

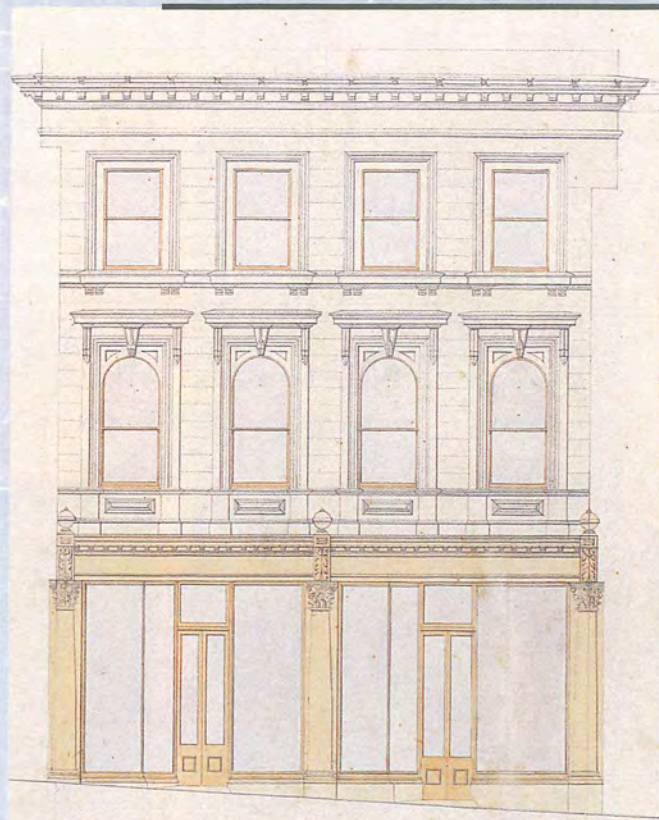
NQ 027.594405
2

STATE
LIBRARY OF N.S.W.
17 JAN 1997
GENERAL REFERENCE
LIBRARY

UPFRONT

Journal of the friends and supporters of the State Library of New South Wales

foundations for architecture



Revealing images of architects

by Michael Mangold

TODAY THE ORIGINAL unity between the form and function of the Sydney Opera House can be fully appreciated only through the drawings, plans, models and sketches in Jørn Utzon's personal papers held in the State Library of New South Wales. His interiors were intended to relate organically to the exterior as in the inner and outer parts of a walnut shell. The outer surface of this acoustically and visually splendid case was to have been visible through glass.

Utzon was prevented from completing the interiors but his intentions remain clear in his architectural collections at the State Library. An international effort by the Library to raise funds to preserve and manage the Utzon collection has already achieved generous support from the Sydney Opera House Trust Ladies' Committee, the Dreyers Foundation in Denmark and the New South Wales Government.

Architecture is not a field for the faint hearted. An Utzon doodle from his Opera House days shows a direct line between the pencil and ideas in his mind. This powerful mix of creativity, ego and technical mastery

imbues original drawings by all great architects with the quality of art. This art informs its subject and shapes not only perceptions of the environment but the environment itself.

It is also a useful art, especially for architectural students weaned on keyboards and screens, and for researchers tracking the history of the built environment. Unfortunately many plans and drawings are fragile and subject to fading because of paper types, inks and printing processes. At greatest risk are plans produced in the second half of this century.

There are tens of thousands of architectural drawings and plans in the collections of the State Library. They have been arriving ever since the Mitchell Library opened its doors in 1910. Curator of Pictures, Elizabeth Ellis, says that these collections include 'an extraordinarily complete archive of nineteenth century New South Wales architecture'.

Now a new fundraising project known as **Foundations for Architecture** has been added to the campaign to save the Utzon drawings. The aim of Foundations for Architecture is to preserve and microfilm the Library's architectural collection in stages so that access to these largely unknown images can be improved and their long term preservation be ensured. The project was launched by the State Librarian, Dagmar Schmidmaier, at a function for architects and other interested people held at the State Library in September. A target of \$90,000 over three years has been set along with the establishment of the position of Curator of Architecture. All contributions are acknowledged in a special Book of Honour.

The State Librarian thanked individuals and architectural firms who have already pledged financial support for the project. Among them are the Architects Network Upper North Shore, Alec Tzannes, Greta and Doug Moran, Peddle Thorp, Cox Richardson,

Merewether & Bagot, and major sponsor Archigraph. Archigraph's Managing Director, Maurizio Nannetti has also proposed transforming some of the materials into interactive three-dimensional models accessible through computer screens at the Library.

Mark Jones, President, Royal Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter) also addressed guests at the launch. He was pleased to add the RAI's support to the project, explaining that one of the Institute's Committees was specifically concerned with issues of preservation for architectural plans and other materials. He referred to the shift in technologies in architectural offices and the need for students to understand the cultural and technical value of drawings beyond computer generated images.

1995 Nancy Keesing Fellowship winner, Sydney architect Jennifer Hill outlined her involvement with the Library's architectural collections. The Fellowship had given her an opportunity to survey the Library's architectural collections and to participate in 'raising awareness of this valuable resource'.



TOP: Sketch, side elevation, Sydney Opera House, late-1950s. Jørn Utzon. Mitchell Library, ref. PXD 492/208

ABOVE: Sketch plan of cottage at Lindfield for W.B. Larke Esq. Wilson, Neave & Berry, ca. 1920. Mitchell Library, ref. PXD 218/144

LEFT: Sections and elevations of Retford Hall, Darling Point, for Anthony Hordern, ca. 1856. Edmund Blacket. Mitchell Library, ref. PXD 206/1/15

Curator of Pictures, Elizabeth Ellis, was the final speaker. She described the scope and significance of the State Library's architectural collections. "In Australia there aren't specialised archives like the Royal British Institute of Architects or the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library in the United States. Here it is collections like the Library's and those in council archives and architectural offices that are the long term records of the architectural profession in this country."

In her closing remarks State Librarian, Dagmar Schmidmaier, reiterated the underlying objectives of Foundations for Architecture. "Through this project the State Library is making a crucial contribution to the current debate about the future directions in the built environment in Sydney. It is through sources of architectural history such as those at the State Library that informed decisions for the future can be made with the benefit of an understanding of the past and the present."

Members of the architectural profession were strongly represented at the launch. Under the watchful eyes of the Library's curators, guests were given a personalised

introduction to the scope of the collection through a display of selected items, some shown for the first time.

Architects Harry Seidler, who has donated his papers and made a financial contribution to the Library, Neville Gruzman and Alec Tzannes were among the guests. Alec Tzannes recalled his experience as an architectural student in New York, highlighting the significance of the architectural archives in a very personal way. "As a student I studied at the Avery Library in New York City which has a very fine architectural collection," Alec said. "It contains models built by Van Der Rohe with his own hands.

"It has drawers containing Michelangelo sketches, from which you can understand how he instructed builders. The immediacy of this material often moved me to tears.

"The experience of seeing direct physical evidence of the architects and the relationship that their drawings conveyed to the society they lived in is profound.

"The presence of these artefacts...the drawings, the sketches and the models, was vital to me. They inspired me and have stayed with me as a constant base against which I continue to assess my life as an architect."

Architect Richard Mann expressed similar sentiments: "The professional lifespan of an architect is very short. An architectural collection of the quality of the State Library's makes you understand that as



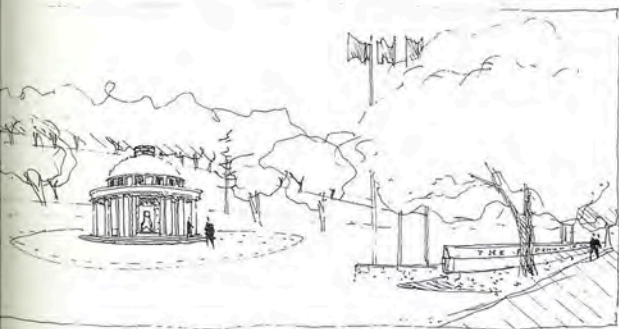
an architect you're really part of a continuum. And basically you feel very proud of the profession for that reason."

The Danish Consul, Mogens P. Pedersen, who has been intensely interested in Jørn Utzon since childhood, surveyed the drawings on display at the launch with great interest. "I was brought up to know all the fantastic things Utzon has done," Consul Pedersen said. "So the opportunity to see his drawings and sketches in the State Library for me is like discovering hidden treasure.

"And when I look at the other architectural drawings here I also see treasures of history with great value."

Foundations for Architecture

Major sponsor: Archigraph
Sponsors: Architects Network
Upper North Shore, Alec Tzannes, Greta and Doug Moran, Peddle Thorp, Cox Richardson, Merewether and Bagot.



SKETCH FROM GRAND DRIVE
- WITTMER

TOP: Front elevation of shop for Anthony Hordern, George Street, Sydney, Edmund Blacket, late 1840s. Mitchell Library, ref. PXD 206/1/67

ABOVE: Federation Pavilion, Centennial Park sketch from Grand Drive, ca. 1986. Alec Tzannes. Mitchell Library, ref. PXD 683/100

RIGHT: Booloominbab, Armidale, side elevation ... residence for F.R. White, 1887. J. Horbury Hunt. Mitchell Library, ref. PXD 573/89

