torches with burning Christians, which is a joke.

RR

00:38:52 So, this was the student organisation?

HB

00:38:54 This was the student organisation, yeah.

RR

00:38:55 That became Scarab?

HB

00:38:57 Which was Scarab. Because, I'll tell you now, I'm just – I can construct little bits and pieces of my history on this basis, because you ask me do I remember any of the projects. I remember two or three projects with John.

00:39:15 One of them was a sheep station, a homestead for a sheep station somewhere out west. I never went there, but, Elizabeth showed me the working drawings for it. Yes, that's it, I remember I did the kitchen details for that. We were having to do zinc lined flour boxes, that you put a hundred weight of flour into at a time, in the kitchen, which is not quite like your suburban kitchen by any means.

00:39:41 And, I can remember him being paid and getting a cheque and going down to the bank and banking the cheque, because everything, he did everything out of a passbook. He had a cheque book – a chequing account and he had a passbook. And, he came back and we, the two of us sat down at his desk and he showed me – he took me through his passbook.

00:40:11 He was so proud because for the first time his passbook had more than £1,000 in it. And, we went back over four or five years of, you know what passbooks are like with all these different entries and so on, line by line and looking and almost made it and, no, it didn't quite and so on and there it was over £1,000.

00:40:31 And, he gave me £150 of that £1,200 he had in the passbook.

RR

00:40:40 That's enough to buy a car.

HB

00:40:41 Which was enough to buy a car and that's my first MG. The MGY I had. That was in second year, that was the beginning of second year some time. And, so I remember that homestead and buying that car and I can remember painting a scarab on the door of the MGY, by the time we were deeply involved in student bits and pieces.

00:41:11 Why a scarab, why was it called a scarab?

JG

00:41:13 Yes, I was wondering.

HB

00:41:14 Well, you know, scarab is this little beetle that you find and it's in Egypt everywhere and I was just talking to an artist up the street here yesterday and she was saying when she was at the BM she bought dozens and dozens of these little scarabs, so, this must have been many years ago.

00:41:34 But, we always quite liked the – it has symbolic value and I can't quite remember what it was. But, the alternative meaning for us was that a scarab was a dung beetle, and it spent its life collecting dung into a little ball and pushing it and we always thought that was very much like being an architecture student. In Brisbane in those days, we were collecting a ball of dung and pushing it up hill.

00:42:03 It's a – remember that when I went to work for John Dalton he, I was indentured to him, he had me – he was an old time, he believed in these things, you know, a type of master and apprentice and the master's role and so on. So, I had articles of indenture which my father had to sign on my behalf, which he'd set out.

RR

00:42:31 But, your father didn't have to pay for this?

HB

00:42:33 No. No. But, he didn't have to pay me very much in turn. He undertook to teach me and it's all set out, paragraph by paragraph what his obligations were and what my obligations – forgotten what they were, but they were properly specified, as an indenture and as terms of indenture, and he paid me £5 a week.

00:42:56 On the basis that – now £5 a week is probably worth what, what would that be worth nowadays?

RR

00:43:09 It was enough to get by.

HB

00:43:10 Well, as long as you lived at home, you know. My mum took 30 bob from it for rent and board and £1.50 and I had £1.50 for fares and getting to and from work and maybe £2 for whatever it was and then she took another £1 the other pound out of it and put that into – made me save it. And, that's what it was.

00:43:39 And, so he would – he took an interest in everything I did. He stood guarantee for things, you know, when I bought the MG he stood guarantee for it, because that was just a deposit, he stood guarantee for it. When interesting people were in town, I'd be invited to come and sit and have coffee with them and things like that. It was a great time.

JG

00:44:08 So, where did you go to after John Dalton?

HB

00:44:10 I went to work for Don and Robin Spencer, the Spencer Brothers. And, Andrew Wiley, who was maybe a year or two in advance of us, was working for them. And, Andrew had said to me, "Come and work for Donny, you know, it'll be fun." I mean, talk about being stupid, but, I went to work for Don. I left John and went to work for Don.

00:44:44 But, it was fun. There's no two ways about it, because Donny Spencer sailed very close to the wind. He could point higher than anybody else and often had to drive – he got into a lot of trouble at times. And, Andrew Wiley was as interesting a designer as Donny was.

00:45:06 Robin used to run the office and we were in, what's that – we were up on, the next street up from Wickham Terrace going out.

RR

00:45:19 Leichhardt Street?

HB

00:45:20 Leichhardt Street, yes, and we were in – there was a ten storey block of apartments that had been built up there and we were on the third floor in one of those.

RR

00:45:31 Called, Glencrag or – no, Craigston, no, not Craigston.

HB

00:45:35 It's still there and they rented an apartment and so, the office was spread through this apartment, it was a two or three bedroom apartment. Donny was interesting because he was much more experimental than John had been.

00:45:59 John had come out of the, I think the modernist constraints of Hayes and Scott, who he must have worked for at some point. And, so his was a good mannered modernism based in part on Hayes and Scott who I'm sure were much influenced by Japanese architecture on one hand and by American west coast on the other.

00:46:31 And, the technologies that were available to the Japanese and on the west coast of America were similar to what you would find in Queensland, and of course, climatic issues were similar as well.

00:46:45 Whereas Hayes and Scott houses, I always think of them as four square, with pyramidal rooves on them and big central fire places and belt rails that set the line. And, it's funny, you were saying to me only yesterday about remembering your father having to build after the war and you could only build in weather boards up to sill

height and beyond that it had to be fibro because there was a restriction on what materials were available.

00:47:19 And, this notion of the horizontal line was a very powerful idea in Queensland architecture and John Dalton always put a belt rail, which was a piece of 10 x 1 ½ hardwood, 250 ml by 30 rail, which ran underneath the windowsill at about 900 through and that was – that's was our datum line for the house and it was a belt rail that ran underneath he windows. It ran through the big sliding doors, so, it just set a horizontal line.

00:48:06 And, in that respect it's probably closer to right than to anything else and right and a Usonian tradition, these horizontals. And, so John's buildings were very well mannered in that respect, and, when I first wen there he was still doing flat roof houses. I'll get onto Donny Spencer in a moment, I think, I'll just - - -

JG

00:48:27 But was it mainly through John Dalton that you got in touch with more modern architecture, 'cause you said CTC was mainly in the Bozar tradition?

HB

00:48:34 Yeah, well you have to think that when you start – first year was no design to speak of, you learnt compositional techniques and you learnt about balance and harmony and you learnt about duality and things like that. But, you didn't actually do any design, to speak of.

00:48:54 Design started in second year and it w as very much set up in the Bozar tradition, you would do an esquisse, a sketch. And, then you would work up the sketch and it would be, maybe it was a one night project or maybe you'd do the esquisse in one night and then you would come down for the second development in the next week and then the final development a week after that or something.

00:49:21 So, it was quite a lot of pressure to do these things and then they would have simple little briefs, simple little briefs. I can remember, probably by third year we were doing kindergartens and little chapels and - - -

RR

00:49:33 Surf clubs and - - -

HB

00:49:34 And, surf clubs and things like that, simple little briefs and I think very intelligent, you know, about how – I go into architecture schools today and I see my colleagues getting first and second year students to do enormous briefs, ridiculously large briefs.

00:49:57 I see people in final year taking on briefs for their final projects which would be done by a team of half a dozen architects, you know, in the real world. But, they were – what I do remember of being taught about design, not that they taught us very much, but at least the briefs were intelligent and pragmatic and took you step by step into slightly more complicated territory.

00:50:26 And, I know that – I can remember that the crits that we had we'd all pin up at the end of the first evening, when we did the esquisse, you'd have two hours to draw and then there would be 40 minutes of crit. And, then whoever was running the design class would go round and speak to the critical drawings, the ones that they found interesting.

00:50:56 It's a technique I still use actually, with my own students. I get them all to pin up and then I walk around and talk. I don't let my students ever talk to their drawings, what's the point. I mean to say, your task is to do a drawing that I can read, you know, and if I can't read it then it's telling me what you meant to do is of no value to us at all.

00:51:16 So, I think it's quite a good technique actually, so that's what happened and crits were actually – the person running the design class, who was a practicing architect, would talk to the drawings and fundamentally about planning issues, you know, who well it was – or whether you needed skyhooks to hold it up.

RR

00:51:44 Skyhooks were always very useful.

HB

00:51:46 But, when I was working for John Dalton, he was doing flat roof houses and they were long thin, stretched out across the site and I can remember that they leaked terribly. Because, the problem was, that even if you didn't have a boxed gutter, but, you had a gutter that was boxed off because you had a long fascia that went across the front and you didn't want to show the gutter or the fall of the gutter behind it. So, the gutter was boxed off in that respect.

00:52:23 And, of course, in this environment they fill with leaves all the while. We don't have deciduous trees, we just live in a deciduous constant environment, constantly deciduous. I can remember that John's wife was saying to me that her solution was, after ever big storm, clients would be ringing to say their roof was leaking and she'd say, "Look, I'm sorry, I'll get him to get right back to you he's in the shower right now." Because they'd be ringing first thing in the morning saying, "We've got a leak." And, I can remember that he'd be gone after a big storm, gone all the next day running around trying to sort out leaking rooves.

00:53:08 He was painting at the time, I mean, he led four – he led a rich cultural life, but very self driven and motivated. But, also - and, so yes, painting. But, of course, you have to understand that Brisbane in those days was remarkable isolated. It cost way

beyond anything that we could afford to fly to Sydney or to Melbourne, so you never did it.

00:53:37 To go to Sydney or Melbourne was either a road trip, in cars that usually blew up long before you got there, particularly if you were like me and you forgot to put oil in it. My MGA got as far as Kempsey before it blew up.

00:53:52 So, going to Sydney or Melbourne was a major, major trip and not many people did it. But, on the other hand – so, that made Brisbane very isolated, culturally isolated. But, it didn't mean it was a desert, by any means. There was a thriving artistic community of sculptors, painters, musicians, architects, pottery makers, print makers, fabric printers all together and Brisbane was sufficiently small in those days, it probably had a population then, maybe about four or five hundred thousand at the most.

00:54:36 So, it was sufficiently small then for all the people that were engaged in cultural production knew each other and what's more, the intellectual life of the university spilled over into the social life of most people. So, John knew everyone and I was part of that.

RR

00:55:01 Contemporary Art Society, did he belong to that?

HB

00:55:03 I imagine so, but, I can't remember.

RR

00:55:07 I can remember going to a lot of their functions because they were a place you went on a Friday night, at Kangaroo Point Hall.

HB

00:55:13 Yes. That's right, that's right. Yeah.

RR

00:55:15 And, people like Roy Churcher were there and - - -

HB

00:55:18 Well, I can remember going to Roy Churcher's house and places like that, yes, at those times. So, it was a very rich cultural life, but isolated from the rest of Australia. And, as a consequence, operating under the radar and thriving and totally under the radar.

00:55:36 And, the other thing of course to bear in mind at that point is, although it was isolated from Sydney and Melbourne and the types of conversations going on there, the only magazine that was – there was Art in Australia and - - -

RR

00:55:49 And Architecture in Australia.

HB

00:55:50 And, Architecture in Australia were the only magazines and they were fundamentally parochial. I mean, Architecture in Australia was in essence the journal of record, run by the institute.

00:56:06 And, there was a little pamphlet called cross sections that came out of – that came out of Melbourne University, which was a bit more interesting, a lot more interesting in fact. But just a pamphlet.

RR

00:56:18 And, John Dalton contributed to that.

HB

00:56:19 He did, yes. But, I don't remember him contributing to it when I was there, but I can't be sure. But, on the other hand, we had all the magazines, and we were only a month away. Everybody, I mean, those architectural practices that could afford it had them delivered by air, the others had it by sea mail. So, at worst we were three months away from the latest thing happening in Europe or America or Japan. But, generally, we were only three or four weeks away, by air mail.

00:56:54 And, collectively, and we were in and out of each other's offices, as students, so, collectively we saw Japan Architect, we saw, what was it, Shrunken Chicken magazine, Shinken Chiku, there was another Japanese magazine we always called the Shrunken Chicken magazine. Which was interesting because every other issue, as I remember, or the back of it, always dealt with Japanese vernacular, which was really quite interesting.

00:57:20 And, then there was Architectural Record from America and there was Progressive Architecture from America. There was Domus and I can't remember Casabella, but, I do remember Domus very clearly. There was Architectural Review from London, there was the Architects Journal from London and there was Architectural Design from London.

00:57:42 There was L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, from France, from Paris. And, occasionally you'd see a German mag, [Baubuilt 00:57:50] or something like that, you'd see. But they were the fundamental magazines and everybody was aware of them.

00:58:00 I can remember John coming into the office one day, he had been doing a series of abstract paintings which were dealing with the transition zone on the veranda. These were a series of abstract horizontal paintings where you're sitting inside the veranda looking out, and what you have is horizontal slats of the venetian louvres, the [00:58:23] and the light and dark pattern that's created by that, and then open areas of bright light and so on.

00:58:34 And, he'd been doing a series of these paintings and he came in one morning, after a weekend, with a photograph that he'd had developed of a rural shed across the road from where his house was in Lone Pine or Brookfield or wherever it was, yes, out that way. Because it was still all paddocks in those days. And, it was, the roof was a typical vernacular cripple roof, which went like this and up and then down and then out. So, these two lower pictures out here are the verandas or the cattle stalls, and the gable roof in the centre, which was a simple little truss.

00:59:27 Well, it probably wasn't even a truss, it probably was just the two rafters leant together against a ridge plate, which was a really standard way of building and getting quite good spans with quite small pieces of hardwood, because it was small and it's a cross section.

00:59:43 And, saying, "We're going to do a roof like this now, I'm not going to have any more leaking rooves." So, then he sits down and he starts to design the first of the houses with the cripple rooves, with the skylight in here and those sorts of pictures.

RR

01:00:00 So, he cut them in half, essentially, took this and made it half.

HB

01:00:02 Yeah. And, pulled it apart and then got a clear story running so that he could get cross ventilation to work properly and get light deep into the plan and so on. But, that was a big leap. That was in '63, this was in first year. And, that was the first abandoning, stepping away from the flat roof, but also stepping away from Hayes and Scott Japanese American Pyramidal forms and so on and into something which was really – took as its inspiration an abstraction of the vernacular.

01:00:48 And, you could see why he was – you could see the pragmatic imperative that was forcing it on him on one hand, but you could see him looking at the quality of light through the paintings he was doing and how he would look across the street and see this. And, you know, it's only two years later that Bob is taking us and two years later and Bob is talking to us about, Robert Riddel, he's talking to us about the rise and fall of the black stump. Which was a very early piece.

RR

01:01:16 You'll have to remind me I've forgotten this.

HB

01:01:18 It was a very early piece in the scarab. Well, you were looking at the vernacular and because – and I can remember you taking us, we would have been in third year by then. I can remember you taking us one Saturday morning, we went up to have a look at Walter Burleigh Griffin’s incinerator.

RR

01:01:35 I can remember that. Yeah.

HB

01:01:36 And, then we went from there out to Beaudesert the same morning and went out to Tamrookum.

RR

01:01:42 Okay.

HB

01:01:43 And, at the same time you were talking about, not only about arts and crafts, but you were talking about the vernacular.

RR

01:01:52 I probably didn’t know anything about arts and crafts in fact.

HB

01:01:54 No. No. But, you were – but what did we know? What did we know? We didn’t know much at all.

RR

01:01:59 Well, we were getting information from everywhere and - - -

HB

01:02:02 Yeah. And, to try to assimilate it.

RR

01:02:04 Yeah.

HB

01:02:05 Because we weren't inside a structured educational program, thank heavens, so it was really quite a good time for us.

RR

01:02:11 But, I can very clearly remember you coming into QIT, I suppose as it was then, with architectural record that had pictures of Sea Ranch and saying, "Look at this."

HB

01:02:29 Well, now here's the story. So, when I was two thirds of the way through second year I got very frustrated because I knew design was this wonderful thing but I didn't know how to do it. I couldn't, typical, because we weren't taught design, you either learnt by osmosis or you copied somebody and neither system worked for me at all.

01:02:58 And, by the end of – near the end of second year, must have been about September, I was absolutely frustrated and fed up and thought I'm never going to make this work. And, I can remember going home and saying to my dad, my father, I'm giving up I'm going to become a bricklayer. And, he laughed.

01:03:15 "With hands like yours your going to be a bricklayer." So, by then I'd been surfing for about a year and surfing was just beginning in Australia.

RR

01:03:28 And, that was here?

HB

01:03:29 No, it wasn't here. I don't think that was – no, it wasn't here at that point, I was going up and down the Gold Coast, I had a 10 foot six balsa board and we put it on the top of our station wagon and mum and dad had a campsite down in Northern New South Wales, just beyond the Tweed. And, they'd drive down on Friday night with the kids, to go camping, and they'd drop me off at Greenmount and I would prop the board up underneath, against the timber boarding on the edge of the beach and sleep under it on Friday and Saturday nights and surf all day Saturday and Sunday and then on the way back in I'd be waiting on the street, they'd pick me up on the way back and that's how I spent every other weekend.

01:04:16 And, I can – forgive me I've just wandered off there, what was I talking about?

RR

01:04:25 You were talking about - - -

JG

01:04:26 Sea Ranch.

HB

01:04:27 Sea Ranch, yes. So, then I went to work, I gave up architecture, I thought, and – but the only job I could get had to be near surf anyway, so, I went and got a little flat and went to work for Mal Cummings, who was Prof Cummings son.

JG

01:04:42 That was after Spencer?

HB

01:04:44 No. No. This is before Spencer. I think before Spencer. I think.

RR

01:04:49 After John Dalton?

HB

01:04:50 After John Dalton. I'll get it, but all this is – because I don't reflect on this, all the time scales are a bit out. They're around about this time. And, I can remember going and because I had a little flat at Mermaid Beach, a little fibro house, and everybody used to come and stay with me because I had a house on the Gold Coast, you know, at the beach. And, I can remember that Spencer Jamieson came down. Now, Spencer Jamieson was the one who was at university and was given the job by Mal Cummings and I was very resentful because he was going to pay Spencer Jamieson a lot more than he was paying me and Spencer Jamieson had no experience at all.

01:05:28 But, I could never feel bad about the fact that Spencer got my job and got paid better because Spence at the same time was showing me a copy of Progressive Architecture or Architectural record, I can't remember what it was, and this must have been November or December, because it was at the end of the university year, but, you know the latest of these, whichever architectural magazine it was had just arrived, so this must have been 1964, in November, December 1964, there with Spencer Jamieson showing me pictures of Sea Ranch which – the condominiums had just been built.

01:06:10 For me it was an absolute complete and total revelation. That's how architecture works, that's easy. Because, what it did was, I mean, what Moore does is he's incredibly influenced by William Wurster. Who's William Wurster you say?

01:06:37 William Wurster is one of the five or six great Californian architects of the early – pre war, between the two wars period. And, he starts off as a semi regionalist and he starts off as a semi regionalist modernist. More vernacular, building ranches in Northern California. But, slightly abstracted, slightly modernist. And, they get progressively more modern and so you look at – there's quite a famous ranch house that he does in the mid to late '20s and it is Sea Ranch, the Condominiums in every details. You can see, it's got the tower at the front, at the entry gate tower, the whole lot. It's all there with the Courtyard with the buildings around it, the Ranch House buildings around it and so on. It's exactly, it's the – Moore basis the condominium at Sea Ranch on William Wurster's building of 30 years before. At least 30 years before.

01:07:44 And, I can remember, I mean Wurster's really quite important because he's one of these regionalist moderns that are taking on the ideas that are coming out of Europe, in the late 1920s and adapting them in a removed way from the cultural life, architectural cultural life of Europe at that point and trying to interpret them, from his own position.

01:08:18 I mean, we see it here in Australia, but later, the same approach. And again in Africa and in South America. And, so what I find interesting is that when we saw Sea Ranch we understood the role of the vernacular which we'd been looking at and thinking about at that point, just beginning to think about. Looking at Brisbane houses, looking at the way in which, and thanks to you Bob, the way in which Robin Dods had interpreted the traditional Queensland, inside the arts and crafts framework, without abandoning some of its fundamental principles.

01:09:01 Environmental and technological principles and bringing it into a new architecture, at that time, you know 110 – 120 years ago, 110 years ago. And, so we were looking at the arts and crafts and looking at Dods, looking at Queenslanders, looking at abstraction, looking at a timber vernacular and a timber construction technique which we were very familiar with because that's how houses were built.

01:09:30 We lived in houses that were timber houses and we were, you know, most architects were reduced because of the size of their budgets – client's budgets – to doing timber framed houses.

01:09:43 So, Sea Ranch was this magical thing, you know, well here's a guy in America whose managed to put it all together from his perspective, I mean, he's working in Oregon Pine, but, we're going to work in hardwood out here, but the principles are the same. I mean, you go into Sea Ranch and you look, particularly in Charles Moore's own apartment in the condominiums, you realise that you're in the Villa La Roche of Le Corbusier, with its three storey spacial organisation.

01:10:14 So, what we probably realised, without being fully able to articulate, was that here was, sort of, Corbusiern heroic modernism being interpreted, using a timber technology, a timber tectonic.

RR

01:10:32 Do you think, what I remember about that is that he introduces this idea of colour and pop art elements into the vernacular and mixed them all up. Do you think that?

HB

01:10:46 Well, of course, yeah because, of course, we were dealing with American art at that point. The Americans artists had been slow to take up modernism and it wasn't until after the war that the American art finally started to flourish. That was in part because, in Europe, the necessity of reconstruction, there was the way in which the fascists had turned out its best intellectuals from Germany and from Italy.

01:11:27 How many artists had fled Germany and France, Belgium, all sorts of places, you know, and ended up in American. So, by the time of the post war period, American art started to reflower, and of course, they were wealthy and artists need – artists more than architects need wealthy patrons.

01:11:46 And, so America became, really, the centre of the art movement, and with it came American interest. And, with that came super graphics, abstract realism, action painting, all this – this was all part of the American take on art and it was very rich. John Dalton was certainly much influenced by Clement Greenberg, the American art critic and considered him one of the great minds and I know people like Gary Emery, the graphic designer who's the same sort of generation coming to Melbourne from Perth as a 16 or 18 year old, so he could see the abstract realist's exhibition at the National Gallery in Victoria in '54 or wherever it was.

01:12:46 So, these were really important moments and American art was very powerful and super graphics, this was certainly part of it and you can see how Moore understands the relationship between super graphics and architecture. And, starts to provide us with this image of architecture, which was [Painterly 01:13:12], vast and canvases that are three stories high, in effect.

01:13:18 And, can you remember when he did the bath house at, when Moore does the bathhouse at Sea Ranch and it's got all super graphics all over it, and - - -

RR

01:13:28 I can't remember that aspect, but I know those colours were a big part of - - -

HB

01:13:33 And, they were primary colours, of course, so they were, sort of, Mondrian sort of quality to it, but, much more graphic in its approach than geometrically structuralist.

RR

01:13:47 We've probably got 20 minutes of tape left and there's a few - - -

HB

01:13:51 We haven't talked about anything.

RR

01:13:52 There's a few questions that we need to get in here.

JG

01:13:57 But, we have another tape, in case we run out.

RR

01:14:00 We do? Okay.

JG

01:14:01 Yes, we can go for another two hours.

RR

01:14:03 Okay. Forget that.

JG

01:14:05 I have another memory card, so.

RR

01:14:07 Good. Good. Good. I guess some of these standard questions that we have to cover deal with that first curriculum at QIT, as it was, and anyone else that you remember. I mean, I'm getting Robin Dods from Neville Lund and do you remember Neville Lund as one of the people who talked about such things?

HB

01:14:33 Not really. I mean, yes the name but I don't remember.

RR

01:14:36 And, Ian Charlton, what about him?

HB

01:14:38 Yes. But I don't remember any faces to go with any of these people.

RR

01:14:41 Okay. And, Col Tesch was teaching down there too and you knew him.

HB

01:14:44 Probably, but, probably construction I would have thought, knowing Col Tesch.

RR

01:14:46 Yeah. He was doing specification I think, or something.

HB

01:14:49 Was it?

RR

01:14:51 Were you aware of Karl Langer, as a student?

HB

01:14:55 Yes and no. I mean, we were aware of the work.

RR

01:15:00 You went to the Broadbeach Hotel?

HB

01:15:01 Yes. Yes. Well, my father was one of the – was an architect on the Broadbeach Hotel.

RR

01:15:08 And, the Chevron Hotel's another thing I remember from that time.

HB

01:15:15 Well, yes and no.

RR

01:15:17 Yes and no. But, are there any, I mean, living on the Gold Coast, that to me was where architecture was happening.

HB

01:15:22 Well, I never saw it that way at all. Isn't that interesting? I thought, you know, that the really interesting things were happening at a domestic scale. Look, there's something I should explain here about why did architects do so many houses in the sixties.

01:15:38 In those days, banks were very lazy, even lazier than they are now, bank managers, and they would not lend money unless you had a proven track record of being able to save and to pay things off and the proper credentials.

RR

01:15:56 Not a bad idea really.

HB

01:15:57 Not a bad idea. But, not when it came to looking after their mates and the like before 2008. However, in those days what happened is that when you became engaged to get married, the two of you would go out and buy a block of land. And, that was the contract, that was the level of commitment, that you were going to get married and you put a deposit on a block of land.

01:16:27 You bought an engagement ring and you had, between you, enough money to put a deposit on a block of land. Then you paid it off, the block of land off, and that took

usually a couple of years. And, the two of you would be working, you'd be living at home, so you saved and you paid the block of land off.

01:16:41 When you'd paid the block of land off, you could then go to the bank and borrow money against the value of the land and against your saving credentials to build a small house, and, if you were an ordinary working couple, you know a tradesman or something like that, then you went off, you got a builder he in turn went off to the Housing Commission and did a house based on a Housing Commission spec and details. And, they're very beautifully built. I worked for six weeks for the Housing Commission, at some point, and spent my time pulling the detail sheets out of various boxes for all the various bits and pieces for the Housing Commission house and I can remember to this day, thinking, they are very carefully and thoughtfully put together, all the flashings were in the right place, all the little rivets were here and there, so beautifully made houses.

01:17:33 But, if you had a tertiary education, you were a teacher, young doctor or whatever, then you went to an architect. And, in those days you couldn't buy an existing house because the bank wouldn't lend you money on it, you actually had to be able to pay for the damn thing or be a mature adult.

01:17:57 So, there was no chance of buying an old house and fixing it up, all you could do was build a new house. So, many architects working with very, very restricted budgets were doing houses. So, I can remember, through most of the formative years of going to college, and working for architects in the day time, was that most of them were building houses.

01:18:27 We did lots of houses. I can remember going to Donny Spencer's office, as I was about to say a while ago, and Donny was incredibly experimental, I mean, he would have, at any one time, three or four houses, I would have thought, on the go. They were in the ground and being constructed. And, they were all different. Whereas John Dalton houses, they always followed – there was definitely an aesthetic program that he was following, whereas Donny Spencer's were always this sort of plan and that sort of plan, but very interesting buildings and beautifully, thoughtfully and crazily detailed at times too.

01:19:01 I can remember one house, going to one house and I think about it to this day, thinking I could end up with asbestosis – if I end up with asbestosis, I know where I got it from. Because, I went onto the site and the whole house was being built, a hardwood stud frame, as I vaguely remember it, 1.2 metre centres, and sheets of compressed cement sheet fibro, asbestos cement sheet, formed the wall surface which were fitted into the frame.

01:19:35 There was no insulation in the house, there was not a double thickness wall, this is cheap, this is experimental and this is a very economical way of building. So, there was Donny Spencer. This notion of experimentation, of course it's admired in Melbourne because their historians, architectural historians, have done the work and

it's admired in Melbourne and Robin Boyd is seen as a key to an experimental architecture.

01:20:07 Although, of course, people like Peter McIntyre were far more ambitious and far more dangerous when it came to making experimental architecture, than even Robin Boyd was. But, Robin Boyd made some very beautiful and interesting, structurally interesting houses. But, Peter McIntyre actually sailed so close to the wind that eventually he had to flee the country and when he came back he went to work for his dad and decided he wouldn't do anymore of that again because it was too dangerous.

01:20:38 But, Donny Spencer, he continually did it, up here in Queensland, because we don't actually have a tradition of historical scholarship, up until now, we are not really aware of this sort of experimental work that was going on in Queensland at that point.

01:20:52 I think Donny is really quite important. But, also look at, the Centenary Pool, what's his name?

RR

01:21:05 Birrell.

HB

01:21:06 Birrell. Who comes from Melbourne but comes from practices in Queensland and brings with him, again, powerful experimental impetus, constructional and structural and planning. And, of course, Birrell you can see the more direct influence of Wright and also one of Wright's most successful student is Bruce Gough. You might look at me like that, but, Bruce Gough was an apprentice, was one of Wright's fellowship apprentices, he got up and left.

01:21:46 And, the great problem about Mr Wright, the people who came through the Wright apprenticeship is they end up being bad Wrighteons. Whereas, Bruce Gough went off to become Bruce Gough and produced some really interesting experimental work. I think in many respects, Donny – not Donny Spencer, but Jim Birrell fits into that character. I worked for Jim Birrell for a while, he fired me too

RR

01:22:12 Who else did you work for? Your worked in Rockhampton, I remember that.

HB

01:22:18 Well, I had a very interesting period in Rockhampton. I worked for McKendry and Cheney and Peter Cheney later became head of school, no what basis I never worked out, at QIT, I never worked out on what basis they would have made him, because he was just an administrator of the practice. I worked for Neil McKendry most of the time and I was their senior draftsman and senior designer for most of their work. I was there for a year or so.

01:22:52 They bribed me with a Mini Cooper, how could I refuse. How could I refuse.

RR

01:23:04 You did right.

HB

01:23:05 He said it was the hottest Cooper in North Queensland and it was, and it was. God it went like a rocket.

JG

01:23:13 So, when did you work for James Birrell?

HB

01:23:15 I worked for James Birrell, I don't know, six – I know when I worked for James Birrell, can't put a date to it but we were doing the agriculture and entomology building. And, that was deeply, deeply inspired by the work of Aalto, but adapted to, not to Finish climate but to Queensland climate.

01:23:43 So, he'd organised, and, brick building because it had to be cheap and it was done with, not very nice bricks too, as I remember.

RR

01:23:50 Cheap rejects.

HB

01:23:52 Yeah. Yeah. Not very nice bricks at all, really cheap. But, what he did is he used the cavity and this is this notion of experimentalism, it's rife at that time in Queensland architecture, and not talked about, but he used the cavity as a ventilating system, so, when you go out there and have a look at the agriculture and entomology building, you will see that it's got – it's hit and miss brickwork with holes in it all over the place. That's part of the ventilation system, ventilating the cavity to cool the building.

01:24:21 It didn't have any air conditioning because they couldn't afford to put air conditioning in this building.

RR

01:24:25 Has now.

HB

01:24:26 I'm sure it has, yes. And, it had a snakelike form and I can remember him, he was still working his way through getting it approved by the different faculties and there were,

like four departments in the faculty, all with competing interest in and wanting a bit of the building.

01:24:51 So, it was a difficult client, very difficult client to work with. I can remember him coming into the office one day and saying, I want you to take the sketch plans for the site plan, I want you to put a pool here in one of the spots. I said, "Why do you want to do that for?" He said, "And, I want you to put a note on that saying, air conditioning, cooling pool."

01:25:15 I said, "This hasn't got any air conditioning in it." He says, I know that, just do it. He says, "Just do it, because they're all going to jump on that because they know that too and they're all going to jump on that and they jump on me and having jumped on me I can get the other things done, I'll pull that one down---" I came back the next day and said, "Take the pool out, yes everything else is okay."

JG

01:25:36 Smart.

RR

01:25:37 Who else do you remember working on that project?

HB

01:25:40 I don't remember, but, people were there. Rex Addison was in the office I think.

RR

01:25:45 Bruce Goodsir?

HB

01:25:46 Bruce Goodsir was in the office and also my brother in law was there, in the office. Bill [Bretall 01:25:50] whose gone off to become a born again Christian.

JG

01:25:54 That was before Richard Stringer was there?

HB

01:25:57 I don't think Dick was – about that time, they were all - - -

RR

01:26:01 Don Watson?

HB

01:26:01 It was a good – Don Watson was there I think, it was quite a big office. I mean, we were in the Valley and we were on the first floor, overlooking, what is Brunswick Street that runs through there?

RR

01:26:11 Wickham Street.

HB

01:26:12 Wickham Street, Wickham Street that runs through there.

RR

01:26:13 And the Rex Hotel, or Rex Theatre Arcade weren't you, or something like that?

HB

01:26:17 Something like that, I can remember we were on the first floor and it was a quite a large, quite a long office overlooking the road, the street and anyway he fired me. I probably deserved it. But, I was lucky, you know, I was really lucky I went on to something else and I worked for interesting architects, really interesting architects.

RR

01:26:40 Any others you can think of? Did you work for Eddie Codd?

HB

01:26:44 No, I didn't work for Eddie Codd.

RR

01:26:45 Because he was an experimenter.

HB

01:26:47 Yes, he was an experimenter too. Yes. But, I worked for somebody in Isles Love Lane, who was that, down in the basement of Isles Love Lane? Used to do schools, can't remember. And, that was in - - -

RR

01:26:59 Neville Miller?

HB

01:27:00 Yes. I think - - -

RR

01:27:00 Or Darville Miller. Darville Miller maybe.

HB

01:27:03 Something like that, who can, yeah, Miller sounds familiar.

RR

01:27:06 I think I worked one day there, at your – your organised it.

HB

01:27:10 Suggested, yeah.

RR

01:27:11 Or was it Phil, maybe it was Phil.

HB

01:27:13 Maybe it was Phil. But, that was interesting because he was doing state schools for the Education Department. And, in those days, all the working drawings were printed out on die lines and then coloured. As per the construction colours. So, brick in section was one colour and brick and elevation was another colour, plumbing fittings were another colour - - -

RR

01:27:41 Concrete was green. Metal was blue.

HB

01:27:45 Yes. And, in section another blue, and your hook is green for this and something else for that, and what's more, you had to colour up four sets, or six sets, or whatever it was. So, it was no simple thing, it was lots and lots of drawings had to be coloured.

RR

01:28:00 Kept you going for days. It gave you work to do. Die lines were done outside the office in most cases. And, there was all of that that young students had to organise.

HB

01:28:17 Yes. They were done and we used to go down to – but, some offices actually, who worked up in, it was the Bank of New South Wales on the corner of Queens and George Street, just opposite the Treasury, somebody worked up in there. Maybe Bob Martin worked there. Somebody worked there and a large office.

RR

01:28:41 Well, Lund Hutton and Newell were in where Bob worked, was in Leichhardt Street, just near Conrad Gargett.

HB

01:28:45 No. No. This was, maybe it was Phil McMaster, I don't know, was working somewhere, was working in this building, and they were doing, I can remember going by and they'd been working – maybe it was Tommy McKerrell even – working in the die line office, all day long. Can you imagine with ammonia? All day long, in Queensland heat.

RR

01:29:07 And, the spec's were done on those roneo machines, that again used some kind of spirit to produce the ink line.

HB

01:29:16 But, I think that, I think that – it was only when I, it was only later when I was in London and I'd finished, I'd stopped editing AD and what was interesting about my time on AD, and that's 1975 to 1979, thereabouts, was I used that time on AD fundamentally for my education. I spent – I had guest editors for virtually every issue and the guest editors were really interesting people.

01:29:51 I mean, Joseph Rykwert Robin Middleton, you name it, Ken Frampton, we were all guest editors at various points. So, it was like having the most fantastic sort of program, education program you could possibly imagine. I'd learnt at that point how to edit, the nuts and bolts of editing as a technical editor on AJ, on the AJ, and, so then I was having these wonderful, wonderful sort of lessons from all the great masters in Britain at that point.

01:30:26 And, other people like Bob Stern and Michael Graves became good friends, worked with us, Charlie Jenks. So, when I went to start working on our own magazine, with Jackie, which we published ourselves, International Architecture, by then I had started to frame an idea about a regionalist critique of architecture and it was, I remember doing an issue on Venturi and Rush in America, a house by James Gowan in England and a house in Sicily by [Larr 01:31:10] and Franco Perini.

01:31:15 Then it clicking to me, in fact, that the drawings for each were and the way in which they built the house and the way in which they presented the construction drawings, the way the drawings were made, were particular to the culture that they were in and that only an Italian could actually do a set of working drawings in which the working drawings included lots of perspectives, which were actually sectional perspectives but were actually construction drawings at the same time.

01:31:43 The Italians were still working out what a working drawing was and they, sort of, were – and because of nature the Italian education system, architectural education system, which was really, definitely by osmosis there with these vast classes and so. So, it was very little practical experience in the way that we had it.

01:32:03 Whereas, when James Gowan made a house, it was – although it was abstracted and very modernist, it was also based on arts and crafts, an arts and craft vernacular reading and all the drawings were particular to completely beautifully rendered in the same way as I'd been rendering drawings for, state school drawings in Brisbane.

01:32:25 But, when I went to see Venturi and he said I've got a very nice house for you and he did, and we looked at the presentation drawings and it was done – a Venturi abstraction of a Georgian Federation, American federal style house somewhere in Connecticut or somewhere like that, on the east coast of America. But, pure Venturi, but also very historical.

01:32:52 And, so when we – when I sat down with one of his senior architects who'd been the job architect, to go through it, I started going through the working drawings and selecting the working drawings, because we were publishing working drawings, I suddenly realised that this wasn't a timber framed house, as it appeared in the drawings, with all these timber mouldings, it was a steel framed house with all the timber mouldings, all the Georgian timber mouldings applied to it.

01:33:16 And, I was rather shocked, and I said, "What's going on here?" and he said, "Oh, well, look, you know, we had a contract and the contractor said it would be cheaper for me, more economic for us, to build it in steel. But, I can still put all the mouldings on it. So, this is American pragmatism, you know, it's why America – America never produced a high tech architect. They could never go there, they're too pragmatic to do that.

01:33:40 So, I was beginning to formulate a regionist critique about from about that point and, of course, all I was doing was articulating something that I had learnt in Brisbane as a student. So, although I was articulating it in 1980 or in the early '80s, it's in fact actually, I was finally reaching a type of maturity, I was nearly 40, I was finally reaching a stage of maturity in architecture where I could reflect on what I'd learnt in the early '60s and from the way architecture was being practiced in Queensland, and start to see what that meant, a regionist critique of modern architecture.

01:34:23 And, I can talk about that for a while if you'd like me to. I don't know, are we running out of tape?

JG

01:34:27 No, we have other memory cards, so we might have to switch in between, but that's fine. Just for our record, when did you start International Architect and where and also maybe joined to that question, why did you decide to leave Australia and go to the UK?

HB

01:34:46 Well, I left Australia because, first of all I'd failed structures twice and I had no head for it at all. I'm fundamentally an [Imperialist 01:34:57] and we can talk about that later on too, if we get a chance.

01:35:04 So, when I got offered a job by Neil McKendry in Rockhampton, I was ready to go. I was ready to go. I'd had enough of architecture school and being failed in structures and doing really well in design and being pissed off, and being pissed off by them. They just did it to you, you know.

01:35:28 And, I was a trouble maker too, there's no two ways about it. I mean, I stirred the possum. Jackie's father was an architect and he was working at – he was the first full time lecturer at QIT. I never had him as a lecturer, but he obviously was pissed off with me too because he would go back to Sydney, because his family was still in Sydney and bitch about bloody Haig Beck, that trouble maker.

01:35:56 And, telling Jackie that, when you get to Brisbane you have nothing to do with that --
-

RR

01:36:05 Did you know Jackie then?

HB

01:36:06 No. No. No. But, of course - - -

RR

01:36:09 Your reputation preceded.

HB

01:36:12 But, when I met her I thought, what a fantastic person.

JG

01:36:17 And, why the UK, because of the AA or - - -

HB

01:36:20 Well, then she – then we started going out together and I was going out with Sally Hutton before then, one of Bob Martin's rejects I think, many rejects, and her father was an architect too. And, then I started going out with Jackie and we – when her father found out about it and didn't like it, at all, I can remember sitting, him taking me outside to have a chat with me and the only condition which I would sit in his car and have a chat with him, I could keep the passenger door open and one foot on the ground. Because he was mad, he was crazy.

01:37:03 But anyway, so, Jackie's mother and Jackie came up with this scheme of getting out of his clutches and so she went off to England to – an interesting and long story which

we won't go into, but, along the way she met Neville Quarry, who's the editor of Cross Sections and senior lecturer at Melbourne University in those days, a really important figure in Australian modern architecture in the '50s and '60s, as an academic.

01:37:33 And, as a consequence of meeting up with Neville she, Neville wrote me a letter and I'm in Rockhampton, and Neville writes me a letter saying, "What are you doing with yourself, get off your backside and , you know, Jackie's told me about you, do something decent with your life. Come over here and do something."

01:37:56 And, it was all I needed, you know, so I went in and gave notice to Neil in Rockhampton and went and got two jobs in Brisbane at the same time and saved the money in eight weeks or something and got a plane and went to England with £50 and a tin trunk full of books and records, and that was it. You could do that in those days.

RR

01:38:23 And, those two jobs?

HB

01:38:31 I remember sitting and writing a spec in four weeks, doing a working drawings and writing a spec in four weeks for a big house. But, we were well trained in those days, really could do those things. And, sitting there doing the spec and thinking, this is really good fun, it's the first decent spec I'd ever done, it was really good fun. because, I had the preamble of course, so all I had to do was sit there and in those days you described what needed to be built.

RR

01:38:55 So, was it your design?

HB

01:38:58 Yes and no. Whatever it was.

RR

01:38:59 You were working for somebody?

HB

01:39:00 I was working for Barnes, somebody called Barnes.

RR

01:39:03 Douglas and Barnes?

HB

01:39:04 Douglas and Barnes, yeah, I was working for Douglas and Barnes, yeah. And, look the space walk was on. Man first walked on the moon, I can remember that being on.

RR

01:39:13 Well, that's '69.

HB

01:39:14 Yeah. And, I left – arrived on Trafalgar Day in London. That's the 20th of October.

RR

01:39:25 I looked it up, I've forgotten now.

HB

01:39:28 And, from there went to the AA, after, you know, lots of other bits and pieces along the way.

RR

01:39:38 So, Neville Quarry was still there?

HB

01:39:40 No. No. Neville Quarry was doing sabbatical and – he was there when I arrived, yes, because I remember having my 25th birthday at his house, must have been, yeah. He would have left after that.

JG

01:39:55 And, when you say bits and pieces along the way, you meant you travelled before you entered?

HB

01:39:58 No, didn't travel at all, I - - -

RR

01:40:00 No money.

HB

01:40:01 Had no money, absolutely, we were broke. Fifty pounds didn't go far in those days and I was working as a contract draftsman and then I got accepted by the AA and then as a consequence to that, because I'd always been interested in making magazines, architectural magazines, so when a job came up at the AJ, Martin Pawley who had been an editor at the AJ, and who was a friend, said, "So, do it, you can always defer

your position at the AA and you haven't got any money anyway, so go and work for the AJ for a while." So, I did.

01:40:37 So, then after I graduated, sort of graduated from the AA, I can remember I was working for a large practice down in Russell Square and, I can't remember the name of the practice - - -

RR

01:40:54 Turner Lansdown Halt?

HB

01:40:55 Yeah. Yes. Something like that, and I can remember I worked for a wonderful architect, whose name - - -

RR

01:41:04 You got me a job there, I know who you mean but I've forgotten his name.

HB

01:41:08 Bob Pattison.

RR

01:41:10 That's it.

HB

01:41:11 And, I worked for Bob and Bob Pattison ran the design for this big practice and did all the design work and I was his assistant and I was going to the AA, but I wasn't going to the AA at all, I was working, because Jackie had - we'd foolishly got married and at that point Jackie lost her grant to go to university. So, I had to pay for her fees and living expenses as well as my own. So, we had no money at all.

RR

01:41:37 But you were very close to the AA, it was only about 100 metres away.

HB

01:41:40 Yes, and she was working at the AA and somebody came round, who was Milne, what's his name, Jack, Milne the one who did beautiful drawings?

RR

01:41:53 Jamie Milne.

HB

01:41:54 Jamie Milne. Jamie Milne came around and he was doing.

JC

01:41:55 Mills, M-i-l-l-s.

HB

01:41:58 Yes, came around, he was doing drawings one night and said, for us, a project that we were doing, because I used to get everybody in to come and work for Bob, to do bits and pieces, Bob Pattison, and Jamie said, "Oh look, their final hand in is tomorrow" and I'm thinking, "oh" so I went home and I took every drawing I'd done, every piece I could find, I'd done a couple of competitions with Andrew [01:42:24], who was also at the AA a bit ahead of me. I put it all into a book and submitted it and I got passed.

01:42:36 It was total bullshit. But, it got passed. Except, as I said before, I didn't do my history thesis, so it took some time. But, years later when I was, when Jackie and I were doing the book on Glenn Murcutt, the Singular Practice, and working with Glenn and really quite close, we were chatting about our days in London. It turned out that he went and worked – he worked for Bob Pattison too.

01:42:59 So, anyway, so I went and worked for an architect after I'd graduated as a graduate architect and he, Stuart Beattie, and up in - - -

RR

01:43:12 Islington?

HB

01:43:14 Islington, that sort of thing, yes, and he was going through – his marriage was breaking up and so he would go riding, he'd go and do dressage two days a week and it was winter and he would go fox hunting the other two days. I'd see him one day a week. And, basically left me to run the office. And, I was out of my depth, totally out of my depth.

01:43:38 And, we were fixing up old houses in Islington, Georgian houses in Islington, from the early 19th Century and turning them into these big grand houses, turning them into six apartments.

RR

01:43:52 Or doing public work, were you?

HB

01:43:53 Yeah, public. I was working for - - -

RR

01:43:54 Public housing?

HB

01:43:55 Working for Islington Council, doing this housing for them and fixing up these big houses. And, his solution to any problem was, "How will we detail the flashings here?" or "What will we do there?" He said, "Well, what have they done now, what's there now?" And, I'd say, "This and this." So, "Well, it's lasted 200 years, do that." That was the total of his advice, "Do that."

01:44:19 And, I was invited by Martin Pawley, who was by then running a scurrilous rag for Alvin Boyarsky.

RR

01:44:30 The Ghost Dance Times.

HB

01:44:31 The Ghost Dance Times, at the AA and he had to take Harry, his son, to the dentist. And, said, "You worked on the AJ Haig, "Come in and do a report on Walter Segal, 'cause I've got to take Harry to the dentist." So, I went in and did a report on, and watched Walter Segal talk about his beautiful houses that he did for housing co-ops.

01:45:00 Do you know of these buildings at all? These houses?

JG

01:45:03 Doesn't ring a bell.

HB

01:45:04 It's another history.

RR

01:45:04 Was he Dutch or?

HB

01:45:05 He was German, Viennese – Austrian, Viennese – Austrian Jew, and so he had worked out a system of making houses, which people built themselves and they put their sweat equity into it. It's a very early example of sweat equity and social housing in Britain. And, he'd worked out a semi prefabricated assembly system. Not unlike Britt and Peters house that was put together over here, where all the bits are cut on the ground and bolted together and then assembled and so on, and you didn't need any great carpentry skills to put most of these houses together.

01:45:42 So, you put the sweat equity into it. On top of that, you know, he did it with seven percent wastage, so, everything was cut to size, delivered, ready, so there was hardly

any wastage on it. So, you saved, most builders accepted maybe 30 percent wastage in those days on site. So, he'd worked out this very economical way of doing sweat equity co-operative housing.

01:46:05 I just fell in love with it, because it was so close to the timber tradition that I'd come out of. So, I wrote this glowing report, which I remember to this day, called, "I love you Walter Segal." And, I did, you know, it was a revelation to me. And, it was, obviously it was a nice piece because Martin Pawley said, "Well, you can write some more of these." So, I did a series of these and I enjoyed do it.

01:46:27 I thought, this is much better than trying to do housing conversions for Islington Council up in Camden, so, I said to Jackie, "I want to give up architecture and practice and I want to see whether I can make a go of this, writing." And, within two weeks I get a phone call from Monica Pidgeon saying, "Would you like to come and be one of my deputy editors?" Out of the blue.

01:47:00 Well, not quite out of the blue, I'd been doing a little bit of writing for AD as well. So, there I was and then a month later Monica said, "I'm leaving, that's why you go the job." And, so Martin Spring and I were left to take over AD. And, we were immediately told by a Standard Catalogue company that they were selling AD, and that we were taken down to have lunch with a prospective buyer who was down in Chinatown in the West End there in Soho.

01:47:35 And, I remember it because, in fact, there'd been a rather brutal 01:47:44 Triad murder that week and two people had been beheaded, you know, by the Triads across the street from where we went. And, we went to visit this guy and head 20 or 30 titles, you know, the Bootmakers Last and things like that, you know, The Racing Horse Times and things like that and we were to become a pair of editors and responsible for AD and it would be put together by another team downstairs that were doing these other magazines.

01:48:07 And, we looked at each other, Martin and I and I said, "I don't want any of that, it's not a nice place to be." So, we went back and a Standard Catalogue director said to us, "Well, what you think?" and we said, "No, we don't like it." And he said, "I'll tell you what, well, if you don't like it, you can buy the magazine from us, it's okay." And we said, "We haven't any money." And, he said, "That's all right, look, you've got---" They pulled out their publishing records and said, "You've got this number of subscriptions and we'll sell it to you for that amount of money, the annual subscription," it was about £30,000.

01:48:40 So, "All you have to do is, you don't have to actually have the £30,000 all you need to do is actually raise the money and put an escrow as loans, but, we won't spend it it will just go into escrow and meanwhile you live off your bookshop sales and produce the magazine on your bookshop sales and give us the subscription money at the end of the time and it will be there."

01:49:05 We thought that's a good deal, so we went out to raise £30,000 which wasn't an easy – I mean, £30,000 in those days, we bought out house in East End for £10,000, so it was three decent sized houses in the East End, you know, it was a lot of money. And, in the end the last bit of the money that we needed to put together, and it took us many months to raise it and it came from Papadakis, who Martin Spring introduced me to, he put £2,000 up or something.

01:49:36 And, told us in fact that we'd all be equal partners and he'd have 52 percent and we'd have 24 percent each, and we'd all be equal partners. And, we thought, "That sounds fair, he knows about publishing." So, we all eventually fell out, it took some time, some years, and it's a long story, but, we fell out and in the end, what I finally fell out with Papadakis is that he interfered so much and I spent most of my time trying to protect AD from his interferences.

01:50:08 And, so one day we were doing an issue with Joseph Rykwert as the guest editor on Alberti and Howard Burns had just discovered the only Alberti drawing and we were publishing that and everything else and we were doing it in English and Italian and it was a wonderful, beautiful, fabulous big issue and I'd got – the names gone out of my head now – but the fabulous architectural draftsman from the AA, used to do lots of AD covers for us, and, have you run out now?

JG

01:50:44 Yes, that one needs to be replaced. Sorry.

HB

01:50:50 We were thinking about how I got from AD to International Architect. And, I can remember being called up to Papadakis' office, as I was every morning, and I would sit there drinking tea with him. Because, if I sat and drank tea with him for two hours it meant that he didn't go across the road and interfere with the rest of the AD people I had working for me. I had a couple of assistants by then.

01:51:15 So, I was up there one morning and working on the Rykwert issue on Alberti and he suddenly dives into his pocket and saying to me, "Andrew Holmes," the architectural draftsman who had done the cover for me, "He can't draw." This is the great architectural draftsman of, illustrative draftsman, of the time, and Andrew Holmes had done a wonderful drawing of, I'm trying to think of which Alberti Church it was in Florence, and you could see the elevation with all the construction drawings, there's construction lines on it with all the proportional set outs on it and so on.

01:52:00 And, he said, "Look, he can't draw, look all these lines go past each other like this on the corners." And, thrusting into his pocket and pulling out this really grubby 35 mil slide of a photograph of the same church facade and saying, this, "Charlie Jenks has just given me this and I want you to put that on the cover."

01:52:27 So, I took it off him, having tried to explain to him that it was just crazy, took it off him, nope must do it. Went downstairs and rang Jack and she came across from the AA and we walked through the park, Holland Park, at lunchtime for an hour and I came back and cleared my desk.

01:52:46 Bigger you, I'm off. And, I was. So, he put the Charlie Jenks photograph on the cover and I set about finding some money to make a new magazine. And, I went straight to Alvin and Alvin gave me - - -

RR

01:53:02 This is Alvin Boyarsky?

HB

01:53:03 Boyarsky, chairman of the AA and Alvin gave me a room, with a window up there somewhere, and a telephone, what more do you want? And, tiny little cell in the back of the AA and said, "There you are, go for it." Ring whoever you want to. So, I ring Michael Graves, he was a good friend. And, I ring Michael Graves and Michael says, "Haig, I haven't got any money, you know what my practice is like," He says, "I haven't got any money." But, he said, "But Philip has just been given the Pritzker prize, the first Pritzker prize and they've just given him \$100,000, and I tell you 35 years ago \$100,000 was a lot more than it is now.

01:53:48 And, so "Why don't you give Philip a ring." So, I ring Philip up and I say, - - -

RR

01:53:54 This is Philip Johnson we're talking about?

HB

01:53:55 Yes. Tell him what's happened, "Oh dear boy, that sounds like a wonderful adventure, would \$10,000 be enough to get you started?" And, so he gave me, he lent us \$10,000 – he gave us \$10,000 and that was enough to print the whole of the first issue.

01:54:19 So, I can remember going off to New York with the first issue to thank him. And, to do a bit of business and so on, talk to people in America and New York, and going to him and going up into the Seagram Building and going up to the top floor where his office was. And, "Oh, dear boy," you know, "It's so nice to see you," wonderfully camp. "So, nice to see you, what brings you over from London?" "Well, we really appreciate you gave us \$10,000 so I can make a new magazine."

01:54:49 "Did I really?" And, then he said, "We'll go and have some lunch" and so he takes me down to, I didn't know in these days, but he takes me down to the Four Seasons. And, we get ushered to a table on the mezzanine level, and there we're having lunch and I'm thinking, gee they give you small portions here in this restaurant. These big white plates and nothing on them.

01:55:20 Years and years later, I mean, this is how naive I was, years and years later I'm reading one of the Sunday colour sups in London and it's Power Eating in New York, was the article. And, there was a plan of the Four Seasons and there's Philip Johnson's table.

01:55:37 So, that's how International Architect started.

JG

01:55:40 And, why did you call it International Architect?

HB

01:55:44 Because we wanted to – I'd been having trouble with Papadakis for some time because we'd made a magazine AD at that point because no one was building in Europe and there was no work around at all. It was a terrible period, this is during the late '70s and it was following the oil problems and all the rest of it. And, before oil had been discovered in the North Sea, or started being properly used from the North Sea.

01:56:15 And, so there was nothing being built. But, then things started to change and I thought, now we should start showing projects and buildings and move away from purely theoretical basis for the – an interpretive, critical theoretical basis for the magazine and do buildings, the way AD used to.

01:56:36 And, he didn't want a bar of that. He said, "No, no, this works perfectly for us," and AD stayed that way, basically, doing thematic issues based on theoretical themes. And, so, I wanted to do buildings and I wanted to do buildings from all around the world, not just Europe.

JG

01:56:56 So, it was – it had nothing – from what you were saying I gather that you were interested in regionalism and if I remember correctly it was Philip Johnson that was involved in this exhibit in New York about international modernism and it was basically modernism that didn't have any of the cultural implications that it had in Europe when it was done. They just saw it as a style and not really as something that responded to a need for a building. So, you didn't – there's no relation or - - -

HB

01:57:26 Well, no there isn't. But, understand that Philip Johnson really does represent an American cultural position and the fact that he received modernism as an aesthetic and not as a program is really quite interesting. Rem and I were in the same year at the AA and we were good friends.

RR

01:57:43 That's Rem Koolhaas.

HB

01:57:44 We were really good friends. I mean, Rem and Charlie Jenks and Leo [Krea 01:57:54] we were all very good mates. We used to have dinner together, four of us and our partners, you know, once a week maybe. Or a couple of times a month, you know, for quite a long time. And, Rem was quite clear, he said the great problem with modernism is that in the post war reconstruction it lost sight of the programmatic intention of modernism.

01:58:25 And, that the task of architects in that latter part of the 20th Century was to reclaim the unfinished work on program. And, of course, he had gone to New York and had been working on Delirious New York for his thesis, which became a book, and he was looking at New York not from an aesthetic point of view, the way New York was constructed, but, from a programmatic side of things and how programs worked and how they meshed and how invention arrived out of it and so on, transformations.

01:59:01 So, Philip Johnson of course, is typical in that American sense of they really did not get the idea of program and what's more, seemed to have had a complete moral bypass when it comes to anything to do with the social commitment to society, and to this day, this is the great dichotomy and split in American politics, is that one half of the country thinks that they should fuck the other half of the country over to get ahead and not worry about them and it's a pity.

01:59:33 So, Philip comes out of that context. I think what was really very interesting is that there I am making AD and International Architect and at about the same time, Ken Frampton who'd been, formally been a technical editor on AD was now involved in the IAUS, the what do they call it Jack?

RR

02:00:00 The International Union of Architects?

HB

02:00:01 No. No. No. No. This is Peter Eisenman and Ken Frampton.

JC

02:00:08 Oppositions?

HB

02:00:09 No, before Oppositions, they bought – Oppositions was one of the results of that. What do they call that the something or other, something or other? Their institute?

JC

02:00:20 The Institute of Urban Studies?

HB

- 02:00:21 That's right. Institute of Urban Studies, or Architecture and Urban Studies. And, which was run out of midtown Manhattan and I would go across working on AD and International Architect there and Ken Frampton was a good friend, I used to stay in his apartment. When he went away he'd give me his apartment to stay in, which was a hole in the wall.
- 02:00:57 I think that the work that I was doing on International Architect which was leading me progressively towards a more regionalist reading of architecture, through all this notion of International Architecture, looking at modernism, not as an international style but the way it was practiced in different parts of the world.
- 02:01:22 Of course, at the same time Ken is thinking about these things and I dare say, you know, dealing with American pragmatism as a theoretician and also as a practicing architect, and he was always adamant for me to understand, as was Joseph Rykwert for me to understand that they were, first and foremost, practicing architects, and Alan Cunningham, that's just died. They saw themselves primarily as architects who had a scholarly bent.
- 02:01:49 But, he was beginning to be – and, I think in opposition to what he was experiencing in America, as a kept Englishman in Manhattan, was trying to think about a more regionalist critique of architecture. So, he's putting forward his idea of a critical regionalism and I'm trying to work out my perspective of it.
- 02:02:10 I mean, and the two come together, he doesn't publish until the mid to late '80s and by then I'm back in Australia. But, we were doing the same thing, thinking about the same problems. And, I know that when I went to, when I went to places like Africa and saw the work of South African architects, like Norman Eaton, and I realised that modernism was being received in Africa in the same way that modernism was being received in Australia and particularly, my experience, in the way it was being received in Brisbane.
- 02:02:47 In that, they were obviously getting the magazines, they were obviously reading them and keeping up with the conversations, the discourse that's going on in architecture in this post war period. But, removed from it and trying to work out how they apply it in their own context. You know, the same thing happens in Chile and Brazil, in Argentina.
- 02:03:09 It's a very – it's interesting, when the Malvinas War starts, over the Falkland's, the Argentineans all wrote to us and said I'm sorry we have to – we exchanged in the war and it means that we can't actually continue to subscribe to International Architect. And, it was very sad, and we lost several hundred subscriptions. It almost killed us. Margaret Thatcher almost killed us over that.
- 02:03:40 But, they were receiving – their idea about what was going on in Europe was received in the same way as we were getting it. And, I found much the same, again, as all places

in Spain. And, the Spanish always saw themselves as being cut off from the rest of Europe and I can remember going there in the early '80s to do an issue on Madrid.

02:04:08 And, it was only a few years after Franco had fallen and then the monarchy had come back and there was a left wing government in power. The Minister for Arts was an architect, all the architects that we met there were trained as certified engineers as well as architects, they were very sophisticated.

02:04:31 They all work with typology, you go to Madrid and on everybody's desk was not the AJ Metric Handbook which you'd find anywhere in Britain, you know, telling you the size of this and that, but, in Madrid it was social housing, they were doing lots of social housing because it was a left wing government and it was a book on typology, Madrid apartment typologies. Everybody had one.

02:05:00 So, what I discovered in Spain was a sense of isolation. They'd been isolated under the fascist regime of Franco and many of the architects I met, and this is Manero and others, had started off under the fascist regime, as young men, and were now – and under the fascist's regime had been cut off by the Pyrenees to go to Europe.

02:05:28 You went to Europe from Spain, so, in the same way that Spain felt itself isolated in much the same way that Brisbane did or, I think many South American, the best of the Southern African architects. What I found particularly interesting was the way in which rationalism and empiricism imposed their different thought structures on the making of architecture and how you thought about making architecture.

02:06:00 I never thought very much about this until I was working on an issue of International Architect, on the historiography of contemporary British architecture which was the work of Roy Laundau who ran the graduate school of the Architectural Association in the '70s and the '80s. It was his work and his students work.

02:06:22 And, he makes the observation at the end of his introductory text that what's interesting about British architects is that they work from within and empiricist tradition, the suck it and see experimental approach, and it's a grand tradition that has served architecture and engineering, in Britain, very well from the time of the Industrial Revolution onwards.

02:06:52 So, all the great engineers, the great English engineers, the British engineers were not trained in France, in fact they couldn't go to France because, at that time it was the end of the Napoleonic wars and it was very difficult to get training. Only Americans could go there.

02:07:10 So, the great engineering skills were in France, in Paris, the great engineering schools. So, the engineers that existed in Britain, and I'm talking about Telford and the likes, [Isbart Kindon Renell 02:07:24] and so on, we were self trained, basically, and they were fundamentally empiricists, they'd experiment and see what worked and use work from some of principles, some experimental principle, and apply it.

- 02:07:39 Whereas, as Laundau points out, that this is a cultural condition in Britain that most Anglo Saxons possess, it's part of their own acculturation, and you can trace it back to Scottish philosophers like Locke and Hume, in a way of thinking, are fundamentally empiricist.
- 02:08:01 Whereas, the romance language, France, Italy and Spain too were rationalists. And, their way of making buildings was from theory into practice, not practice into theory. It's, sort of, a back to front way of doing it. And, you're Belgian and so you might suffer from the same problem, or be the beneficiary of the same opportunities. Whichever way you want to look at it.
- 02:08:27 But, what I find interesting about Australians, Australians are Anglo Saxon stock and so they come to this country with an empiricist approach to how they're doing things. That is amplified by pioneer society. And, Russell Hall makes this wonderful observation, because he's brought up on a farm, he said, "Every problem on a farm can be fixed with a bit of fencing wire and a bit of 2x4. And, if it can't be fixed with a bit of fencing wire and a bit of 2x4, you're the problem.
- 02:09:04 So, this is this notion of empiricism, really an applied level about how you survive. So, most pioneer cultures actually have very, very powerful empirical tradition to it. So, you find empiricism operates really well, where it becomes pragmatic and utilitarianism in America, but it is fundamentally empiricist in its inspiration. But, of course, you'll find all through South America and through Africa too, so, even though you may have romance language speaking in South America, they're still part of an empiricist pioneering culture. So, they're interesting.
- 02:09:46 I find them very interesting and as a consequence, the isolation for them, being aware of the discourses that are going on, as they were here in Brisbane, but being isolated from it means that with your empiricist grounding you're quite happy to experiment. And, to experiment with, well how do you take on these modernist ideas.
- 02:10:06 So, I think that probably program, but architects were more alive to issues of program here in Australia and probably in South Africa and South America than they were in the post war reconstruction in Europe and America.
- 02:10:25 Certainly environmental issues and the organisation of the plan based around environmental issues was a powerful imperative in Sydney and in Brisbane. I mean, here you didn't even talk about it, you didn't have to. It was, you know, the breeze came from this direction you needed to have the rooms this big or not this big, and this cross ventilation to work this way, you needed sun shading you just did houses like that, it had to be that way.
- 02:10:48 And, again, sort of, well how do you make it out of timber, how do you do this, how do you do what is basically a concrete and steel wide architecture, how do you do this out of timber. And, they found their ways of doing it, so, I think it's quite impressive.

02:11:02 I mean, modularity became quite important as a way of taking on this notion of the prefabricated, the reconstruction of the prefabricated building that it was a powerful idea in Britain and in Europe and it was taken up here in a modular setting. But, informed by Japanese architecture.

RR

02:11:25 You got the Stegbar window wall, and the Naco louvre, you based things around the limits of those.

HB

02:11:31 Yeah. So, the notion of the module becomes a powerful aesthetic imperative in, I think, particularly in Queensland, South East Queensland, and in Sydney, in Sydney too. In Sydney of course, there was – the conversation about environmental issues begins, probably, in the late '20s or early '30s. Who was the dean of architecture in the '20s and '30s, the big Englishman?

RR

02:12:09 Wilkinson.

HB

02:12:08 Wilkinson, yes. So, Wilkinson comes with this idea that we needed in Australian architecture, and this is how modernism is brought into Australia and how it's imbibed. But, Wilkinson has this idea that we need to make an architecture that's particular to Australia and response of him being in Sydney to the climate conditions, which was essentially a Mediterranean climate.

02:12:37 So, his idea was that you make a Mediterranean architecture, it's that sort of climate so it needs to be made of masonry, it needs proper overhangs on it, it needs, [02:12:48] and things like that, so it has a sort of a Mediterranean typology about it, Italianate, but, on the other hand it will use the details and the construction from its colonial heritage, which is Georgian meets the bungalow in India. And, we don't talk much about our Indian connection, but, our Indian connection is really quite powerful in Australia.

02:13:09 So, Wilkinson fuses these ideas about a regionalist architecture that's particular to a place and to its culture. But, also responsive to climatic concerns. Of course the young architects that are coming under his influence are also coming under the influence of the international style, in the late '30s and so they're listening to him about the environmental imperatives, the programmatic concern of the environment.

02:13:41 But, they're actually looking at European modernism and so what we get in fact is a discourse that continues about environmental issues, but which is now inside European modernist aesthetic. But, adapted to the materials we have here. Sid

Ancher is a key figure in this and probably maybe one of the most important of all the Australian early modernists.

02:14:16 I put him more important than what's going on in Melbourne, which, you know, in Melbourne what they were receiving in the late '30s was an aesthetic idea from the magazines and from the Jewish architects escaping from Austria and Germany and coming to work in Melbourne.

02:14:40 But, what happens in Sydney is, Syd Ancher actually starts to think about how to make a modern architecture with the materials that are available in Sydney and are responsive to this problematic concern of an the environment. I think it's much truer to a modernist position than the Melbourne architects are.

02:15:00 But of course, he who writes the history writes it his way. And, Sydney has never been very good at writing its own history, and so the Melbourne architects have claimed a high ground, but it won't always be that way and Syd Ancher will finally be recognised for what his true contribution was.

02:15:17 But, of course you understand then that people like Murcutt come out of that tradition. Murcutt just didn't appear fully formed as this environmental minimalist, you know, over night, a timber and tin Miesian as Alison Smithson called him. But, he comes out of a discourse that had been going on for some time. By the time he starts practising in the early '60s it had been a discourse that had been alive for 20 years.

02:15:46 I make this connection here between Sydney and Brisbane, although we had no idea what was going on in Sydney because it was so far away and it was really poor communications between the two, we had a similar discourse going on here, about modernism, environmental concerns, particularly environmental – today gives you an idea what you have to deal with, so all that was well understood and it was part of the air that architects breathed. It was the soup that they were swimming in, as it were.

02:16:16 So, I think that – I mean, also of course, in that period that follows the second world war, when architects come back – my father had been in Canada and had obviously been across to Buffalo or somewhere like that. Because he did his training in Canada and had been across to, and maybe had gone and seen Wright. Because other architects who'd been through and been air crew and been trained in Southern Canada had also come across and seen Wright. So, they were well aware of Wright and the use.

02:16:51 And, in part use only in tradition, but Moore, which was widened and thriving in the post war period. But, Moore had seen the houses in the Prairie period, the Prairie architecture. So, Wright was something that was well understood and it think, also the Wrighton tradition or the Usonian tradition fitted well in Sydney and in Brisbane with the materials that were available, with the restrictions that were put on with

rationing and building materials in the post war period, with the climatic conditions with the limited number of sites, particularly in Sydney, that were available.

02:17:27 Because, I was explaining before that you had to get engaged and buy your block of land and so on, well the only block of land you could afford in those days, in Sydney, which was considerably more built up than Brisbane was, in the post war period, were up the chases, up the gullies, leading down into Sydney Harbour.

02:17:43 So, people, young people bought impossible sites because they were the only ones they could afford and they were a fabulous challenge to architects particularly, but, if you were working in the Wrighteon tradition, you know, it sort of, you found a way through it.

02:17:58 You look at Ken Woolley's wonderful house that he does at Mossman for himself, the one that steps down, it really has powerful Wrighteon aspects to it as well. Although it's not clearly a Usonian house, you can see that Wrighteon tradition coming through.

02:18:15 But, also, of course, they'd all been to England by then and they'd seen brutalism. And, brutalism was this notion of the self finished material, again which is Smithson looking at how you could do things economically, looking at what Corb was doing. So, they bought that back and of course it worked. With hardly any plaster at all you can actually – you could use clinker brick which were cheap because they were the reject bricks down in Sydney.

RR

02:18:42 It was about truth and integrity and also texture, all of those things came into it.

HB

02:18:49 All that came into it, it was all part of the – there was John Dalton talking about truth and integrity and texture and so on and me thinking he was referring specifically to architectural materials. But, not necessarily.

02:19:03 So, the way modernism is taken on in Queensland is, you know, the pre war period is, it's largely as it was in Melbourne. It's a pictorial, largely a pictorial approach. An aesthetic that's not fully comprehended. In Melbourne I'm not about the Jewish refugees who came out here, I mean, they really built to a program and there's a tectonic that you can see the way buildings were assembled and so on.

02:19:44 So, I'm just talking about generally the way architecture was received in Melbourne and in Brisbane, in the '30s was – what little modernism it was, was basic in style, as far as I can work out, not a full understanding of the programmatic issues.

02:20:00 But, by the time, after the second world war, by then in Sydney and in Brisbane architects really were looking at a modern architecture an trying to interpret it as best they could. I think, as I said before, I think Hayes and Scott managed to encapsulate

both the Japanese and a west coast American approach, in their houses. Bits of Wright and bits of case study houses and bits of Japanese vernacular.

02:20:40 It was all, sort of, coming together and I think some rather beautiful houses that they did. It's out of that background that Dalton and the others, that's the discourse that they're engaged in here.

02:21:02 In Sydney it was, you know, it starts off as Wright – first of all Wilkinson, then Wright – international style, then Wright then brutalism until they find their own nuts and berries approach. So, by the mid '60s. And, of course it flowers in the '60s, in Sydney and it flowers here in Brisbane in about the same period, some interesting houses done in this period.

02:21:24 Then banks decide in fact that they will lend money for old houses, you can buy an old house and get a bank loan if you're a young person. And, it's about at that point that, in Sydney, that young couples are having to make a decision about whether to buy a block of land that's cheap and a long way from the city, or whether they buy an old house closer to the city. The same things happening in Brisbane, so people start to buy – so, people make a decision, a balanced decision about where they want to live in relation to the centre of the city, to schools, to services, facilities and all the rest of it. And, at that point the banks also start to lend money on old houses and architects stopped making houses.

JG

02:22:10 But, am I correct in understanding that, you were saying that in the immediate post war period the international modernism was interpreted or adapted to the Australian climate by Dalton and others that were doing it? But, these architects were not yet looking at the heritage of architecture that existed here, that was still later on?

HB

02:22:33 I wasn't aware of it from the architects, and yes, I remember it was a shattering experience, John Dalton saying we've got to do all rooves like this. I mean, "What."

RR

02:22:42 Because Karl Langer was doing the opposite, he was saying there's all these things wrong with that tradition, it's too dark. We need light, we need water, we need gardens, all that stuff is part of the architecture, which was pretty radical stuff. I don't know that he got much traction with architects in Brisbane, I think they really avoided him.

HB

02:23:06 I don't know, but I made a habit whenever I see, whenever I see in a bookshop, books on architecture and house design, published directly after the war, of grabbing them wherever I can, I've got a few I've found. And, it's quite interesting because most of

them are built around an environmental program. Many of the house designs that they're showing, You Too Can Build a House, you know, and Woman's Weekly, whatever, and there's been 30 designs and two thirds of them will have some sort of environmental concern about how you get cross ventilation, how you get solar penetration or not, and so on.

02:23:48 So, you know, this environmental, the environmental issue was always there and well understood. But, as part of the program for making architecture. But, never raised to a high theoretical level. Because, architects didn't theorise in those days. And, it's still embarrassing to talk about, I mean, the architects you would have been dealing with at that time will find it very difficult to theorise their work, they just did it.

JG

02:24:15 A few managed to.

HB

02:24:18 And, then it's embarrassing.

RR

02:24:20 Well, you get someone like Mervyn Rylance who, in the '30s pre war, was doing houses where he would do a plan and he would say to his client, "Well, you can have this looking this old English, or you can have it looking like Spanish mission, or you can have it looking like modern."

HB

02:24:36 Yeah. Or Cape Cod or whatever

RR

02:24:38 But, his idea of modern was streamline moderne, you know, but it had steel windows and it had white rendered surfaces, but it was just a choice based on anything that you might like the look of, and no - - -

HB

02:24:57 Well, there was, in the '30s was a period of architectural eclecticism in Australia, of great uncertainty. And, this is exactly what you're describing. And, it's really not until the post war period and people come back from the war and from what they experience in Britain and in North America and realise that it's a more considered approach to making of architecture.

02:25:28 And, of course they're getting the magazines by then and the great Californian magazine called – it had all the case study houses in it, projects in it – Art and Architecture, in California, these were really significant magazines that formed a way of thinking about architecture.

- 02:25:56 I mean, what I find really interesting is that modernism and the way it was being practiced at a domestic level, exhausted itself in Australia in the late '60s, early '70s. And, it exhausted itself because architects stopped building houses, for a while, or building lots of houses.
- 02:26:23 And, up until then it had been highly experimental, you know, every house was different and every house was a new chance to actually work over, fundamentally, the same program, but to look at it from a different perspective. You know, looking at problems with site and environment, whatever it was, so it's a really very interesting period, up until the late '60s, early '70s. Then it goes quiet.
- 02:26:47 I think what's really lucky for Queensland architecture is that, shortly after the '70s that Peter O'Gorman, of course, is doing his experimental work, and he was a bit older than me, so he's doing prefabricated timber framed house, very influenced by Wright and the Usonian tradition. If you go through the issue that we did on [Britt Peters 02:27:11]work, you'll find that some of his early work has strong Usonian motives in it.
- 02:27:20 And, then the final planning of their last projects is pure Wrighton Bozar. The big Moreton Bay houses that he did for Jenny and others are all based on those principles. Bozar Wrighton principles.
- 02:27:34 But, when Britt comes and, now we're dealing – she arrives here in '78, just outside your time frame, but, when she arrives and they start to work together, they start to develop an approach to making architecture, which is based on climatic concerns, on timber, and her experience as an outsider, about this new environment that she's in. And, coming as a Scandinavian, but with some Australian background, she's very important.
- 02:28:06 She's in a good position to start to theorise this work. He was very good at practice and good at arguing, but she was great at theorising the work. And, from that springs – the work that Bob had done, no, before that, the work that Dalton had done, the work that Bob and others had done looking at the vernacular and historic tradition in Queensland were all beginning to play into this.
- 02:28:32 And, I think what was really important, was when Whitlam came to power, the Labour government came to power in the early 1970s, suddenly it became okay to be Australian. Accents, newsreaders accents changed, they became Australian. They ceased to be anglicised. And, what's more, all things Australian were good.
- 02:28:53 So, suddenly, great volumes of Lawson were being published. Our forgotten great vernacular poet. Suddenly being published in the '70s. The heritage commission is set up and we're looking – for the first time looking at our traditions, at our historical traditions and roots and so on.
- 02:29:11 And, in architecture, we're beginning to look at the vernacular, in a very superficial way. I mean, what we see is, any amount of rolled corrugated iron verandas.

RR

02:29:22 You get Philip Cox, who's trying to record it and doing a few books - - -

HB

02:29:27 On Australian vernacular.

RR

02:29:28 - - - on these rude timber structures and his early work is very much based on - - -

HB

02:29:35 An abstraction of the vernacular.

RR

02:29:37 Well, that but also an element of conservation in it where there's an old building, Tocal I think it was that made him, he won an award for that school, it was based around a homestead and all these buildings were modern versions of the vernacular.

HB

02:29:55 Sure. And, when you go through Tocal all the details inside the chapel, which is the most spectacular piece of engineering, or timber engineering work, that just spire on the chapel. But, all the detailing inside the chapel is arts and crafts. You know, with peg joints and it's very beautifully put together in fact and you think, what.

02:30:12 This later became a high tech architect, you now, Australian high tech architect. But, I think that the interest in the vernacular, the research that Philip Cox had been doing from the early '60s onwards, on wool sheds and rude Australian timber buildings and things like that, were beginning to have an impression on the discourse.

02:30:34 Looking at Australia was okay. That we were all right, you know, we didn't have to look beyond, or to our betters all the while. And, so, I think that's a rich moment, a fertile moment for Peter and Britt to start their work at Queensland University, because everybody's antenna was attuned to what they have to say and I think the true Queensland modernism, really true Queensland modernism, begins sometime in the late '80s, and their students coming through and the work that they're doing.

02:31:12 Now when we look around it's any amount of it. A way of making architecture which is particularly displaced, which is driven by programmatic concerns which is absolutely aware of climatic issues. These were all considerations that were being – that were in the pot being, sort of, considered in the '50s and '60s but not quite actually brought to – articulated into a theoretical proposition.

02:31:35 But, now it's there and we've got a rich, I think we have the best domestic architecture in Australia and some of the best in the world. And, of course it doesn't photograph.

So nobody takes any notice of it. Which is good, or bad, as the case may be because everybody in architectural magazines want hero shots and you can't take a hero shot of a house that dissipates itself into the landscape.

RR

02:32:02 You can't even see it.

HB

02:32:03 You can't even see it. You wonder where it begins and where it ends, you know. And, also the whole idea of when you touch a bit, that bit goes all the way through, so there's an approach to detailing and tectonics, which is so close – this point that Robert keeps coming back to, which is truth, integrity, the materiality of buildings, the texture of them, it's always been with us. And, the way in which we detail timber houses, have always detailed timber houses, and from before Dods onwards, timber houses have always been detailed, with this notion of absolute integrity of the material and of the detail. The bit you touch here on the outside is part of the bit that you touch when you go inside and it's all part of the same detail. It's all assembled.

02:32:53 Tectonics is into the assembly, the way things connect, is part of the way in which they make architecture here in Queensland. I think the best timber tectonics are here and I've used tectonic in a very particular way here, as Frampton would have us use it. To do with the way things are connected, the art of connections.

RR

02:33:14 John Railton. Did he have any importance with you. I mean, I - - -

HB

02:33:24 Well, it wasn't John Railton that I was thinking of before, about running off to Melbourne, it wasn't, but, I do remember we went to look at Railton houses.

RR

02:33:32 There weren't many of them.

HB

02:33:33 There weren't many of them and his houses and Geoffrey Pie's houses we used to go and have a look at, look at the details of them and be astounded, be amazed.

RR

02:33:43 The other person I remember was, who Tom McKerrell worked for, I can't think of his name now.

HB

02:33:57 Well, go an interview Tom. Don't interview Tom.

RR

02:34:02 No, it was a guy who left architecture and became a sculptor. His name won't come.

HB

02:34:08 What I remember learning about detailing, and I think this is probably quite important, to understanding modernism in the '50s and '60s in Australia, is that, first of all there was a tradition of good building, of good carpentry. And, carpenters who were really on the borderline at times of being joiners, in the way in which they could assemble things.

02:34:34 And the Housing Commission had, as I mentioned before, had established a base standard for carpentry and it was difficult not to build well in Queensland. And, there was a tradition of how you make timber houses, that was 100 years old by the time I got to it, almost. So, things were well put together and tested in time and tested about how you dealt with environmental issues, how you dealt with white ants and many other things. Timber open and closed and how you dealt with that.

02:35:12 So, when we sat down to detail a building, I can remember that we would do a one to ten scale set of drawings that would go, in plan, which would go all the way around the building. All the way, through every junction, through every connection, every door jamb, every window jamb, every intersection of one material against another material, it was detailed in plan, and, right beside it it was detailed in section.

02:35:43 So, the notion that this thing I was saying before about the bit you touch on the outside is the same as the bit you touch on the inside, was sort of, was inculcated into the way in which you put a building together. Now, when I went to Melbourne, what I realised there was, because of probably climatic concerns, issues, that they built two architectures. They built an outside architecture and an inside architecture, and the detail you touched here on the outside had nothing to do with the inside and it leads to an interior architecture and a concept of interior design, which was always an anathema to us, when I was young.

02:36:24 And, on the other hand the outside of the building became much more formalist and pictorial, and Melbourne architects to this day, because they've never actually taken on the climatic imperative and dealt with it, still are caught in this – trapped in this world of two architectures, every building is two architectures, or nearly every building is two architectures.

02:36:44 Or trying to find a [02:36:46] for why you make – I mean, I was listening to Howard Raggatt explain the K House, which is down on the Mornington Peninsula, which is this thing, which, in plan is an abstracted K, don't ask me why. It was a favourite letter of the alphabet or something, them or the client or whatever. So there's this crazy building, bits and pieces flying all over the place.

02:37:11 Photographs fabulously, but, you go inside and you think, it's an interior designer's wank. It's just embarrassing.

RR

02:37:19 But, then I had the same feeling with Russell Hall's house for his sister, that, you know, here. You go inside that and you think, how on earth do you use these spaces, these crazy funny shaped triangles that don't take furniture. I'm thinking, you'd have to have everything custom built of this house and therefore this seems like it's going in the wrong direction to me.

HB

02:37:46 I always thought it was a rather strange house too. You know, Rex Addison was a far better architect, is a far better architect. But, we're talking now about our generation and our generation, coming to some sort of maturity. I mean, architects don't get mature until they're about 40. Don't really start doing good work until their nearly 40.

02:38:07 Up until then it's purely experimental and whatever forces that are acting on you from outside, it takes a long while to learn how to detail a building properly. You know, 15 years of hard work to work out how to keep the water in or out, and it takes a long while to grow up to become a real human being and to understand people and therefore be able to think about the program of buildings.

02:38:33 That's not something that 20 year olds or 30 year olds can do.

RR

02:38:37 By the time you built this house, you'd grown up.

HB

02:38:39 I had yes, a bit. But, I'm just thinking now though, if you want to look at that modernist tradition which flourishes in Queensland from the late '70s onwards, it actually begins with a generation of architects who were trained by the modernists that you're looking at. But, they start to flourish when they turn 40 and they don't turn 40 until 1980 or a bit later, 1985 or something like that.

02:39:13 And, so this point I was making before about the true Queensland modern tradition, although it has its roots in this post war period, really starts to come into its own and flourish as a clear discourse that you can identify it's components, probably not until the late '80s. And, it's gone from strength to strength.

02:39:33 At the moment now, it's dealing with how to get round the problem of the 'look at me' bit. The 'look at me bit', you know, the Melbourne – architectural editors want, who are not trained as architects anymore, usually, want pictures that look a bit crazy.

So, architects in Queensland are trying to work that out now. They may, they may not.

RR

02:39:59 There was quite a lot of that happening around here. And, what we looked at yesterday.

HB

02:40:09 So, have we reached the end or would you like to ask me another question? I could go on for hours as you know.

JG

02:40:15 I think we – maybe come back another time to continue the conversation. Thank you so much.

HB

02:40:23 Well, the pleasure has been all mine, I assure you.

JG

02:40:27 That was fantastic.

RR

02:40:28 You did pretty well for not remembering anything.

HB

02:40:30 Well, I don't remember any details, I just remember other things.

END OF TRANSCRIPT