

Taxation of excess concessional superannuation contributions - the current state of play.

The government's release late last year of draft legislation designed to allow some people under very particular circumstances to apply to get a refund of excess superannuation contributions rather than incur excess contributions tax illustrates what must be a rare event - a government assisting a taxpayer to avoid a tax imposed by that government. It arguably also illustrates a regime that appears to be at war with itself, and in denial.

Prior to the establishment of a compulsory superannuation regime in 1992, the bulk of the workforce did not give superannuation a second thought, if in fact they thought about it at all. It was the reserve of some business people cognisant of the incredible flexibility then available and the near absence of regulation of a superannuation fund's affairs prior to the introduction of the *Occupational Superannuation Standards Regulations 1987*.

From 1992 superannuation was introduced to the mainstream, and millions of workers became directly involved with this new form of saving for retirement. As well as the compulsory element, taxpayers were encouraged via taxation concessions to voluntarily contribute amounts over and above the required minimum, which was then only 3% of gross wages and salaries. In order to limit the cost of the concessions, aged based limits were put in place. More was allowed to be contributed as one got older, the rationale being that older workers had less time to establish sufficient savings to fund their retirement.

The concessional contribution cap for the financial year ended 30 June 1995 was \$62,000 and compulsory superannuation accounted for less than 5% of salaries and wages. Accordingly, excess contributions were then simply not an issue. Under this aged based scheme, the limits were indexed, and by the financial year ended 30 June 2007, the limit had increased to \$105,113. Whilst compulsory superannuation had increased to 9% of wages and salaries, one still had to be drawing a salary of more than \$1 million per year for the concessional contribution limit to conflict with the Superannuation Guarantee Charge, so again up until this point the regime appeared to be O.K.

The change in the 2008 financial year to Simple Super reduced the concessional contribution limits by more than 5% for those aged 50 and over. It also slashed the non concessional contribution limit from \$1 million (and unlimited in prior years) to just \$150,000, subject to relatively complex "bring forward" provisions that allowed taxpayers to effectively "prepay" two years' worth of non concessional contributions. So, whilst on the one hand superannuation was compulsory for employees and generally considered by government to be a "good" thing, what constituted "too much" of a "good" thing and therefore "bad" was becoming less and less.

The crunch came with the Global Financial Crisis. Ironically, whilst superannuation was put forward as a tool by which the nation could be weaned off the age pension and fend for itself, supposedly saving the government a considerable sum, the means to better do that by contributing voluntarily to superannuation was made dramatically more difficult. In the financial year ended 30 June 2010, concessional contribution limits were halved, such that those under 50 could only contribute \$25,000 instead of \$50,000, and those 50 and over \$50,000 instead of \$100,000.

At these levels, successful executives found that in order for their employers to comply with legislation regarding compulsory superannuation, they had to breach legislation relating to concessional contribution caps. Excess contributions tax assessment notices started flooding in to superannuation fund trustees all around the country. The nightmare of unexpected assessment notices, anxious discussions with tax agents, employees grappling with release authority forms and harassed superannuation fund trustees dealing with a deluge of urgent inquiries had begun. Given the complexity of the "bring forward" provisions, the difficulty of tracking superannuation payments made by multiple employers, the inclusion of compulsory superannuation contributions in the overall contribution limit and the ability of an excess payment tripping not only the concessional contribution limit for an extra 31.5% tax but the non concessional limit as well, resulting in a total tax load of an astonishing 93%, the stage was set for an administrative and public relations disaster for the incumbent administration.

Unfortunately the draft legislation in its current form simply allows members of superannuation funds who exceed the concessional contribution cap by \$10,000 or less a *once-off* opportunity to have the excess contributions refunded rather than incur the excess contributions tax. Such a proposal patently does not address any of the above flaws in the regime identified above.

After being introduced into Parliament on 1 March 2012 as the *Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (2012 Measures No. 1) Bill 2012* and proceeding forthwith to the second reading stage, the draft legislation was immediately referred to the House Standing Committee on Economics.

It is to be hoped that this committee will consult widely and be open to some real reform to the existing regime so that the twin aims of encouraging retirement savings through superannuation whilst containing the cost to taxpayers at large of the concessions (provided to engender the retirement planning in the first place) may be met.

Through John Dymond's membership of the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners, Dymond Foulds & Vaughan is able to draw on the expertise of other professionals such as law firm, MJP Legal. Further Dymond, Foulds & Vaughan has formed a strategic alliance with financial advisory firm Newell Palmer. Thus, Dymond, Foulds & Vaughan provides its clients with an integrated suite of professional services that would normally only be available from major international accounting firms catering for multinational corporate clients. Dymond, Foulds & Vaughan offers this facility whilst providing the personal attention of the firms' senior people that is available from small firms, and at a small firm price! Dymond, Foulds & Vaughan works with fellow professionals to provide taxation, structured estate planning, asset protection and wealth preservation services for individuals and their businesses. To discuss these issues, and their relevance to you, call John Dymond at Dymond, Foulds & Vaughan.

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A weekend in Canberra, Art Deco Napier, The New Deal, Rio and more



FROM THE EDITOR

I am pleased to see that the Society has been very busy already this year and there are many more events to come, as detailed very effectively by our renowned Vice President, David de Rozenker-Apted at page 3.

We are very fortunate to again have received international contributions to this newsletter, and Colin Hines provides a most informative and characteristically entertaining article on that most famous of Art Deco cities, Napier in New Zealand. As well as describing the city and detailing its architects, Colin also suggests places to stay whilst you're there and a little known museum just out of town which I will surely visit next time I cross the Tasman. Colin's wonderful piece begins at page 12.

Your intrepid reporter was very sad to have missed one of the highlights of last year, the long-weekend guided tour of Canberra led by acknowledged expert and esteemed President Roy Lumby, ably assisted by the abovementioned VP. Stuart Read has provided an excellent summary of events and in his inimitable way has woven into the story how the flora plays a part in Canberra's built environment. His account of this marvellous excursion begins at page 8.

We were very fortunate late last year to be able to hear from Professor Gray Brechin, international speaker, author and historical geographer. He is the founder and project scholar of California's Living New Deal Project, which is a multimedia project aimed at significantly enhancing the scant historical record of President F D Roosevelt's New Deal program of public works. Larisa Sarkadi visited one of the cities in the United States touched by the New Deal program whilst attending the 2005 World Congress, and provides us with a personal insight into how the New Deal worked as a force for positive change. Her recounting of the visit begins at page 5.

John Dymond

Larisa is a regular attendee at World Congresses. As an attendee at the 2007 Melbourne World Congress in Melbourne, your editor can attest to the quality of international speakers, the remarkable generosity of host city Art Deco members and the remarkable tours of buildings and sites that would otherwise be completely inaccessible, and thoroughly recommends them to all Society members. The 11th International Congress on Art Deco was held recently in Rio de Janeiro, and Larisa was there and has given us a thrilling account of what went on. Her report starts at page 16.

For those of you with an interest in Australian landscape architecture, the name Bruce Mackenzie would be well known. His most recent book, *Design with Landscape* has recently been published, with details on page 18.

The Society has embraced technology in organising its events which are now listed and administered through Eventbrite, a superb web-based facility specifically geared to the running of group events. The link is www.twentieth.eventbrite.com.au and from this web site you can keep track of all Society events and keep right up to the minute as to the latest developments affecting you as a Society member. You can also book online and pay online for any Society event, thus securing your place for even the most popular of activities.

We have again been able to provide you with a bumper 20 page newsletter due to the devoted contributions of a few of you. We encourage contributions of any sort from all of you and on page 19 we explain how to submit text and/or pictures. We are also happy to have news of upcoming events etc., so please feel free to contact us. The next edition is sure to be something special, so why not be part of it?



FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

The Christmas Lunch at The Grace Hotel Brasserie on Sunday 18th December 2011 was a great success with everyone enjoying the food and polite and attentive service.

Certainly, the venue was a great improvement on the previous year, being part of ongoing renovations to the restaurants and bars throughout the hotel.



In February, "Australia's Master Gardener", Stuart Read's talk on Paul Sorensen, was very well received and enjoyed by all.

March saw our first foray into a partnered event, when Members of the Citroen Car Club of NSW joined with us and the Historic Houses Trust at the Rose Seidler House for a combined picnic. Although the weather was a little insecure, the sun did shine through and made for a most pleasant day.

With the conscientious assistance of our event coordinator Joyce Burrell, 2012's events schedule is shaping up to be another great year with our popular series of walks and talks, an AGM no one will want to miss!, a trip to Mudgee and its environs over the Labor Day long weekend, and of course our annual Festive Season Luncheon. Joyce and I have a few arrangements to have confirmed and put in place before we go "public", however in the meanwhile please make notes of the following major events in your diaries.

25 May – "Early Modernism in Australia" – A talk on Sydney's Art Scene by Lorraine Kypiotis;

24 June – "Monumental Sydney" – A walk through Hyde Park with our President Roy Lumby;

27 July – "Beautiful Buildings from Afar" – Part II of Nonie Hodgson's travel log;

31 August – AGM followed by a presentation by a very popular television personality;

29 September – 1 October – A trip to Mudgee for the long weekend;

16 December – The Annual Christmas Lunch.

We encourage you to book early and use the convenience of Eventbrite by using the link www.twentieth.eventbrite.com where you can make your payment over the internet to secure your place/s at the event.

Naturally, you may continue to book on (02) 9878 2511, by leaving a message after the welcome and tone, or email david@twentieth.org.au if you are paying on the day.

Our President Roy Lumby is disappointed that he has not been able to contribute to this issue, having been bunkered down finalising



Rose Seidler House – March 18 (photo by Michael Richardson)



The Country Women's Association Hall in Hornsby Park

his Doctoral Thesis. He is happy to advise that it has been deposited with the University of Sydney, and looks forward to being "back on board" soon. On his behalf, I would like to share a few updates on recent conservation issues.

The NSW Joint Regional Planning Panel has withheld final development approval of the Hornsby aquatic centre until the council gives "further consideration" to access road plans that do not require demolishing the Country Women's Association building. The panel is ruling on the proposal because Hornsby Council is the applicant and because the development will cost more than \$5 million. Announcing the unanimous decision, panel chair Mary-Lynne Taylor said the panel would "prefer a roadway that is more sensitive to the heritage significance of the park and that will retain the CWA building".

The Society has written to Penrith City Council urging them to drop their opposition to the proposed listing on the NSW State Heritage Register of the Penrith Regional Gallery/Lewers Bequest. This amazing former home of artists Margo and Gerald Lewers is now run as a gallery and cultural centre. It includes a delightful and very personal garden setting full of sculpture around a Sydney Ancher modernist and early 20th century house.

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Cover photo by Matt Stone



Lewers Bequest and Penrith Regional Gallery

Two letters sent by Society Member G. Swann on matters of concern

The Metropolitan Water Sewerage & Drainage Board Building, Sydney, 1965. McConnel Smith and Johnson

To The Editor Sydney Morning Herald

"Dear Sir

Bill Higgins (Letters 26th February) claims that "Sydney should be grateful that private industry brings internationally renowned architects to the city". Have a look at the results and you will more likely be resentful.

And government has already dismissed the winners of the original design competition.

In Sydney the few genuine examples of 20th century Modern Architecture were designed by local architects who responded to local conditions in particular to the light of Sydney. Yet some of these examples are now under threat of being replaced by "buildings". Buildings are "products" marketed to prospective tenants as having been designed by the latest voguish architect from overseas.

Buildings are produced to maximize profit for the developers and are delivered by project managers who, in order to justify their existence, deliver a project below budget and quality. Local architects are used to merely "draw up the plans" and are cowed into submission as they may lose the potential documentation fees should they express their dissatisfaction.

For example, given the protagonists, the possibility of an architectural solution at Barangaroo is an unrealistic aspiration. The most mundane, simplistic and obvious solution is the one that has been given the green light. What should have been a cohesive entity looks like a dog's breakfast..

As at Bennelong Point, Architecture could have delivered a solution that transcended the obvious and lifted the spirit.

Regards"

MLC Tower, Sydney, 1978. Harry Seidler & Associates

"Dear Letters Editor

It is encouraging to read that the owners of the 1978 MLC tower will spend \$100 million to restore its facades. (Four Years and \$100 M for city tower repair job SMH 7th November 2011)

The development of this site was subject to much debate as it obliterated a much loved city precinct that included the Theatre Royal, The Australia Hotel and Rowe Street.

There is now an opportunity to redress the scar that was visited on Martin Place as a result.

The owners should be encouraged to develop a new podium building facing Martin Place and aligned to Castlereagh similar in scale to the adjacent Commonwealth Bank 'Money Box' building.

The travellers club could be relocated there and the new building could be raised to retain the public space.

The prestige of a Martin Place address would ensure the viability of the development and the city would be the beneficiary"

NB. Letters reproduced with the kind permission of the author.

We are very keen to have you, the Members, contribute to our efforts in growing the Society in whatever way you feel most comfortable. We ask you to consider these opportunities.

We have a most important vacancy in that of Hon. Secretary and if this appeals please contact me on david@twentieth.org.au to discuss the responsibilities, or write to me at our postal address shown on page 19.

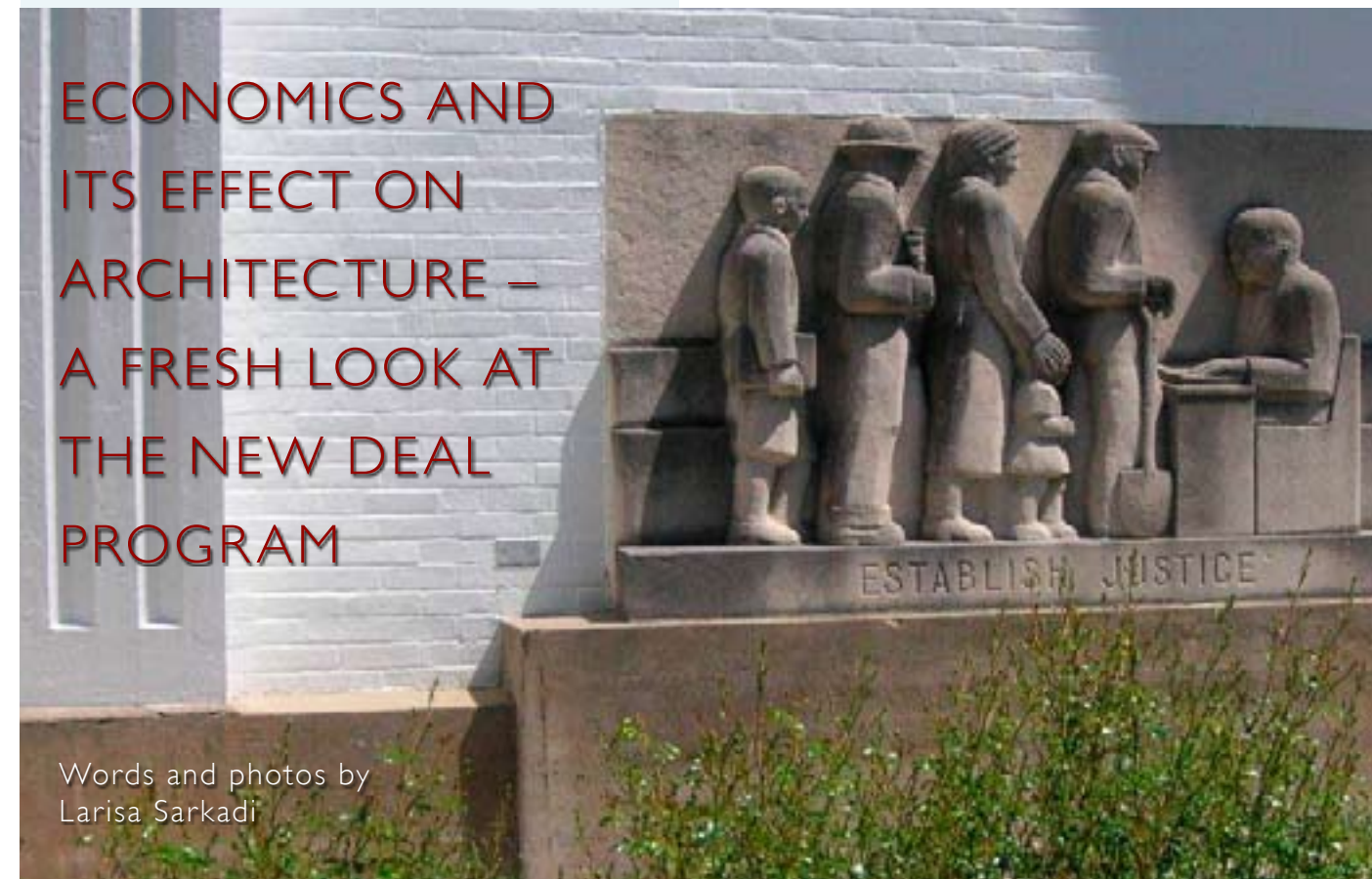
Other contributions would be of enormous benefit especially in the area of articles and/or comment for The News, and the eNews.

We encourage any of you with special interest in twentieth century heritage, to share your comments, whether it be on the built environment, landscapes, ceramics, decorative arts, fashion, jewellery or any other design disciplines.

David de Rozenker-Apted

ECONOMICS AND ITS EFFECT ON ARCHITECTURE – A FRESH LOOK AT THE NEW DEAL PROGRAM

Words and photos by Larisa Sarkadi



One of six friezes by L Thomas, 1937

The 11th of November talk presented by Prof Gray Brechin on the New Deal Architecture, in my opinion, was the most memorable one delivered to the 20thCentury Heritage Society of NSW in 2011.

Besides the outstanding eloquence and lucidity of the speaker, the topic itself drew uncanny parallels between the years following the Great Depression of the late 1920s through the 1930s and the current economic situation in the USA.

This presentation has also thrown some light on the impact of the current financial crisis on that most public art, architecture. Unfortunately, it is possible that some of the original structures were seen for the last time, as financial pressures would obliterate them. Professor Brechin illustrated the enormous scope of the ambitious New Deal program. The sheer number of sites shown had to be absorbed fairly rapidly and it left the audience wanting to linger on each image to absorb more details. During my trip to the East Coast of USA to attend the 2005 Congress on Art Deco held in New York, I was fortunate enough to visit one of these featured sites.

The Great Depression of 1929 began in the United States of America spreading throughout the whole industrial world. A quarter of the labour force of the country, about 15 million people, were unemployed. Wages dropped and the cost of agricultural produce and goods followed. Over 90,000 businesses closed altogether. Families of former breadwinners faced years of grinding poverty, hunger and homelessness.

In 1935, in spite of opposition from conservative forces, the administration of the newly elected President F D Roosevelt embarked on the so-called New Deal program. It purchased about 12,000 acres of rural land about 20 km north of Washington DC.

The City of Greenbelt, Maryland, took its name from the forestland surrounding the town and was one of a cluster of three townships. It was the first community in the country built as a federal venture for low-income housing. It was designed as a complete city with a network of roads connecting residential precincts, schools, businesses and recreational facilities. The city was planned by the Resettlement Administration under the authority granted by the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act. In the country, still deeply affected by the Great Depression, such federal projects were envisaged as job-creating ventures with the added benefit of building long-lasting infrastructure. Over 13,000 people worked on the construction of Greenbelt, making it the largest single project of the New Deal.

The first phase of construction was completed by the end of 1937, accommodating 885 families in small apartment blocks and cottages. In 1941, as the country was facing the Second World War, another 1,000 dwellings were constructed for defence personnel and their families.

A well planned town, Greenbelt had pedestrian-friendly walkways and underpasses, so residents could walk to the city centre and children could walk to schools without a need to cross main streets. The majority of buildings display elements of streamlined Art Deco style. Exterior design of the residential buildings reflects the influence of the Bauhaus architectural school. Their rather plain, solid appearance is enlivened by insertions of glass bricks and softened by greenery in the surroundings. The most architecturally significant structure is the former elementary school decorated with a set of six friezes by a renowned sculptor, Lenore Thomas Strauss. Each frieze illustrates one phrase of the opening statement of the Constitution of the United States of America.

Another of her sculptures, Mother and Child, decorated the open



Residential apartment block

space in the city centre. These visual works of art, and many others, were sponsored by the US government through the New Deal public art funding. The best tribute to the Greenbelt town planners came from the weekly newsletter published by the National Association of Real Estate Board. Between denunciations of all government housing programs, the Board praised the Greenbelt towns for their "excellent design".

Greenbelt dwellings were built for people with an income between \$1,200 and \$2,000 a year. The low construction costs meant that the rooms were small. Specially designed furniture dictated the size and configuration of each room, rather than the conventional reverse approach. The April 1937 issue of *House Beautiful* magazine carried an article by the technical consultant for the Resettlement Administration, Miss Elizabeth Hoffin. In it she wrote: "The furniture you see was built for those rooms and those rooms alone". By necessity, the furniture needed to be durable and inexpensive, hence low cost timbers, such as maple, oak and gum, were used in its production. All pieces of furniture were designed and built by the Special Skills Division and were mass-produced using factory machines. All items were modern in design, matching and functional. Entire household fit-outs costing between \$300 and \$400 were available for purchase on extended credit at \$5 per month.

On our visit, almost 70 years on, the streets of Greenbelt are lined with mature trees. The town itself is a microcosm of life in the 1930s. The city museum is situated in the original International Style house and features restored interiors of a typical New Deal apartment. Every room is complete with furniture and objects from the period of 1936-1946 – reflecting life of the working class family, including, of course, depression style glass.

Following the global financial crisis of recent years, the country



Greenbelt cinema building, 1939



Typical domestic interior of the era in the Greenbelt City Museum

again considers the lasting legacy and benefits of the New Deal program. "Occupy Wall Street" protests in many cities are calling on US Congress to boost the economy by allocating funds to public projects, such as construction of bridges and roads. Supported by trade unions, angry protesters have marched on business districts and blocked roads and bridges, demanding jobs. It may be fitting to finish this essay with a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt's biography by Blanch Wiesen Cook. In her book "Eleanor Roosevelt 1933-1938" she summarises the philosophy behind the New Deal programs: 'Permanent prosperity depends on long-range considerations – the need for reforestation, the need for permanent granary', construction of dams, ponds and flood control. The present US government needs the courage and vision of FDR.

Bibliography: Arnold, J.L. *The new deal in the suburbs; a history of the Greenbelt Town Program 1935-1954*. Ohio State University Press, 1971 Cook, B. Wiesen Eleanor Roosevelt. Vol Two 1933-1938. Penguin Books, NY, 1999. Low-Cost Furniture. *House Beautiful*, April 1937.



Former elementary school, presently Greenbelt Community Centre



Mother and Child sculptural group By L Thomas, 1938

A WEEKEND IN CANBERRA

1 - 2 October 2011

Words and
photos by
Stuart Read



'Bogong Moth' sculpture east of the National Library of Australia

Led by indomitable and ever-generous President Roy Lumby, assisted by Vice-President David de Rozenker-Apted, a good number of members gathered for a fascinating closer look over 2½ days at 20th century Canberra.

Day one started with a slow stroll through the heart of the Australian National University campus, more or less sited where the city's designers Walter Burley & Marion Mahony Griffin intended, below Black Mountain and west of the city.

The campus is a designed landscape with generous open spaces, tree avenues giving easy foot access and increasing levels of 'infill' providing, in places, city-like density. It couldn't have been more different in 1912-13 when Old Canberra House, Bachelors' Quarters and the old Community Hospital were almost the site's only structures, amongst large eucalypts and grass.

The ANU has an array of buildings by notable architects and its landscape design is well worth appreciation as it matures. Typically buildings occurred in stages, as student numbers grew.

Predominant designers were:

A) Thomas O'Mahony / Bunning & Madden, combinations of whom designed the

a) Law School's 3 stages:

- 1) (former Oriental Studies, 1962-5;
- 2) southern wing (1968, by O'Mahony, Neville & Morgan); and
- 3) a middle section (1974, by the same practice).

b) J.B.Chifley Building (General Studies / Library)'s two stages:

- 1) 1961-3;
- 2) 1968, by Anthony Cooper & Associates in ultra-stripped classicism. To its south is a (rare in Australia) formal avenue of silver birch trees, framing a sculpture, *Levy* by Western Sydney artist, Paul Hopmeier. This was one of several sculptures grac-

ing the grounds, part of a large ANU collection that adds much interest.

c) Haydon-Allen Building flanking the Union to its east, one of the first four permanent buildings on campus (1959-60) and first to house the arts. Its detached, circular theatre (1961, surrounded by a quadrangle from 1966-72) was dubbed 'The Tank' and remains a pivot of attention in a lovely, wooded patio. Haydon and Allen were the first full-time lecturers at C.A.C., the former in Modern Languages, the latter in English.

B) Yuncken Freeman Architects (YFA) / Yuncken Freeman, e.g.:

a) the (Student) Union Concessions Building, completed 1972 and bluntly functional – softened by a post-modern sculptural 'strap on' installation, *Spirit of Enquiry* by Melbourne artist Deborah Halpern. It faces across a large square also made over by YFA, the

b) Union Court (1975) to;

c) the Student Union Building by YFA (1973), and

d) the A.D.Hope Building to the east (1975), now home to Archaeology, Anthropology, Art History, Classics and English. Hope was Professor of English at Canberra University College (C.A.C.)(1951-60) and ANU (1961-8), influential in getting the first university course in Australian literature up and a major poet; and

e) The Chancellery (1962-8) a striking low arc wing flanked by a walkway, separated by a pool from a tall vertical tower. *Saraswati*, *Goddess of Wisdom*, presides over the pool (gift of Indonesia, 1969).

C) Edwin / E.H.Henderson, Chief Architect for the Department of the Interior, e.g.:

a) The Drill Hall on the University's eastern city flank, 1940 in



Evans Crescent precinct - modern housing in Griffith amid mature cypresses, oaks and hedges



Elevated bridge from High Court to National Gallery

functionalist style. The army moved out by 1969 and after mixed uses including as radio station 2XX (1973-99) it took up daytime use as the Drill Hall Gallery (ANU + National Gallery of Australia). This use remains. A Ken Unsworth untitled aluminium 'strips' sculpture outside it dates to 1975 and resembles a kind of melted menorah. Unsworth later lectured at the Sydney Centre for Adult Education.

University Avenue bisects the campus, running along Griffin's north-west alignment linking Black Mountain and Mount Ainslie. Its use and development grew from Roy Simpson's plan of 1971 into a pedestrian plaza (1974) and Union Court (Yuncken Freeman, 1975), an activity hub.

The Pauline Griffin Building (the original student union) was designed by Sydney Ancher of Ancher, Mortlock and Woolley and finished in 1965. Its strong, low-slung horizontal, modernist lines contrast with the J.B.Chifley Library to its west.

The H.C. Coombs Building (originally Research Schools of Social Sciences and Pacific & Asian Studies) was designed by Mockridge,



View from National Arboretum east to the city

Stahle & Mitchell (1962-4) in hexagonal plan – three pods with internal courts. 'Nugget' Coombs was Chancellor 1968-76 with interests in the ANU spanning over 40 years, including, Director-General of Post-War Reconstruction. Its best feature is the striking metal screens flanking the main entry, by NZ-born sculptor and jeweller Matcham Skipper (1962) who grew up at and returned to live at Montsalvat artists' colony in Eltham, Melbourne.

The R.G. Menzies Building of the University Library was designed by J.D.Scarborough & Partners with Collard, Clark and Jackson (1961-3) - the first purpose-built library on site. Its low section, supported by mushroom-headed columns infilled with sculptor Lyndon Dadswell's steel and copper panels (1964), contrasts with a taller 3 storey section to the north.

University House was one of the first buildings built on the then University College site of the University of Melbourne. Designed by Professor Lewis, it was built by 1953 and awarded the Sulman Medal in that year. In clean, white tones with restrained elegance and spacious courtyards, it is influenced by the tradition of English



Rear of National Athletics Stadium, Bruce in the Australian Institute of Sport

university college quadrangles. It features a number of sculptures, enamel mural panels etc – giving the place a lot of visual interest.

After lunch we enjoyed a suburban stroll around Manuka and Forrest, marvelling at late 1920s and 1930s integrated shops, housing and street tree plantings including white poplars, various cypresses and Atlas cedars aplenty.

This included the slightly Hollywood Spanish/Mediterranean revival Fraser House (c1930, by Kenneth Oliphant) for Oakey & Parkes, who won the contract for 'Blandfordia no. 2' suburban houses (now Manuka) from 1926. Many of these 'two storey duplex' cottages are now commercial offices, rather than houses. Manuka Pool (1930-1, by E.H.Henderson with H.G.O'Connell) with a unicorn sculpture by Otto Steen and near this, the Forrest Fire Station and (7) Residences Group (1939, by Henderson, in functionalist style), like something from Duduk's Holland, in contrasting bricks with flat roofs. Plus over Canberra Avenue to the south, St.Christopher's Catholic Cathedral in Romanesque style cream brick by Clement Glancy (1936-8/73), straddling the shops with J.Burcham Clamp's more eclectic St.Paul's Anglican Church (1938-9/63) to the east. The Evans Crescent Precinct in neighbouring Griffith is the finest example of early Modernist housing in Canberra. Designed by Malcolm Moir and Heather Sutherland (1927+), the latter a step-sister of 'La Stupenda', Joan.

On day two we journeyed to Belconnen in the north-west to take in the large scale 'playground' of the Australian Institute of Sport at Bruce, and the sub/urban pioneering work of the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) under Menzies – which 'kick-started' Canberra's satellite cities forming the 'Y' plan: Belconnen and Woden.

Members took in the massive scale and optimism of the Institute of Sport with various stadia (e.g. the Athletics Stadium (1974-7); by Phillip Cox, Storey & Partners; Indoor Sports & Training Centre

(1979-81, same crew); Sports Swimming Centre (1982, Daryl Jackson), Visitors Centre (1997, Daryl Jackson Alastair Swain). Amazing structures with vast crowd-absorbing spaces contrast with the concrete brutalism of the town centre's Cameron (1976, John Andrews) and Benjamin Offices (1979, McConnel, Smith & Johnson) – the first of a crop of office and commercial buildings. With the 1997 Commonwealth Government abandonment of 70,000 square meters of office space from service staff cuts, Cameron Offices was proposed for demolition. Protests and belated heritage listing saved 3 wings of the building: 6 more wings were demolished. Some of these are now facing redundancy, demolition and major alteration as land prices and density rise, ideas about office culture and technology evolve, and pressures for change such as urban living rise. Canberra faces the very same forces as the rest of Australia's cities.

In pleasant contrast was a visit to the Australian National Arboretum (tree collection) at Yarramundi, on the former future site of the National Museum (since moved to the Acton Peninsula) and part of lands devastated by raging bushfire in 2003. On surprisingly hilly land forming the south-west slopes of Black Mountain and Lake Burley Griffin's western shores, the site gives wonderful views across central Canberra, up the lake, south to Woden, Tuggeranong and the Brindabella Ranges beyond. Plantings are young but moving fast and the arboretum's unusual layout is due to a 2004 competition-winning entry by landscape architects Taylor Cullity Lethlean, working with architects Tonkin Zulaikha Greer. Its approach is '100 forests & 100 gardens' focusing on species either symbolic of their country of origin or that are endangered in the wild today.

Burley Griffin's Canberra plan included a 'Continental Arboretum' west of the lake. Thomas Weston, influential in landscaping early Canberra, founded the Westbourne Woods Arboretum to the south and supervised afforestation of Canberra's hills 1913-26.



Matcham Skipper's metal screens on the H.C. ('Nugget') Coombs building, ANU

Lindsay Pryor continued Weston's experiments with species, planting the ANU, streets and suburbs, parks and founding the Herbarium at what became the National Botanic Garden. A Lindsay Pryor Arboretum (1954-7) between the Tuggeranong Parkway and lake honours him.

To finish was a visit to the central part of the Parliamentary Triangle, focusing on the neoclassical National Library (1968, Bunning & Madden again), Treasury (1967-70, Fowell Mansfield, Jarvis & MacLuran), neo-modernist Questacon Science Centre (1988, Laurence Nield & Partners), National Portrait Gallery (1998, Johnson, Pilton Walker), High Court (1980, by Chris Kringas) and National Gallery of Australia (1982, by Colin Madigan), both the latter for Edwards, Madigan, Torzillo (Briggs), plus the latter's wonderful Sculpture Garden (same crew, working with landscape architect Harry Howard and Associates) which forms part of the glorious landscaping that separates and frames them all. This landscaping varies between swathes of green and brown lawns, formal tree avenues of European and American oaks, Himalayan and Moroccan cedars, local eucalypts, wattles and other native species.

The bush garden setting for the Court and Gallery were the work of Sydney landscape architects Harry Howard & Associates (Barbara Buchanan) and Bruce Mackenzie and have survived recent alterations and additions to the Gallery, and misunderstanding.

Another element striking me was the number of wonderful fountains, including Bob Woodward's cascade outside the High Court and Norma Redpath's fountain outside the Treasury (1965-9).

So all in all, a terrific weekend, sprigged with stimuli for eye, mind and belly. Thanks to Roy and David for sterling organisation and notes and all for bonhomie.



National Arboretum planting and sculpture



Ken Unsworth sculpture, Asian pear trees and Drill Hall gallery, ANU

ART DECO NAPIER

POSSIBLY THE ONLY
GOOD THING TO
COME OUT OF AN
EARTHQUAKE

By Colin Hines
Photos by Roy Lumby



Bank of New Zealand, Maori motifs in ceiling.

"Napier represents the most complete and significant groups of Art Deco buildings in the world, and is comparable with Bath as an example of a planned townscape in a cohesive style. Napier is, without doubt, unique".

Sir Neil Cossons OBE, Chair of English Heritage, 2000-2007

Past President, British Museums Association

'Napier's Famous Art Deco Walks' Art Deco Trust Napier 2008

Just days before the Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand's South Island in which so far 182 people have died, thousands gathered in the sunny coastal town of Napier in the North Island to celebrate the rebirth of the town that was itself devastated by an earthquake 80 years before. On 3 February 1931, New Zealand's deadliest earthquake devastated the cities of Napier and Hastings, Hawke's Bay. At least 250 people died in the magnitude 7.8 earthquake, 157 of them in Napier, and 93 in the nearby town of Hastings.

During the quake the Napier area tilted upwards by around 7 feet, and its inner harbour of over 5000 acres of shallow tidal lagoon was emptied out into the sea. The earthquake and subsequent fires destroyed most of the city's commercial heart.

Napier was rebuilt in the early 1930s and became the newest city in the world and nowhere else can you see such a variety of buildings in the styles of the 1930s in such a concentrated area - Stripped Classical, Spanish Mission, and above all Art Deco. And Napier's Art Deco is unique, with its Maori motifs and it's now spruced up streets reflecting the buildings original colourful cement plaster, tinted in a range of colours such as cream, buff, ochre, pink, green and blue.

This Art Deco style was omnipresent in Napier not just because it was fashionable at the time, but also because it used reinforced concrete, deemed crucial to protect the town from future earthquakes. In addition, its more streamlined shapes were free of the decorative attachments of earlier styles that had fallen off and killed and injured so many people in 1931. Instead, the geometric decorations that were so central to the style were easily applied to the smooth concrete walls. The new land formed by the raising of the floor of the inner harbour was soon also being built on to allow the development of Art Deco one-story suburbs.

The buildings were also cheap structures, essentially decorated concrete boxes. This was crucial in the depression and even more so since the original owners had no 'act of God' insurance, so had to get loans from the government to rebuild, whilst still paying off any loans they had on their previous, now destroyed, buildings. Four architectural practises built most of the new town and its surrounding suburbs.

Large numbers of architects came from Wellington and elsewhere to work on the project since there was little other work around. The same was true of those with the necessary building skills; they were desperate for work so the rebuilding was relatively cheap.

Recognition of the Art Deco uniqueness of Napier began in 1981 when a group of OECD planners and architects passed through the city and were impressed by its heritage of 'all the concrete buildings of the 1930s'. This led to a Ministry of Works and Development funded book on 'The Art Deco Architecture of Napier' and an exhibition and a TV documentary entitled 'Newest City On the Globe'. Local activists organised a public walk, plus jazz bands, vintage cars and street theatre before the TV documentary's premiere in 1985. Instead of the 100 people expected, eleven hundred turned up. The organisers - the Art Deco Group - published

a walk guide and organised tours, and this grew into the Napier Art Deco Trust which now has full-time staff, its own offices and organises the incredibly successful Art Deco Week, which attracts thousands from all over the world.

A key part of the Trust's initial activities was to overcome the threat of Deco buildings being demolished, since despite having a protective Napier District Plan, local government was unable to provide really adequate protection. This is because New Zealand's heritage legislation fails to provide a firm legal basis for the preservation of built heritage such as that in Napier, which was often dismissed as too young to be important. Since 1983 when the National Bank Building and the Norwich Union Building were demolished, more than a dozen buildings have been lost or inappropriately altered. However, things seem to have turned an attitudinal corner because since 1996 none has been lost - this thanks to the constant vigilance and public education work of the Art Deco Trust. Their work has also been strengthened by the growing international realisation of the importance of the Art Deco era and the fact that Napier is one of the world's finest examples of this style.

If, as you must, you come to visit Napier, without a doubt the best and most stylish way to learn about the city is to take a ride in the Art Deco Trust's 1937 Packard, chauffeured by local John Speakman. He introduces himself with the words "Speakman by name Speakman by nature" and what follows is a knowledgeable, fascinating, moving, amusing and above all utterly enthusiastic tour. John is now in his 70s and his still-living sister survived the 1931 earthquake, so he has endless anecdotes of that era.

I went to Napier in late February to experience the Art Deco Week held annually to celebrate the rebirth of the earthquake-shattered city. As I was about to set off on our stylish car tour, a blue 1939 Austin 16 zipped by with Sally Jackson of the Art Deco Trust at the wheel. As were thousands of people who flocked to the city for this event, she was dressed in full 30s regalia, crowned with a dapper cloche hat.

It turned out that she was off to welcome one of the numerous cruise ships that are increasingly making Napier a port of call. That day it was fittingly the MS Deutschland which, in addition to transporting 500 guests on its luxury cruises, is also a floating set for the popular and long running German series Das Traum Schiff (the Dream Ship), with its interior designed and built to reflect the glamour and luxury of the 1930s. Apparently its main ballroom has a massive chandelier hanging from a sculpted and Deco patterned ceiling, its passageways resemble parts of the Savoy and its bars and restaurants continue the 30s theme. Yes, in Napier's Art Deco Week even the visiting ship is decked out appropriately. Indeed the Wellington Parliament was also made aware of the event when the local Labour MP Stuart Nash gave a speech highlighting the Art Deco festivities of his city in full 1930s regalia.

The 80th Anniversary of the Napier Earthquake in February saw literally thousands of people joining the residents in the biggest Deco fashion parade in the world. The streets thronged with people of all ages dressed elegantly in the styles of the time, some dancing to various bands playing the music of the era, other being serenaded by a choir of flappers, a barbers' shop ensemble. The shop assistants were dressed in the period and for visitors who wanted to get in the mood, or more likely refresh their existing wardrobes, there were a number of shops selling or renting out costumes of the period.



Bank of New Zealand, 1932, Crichton, McKay and Houghton

I got there on the Wednesday before the big weekend and already the town was filling up with 20s and 30s cars from all over New Zealand and Australia, as well as further afield. By the Saturday over 300 of these vintage cars crammed with passengers in period clothes processed through the city. From Rolls Royces to Morris 8s, and from Fords to Hollywood's 30s favourites the breathtaking Auburns and Cords, the streets were awash with sleek, streamlined cars festooned with running boards, huge bespoke wheel hubs and chrome fittings.

In addition there were flying displays from The Royal New Zealand Air Force flying single propeller planes in formation and vintage 30s Warbird Harvards also took to the air. There were also steam trains pulling vintage carriages of the era, with vintage clothing for the passenger if not obligatory, then certainly de-rigueur.

Amongst the over one hundred other events also advertised were: 'bathing belles in a torrent of ticklish togs, with Hollywood talent scouts circling the stage; Charleston lessons for 'Feet with Heat'; the Premier Hairdressing School providing an Art Deco "Do"; and even the 'Swing and a Prayer' Deco themed services in local churches, including an Art Deco Liturgy written by the local composer'.

This street fashion show, held against a backdrop of streets lined with colourful Deco buildings, ranged from elegant thirties dresses and suits like something out of an Astaire/Rogers movie, through to kids dressed in cloth caps and braces, one selling home made lemonade. There was even a group of more threadbare depression victims waving cups and doubtless to be found singing 'Buddy can you spare a dime'.

If all this sounds a bit contrived, it really isn't. There was everywhere a genuine atmosphere of good natured enjoyment. Also a



Municipal Theatre, J. T. Watson, 1937.

relief was the lack of intrusive big sponsors ripping off the audience and no 'B' list celebrities primping around in hospitality areas. It was instead a warm-hearted and fun celebration of a town's survival and revival following an earthquake, and of course an appreciation of the wonderful Art Deco style of the city.

Finally on the Sunday morning there was the quite incredible Gatsby Picnic when literally hundreds of people set up countless gazebos. These housed tableaux of 30s living with all the furniture, crockery, and of course, clothes. Competition for the best display is fierce – the picnics are allowed to start setting up at 6am and so, as can be imagined, the number of champagne breakfasts are huge – as is the serious but good-natured effort that goes into them.

The next Napier Art Deco Week will be held next February 14th-19th; my advice is to take out your fountain pen now and put the date in your leather-bound diary.

Where to Stay: His Masters Lodge

The only thing better than attending the Napier Art Deco Week is to do so while staying at the Deco guesthouse 'His Masters Lodge'. Listed as one of the five best Art Deco hotels in the world, it is run as 'the smallest luxury hotel' by two ex-New Yorkers Joan and Larry Blume, a former dentist and lawyer respectively. These affable, welcoming and very knowledgeable Deco experts bought the building on impulse in April 2003, having been bowled over when they first saw it. The house is on the top of Napier Hill overlooking the Napier Pacific Ocean seafront and the 30s Marine Parade, flanked by palms and the angular Norfolk Island pines – the nearest nature gets to Art Deco.

Originally the home of Baron Gerhard Husheer, director of the National Tobacco Company and one of the richest men in New Zealand, it was designed by the architect Louis Hay in the early 1930s.



Daily Telegraph Building, 1932, E. A. Williams.

He also designed Napier's most famous Art Deco building – the National Tobacco Company Building. With a lavish budget, Hay, an admirer of Frank Lloyd Wright, set about decorating the house with expensive leadlight windows in elaborate designs of fruit and flowers. He added Art Deco doors, Art Nouveau brass door handles and plates, Arts & Crafts fireplaces and Louis Comfort Tiffany-influenced grapevine and fruit-stained glass.

Joan and Larry Blume have tastefully filled the house with original Art Deco and some Art Nouveau furnishings. There is one Art Deco and one Art Nouveau bedroom, but in addition to the wonderful surrounds the hosts provide faultless food, warm hospitality and not surprisingly lots of Deco expertise. There is no classier place to stay during a visit to Napier, both in terms of the stylish surroundings and the way you are looked after.

A Deco PS: New Zealand has one other Deco surprise for those visiting the South Island. Having seen the staggering beauty spots of the west coast – I was driving inland when I discovered Ranfurley, a tiny Deco town to the north west of Dunedin. It has its own Deco dress up celebration at the end of February and in its wonderful moderne-streamlined station milk bar is what I consider to be the finest 30s museum in the world. It has an incredibly comprehensive collection of 1930s furniture, household items and clothing laid out in a bedroom, dining room, living room and kitchen, thus giving a really fulsome idea of what Deco living in the 30s was like. The museum was opened in 2000, with the majority of items being on loan from four individuals.

It's a long way to go – but it's well worth the journey.



Former T & G Building, Atkin & Mitchell, 1936.



New Napier Arch, J.T. Watson, 1937.

What Art Deco Symbolises

The motifs on the outside of 1930's Art Deco buildings such as those in Napier were chosen to symbolise energy, power and technology. The zig zag designs were associated with radio and electric waves; geometric shapes represented the machine and technology which people then imagined would solve all of society's problems; stepped designs reflected the shape of the skyscraper, symbolic of the early 20th century, and finally sunbursts and fountains represented the dawn of a new, modern age. In addition to the eclectic use of decoration from ancient cultures that was so much a part of Art Deco, such as Egyptian and Mayan patterns, Napier has its own Maori inspired patterns. Later buildings particularly in the suburbs had the streamlined shapes with rounded corners and balconies, speed lines and port-hole windows – every building a luxury liner!



State Theatre, Finch & Westerholm, 1933.



The Rothmans Building (Formerly the National Tobacco Company), Louis Hay, 1933.

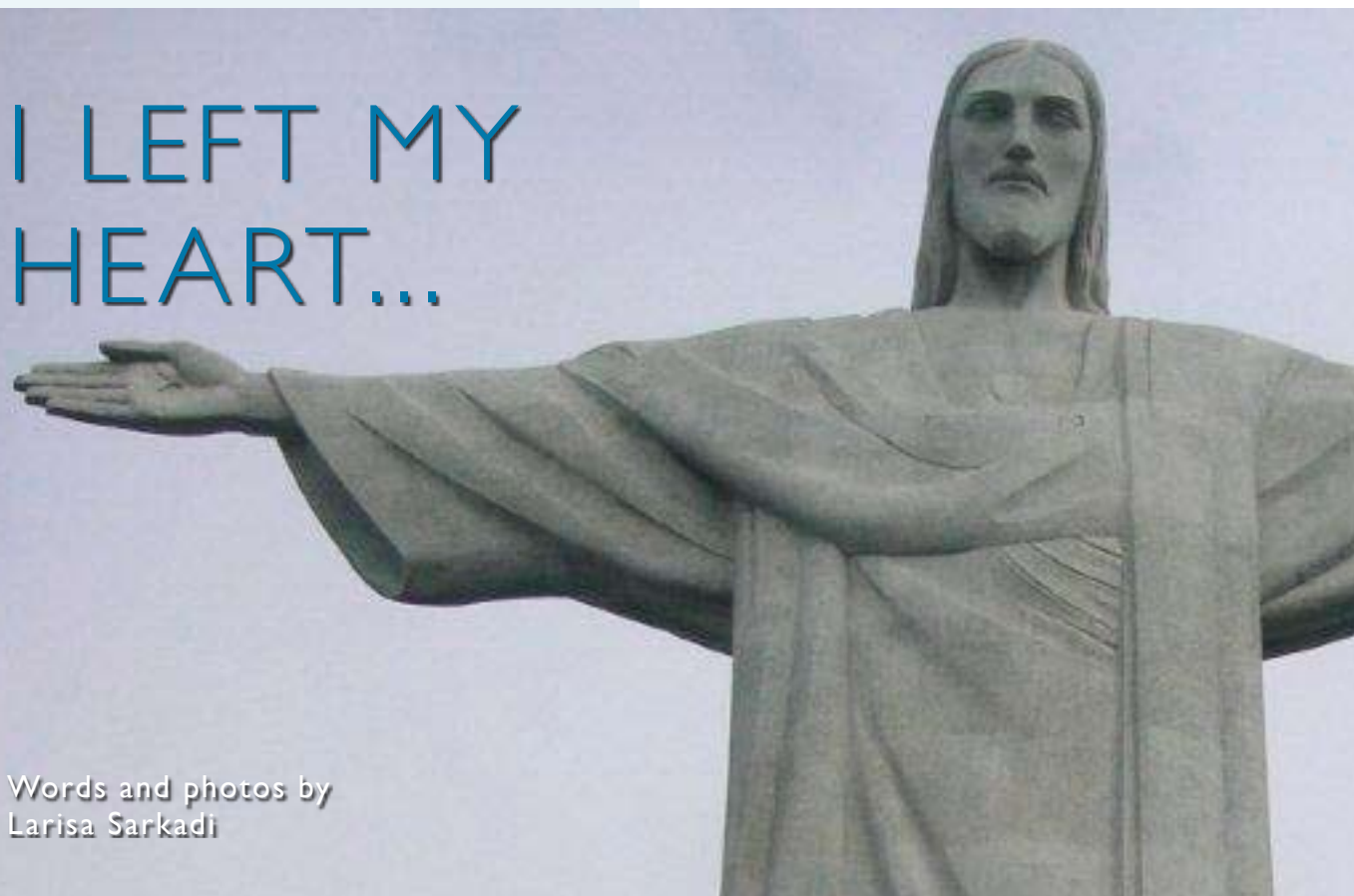
Napier's Architects

The four architectural practices in Napier in 1931 banded together to share facilities and bring a unity of purpose to the task of rebuilding the town, working in shifts around the clock. But they continued (except in rare cases) to design the buildings individually. These firms were: • E A Williams, who favoured the Art Deco style. • Finch & Westerholm, who designed mainly in the Spanish Mission style. • J A Louis Hay, who usually designed buildings inspired by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, and occasionally Louis Sullivan. • Natusch & Sons, whose work tended to reflect the growing modern movement.

Other architects who worked in Napier in the 1930s were J T Watson who arrived in 1934 and became Borough Architect, and architects from other cities, chiefly Wellington, who were retained by banks, insurance companies and hotel chains to design their buildings throughout New Zealand.

I LEFT MY HEART...

Words and photos by
Larisa Sarkadi



Monument of the Christ the Redeemer, 1927-1931, Corcovado Mountain.

As was expected, the 11th International Congress on Art Deco in Rio de Janeiro was worth the long flight and every penny of its not inconsiderable registration fee. We could not participate in the pre-congress events in Sao Paulo but the main program in Rio de Janeiro delivered on every level.

Before we even begin on the very purpose of these bi-annual gatherings of the Art Deco professionals and fans, let me declare my latest love interest: Rio de Janeiro. Natural features of the city are as exuberant as the local culture. Sited around shores of a deep lagoon, Rio is nestled among granite peaks "starring" on those countless vintage airline posters. Immortalised on Galle-designed vases, these monoliths are scattered at random everywhere you turn.

Every viewpoint is wonderfully different; every angle begs to be captured on film. In the local tropical climate fruits and vegetables grow to an unbelievable size and taste, and sandy beaches seem to stretch for ever. To sum it up, Rio is a paradise on Earth for photographers and sybarites.

As for the main reason for our trip, Rio's architecture did not disappoint either. Architectural gems could be spotted everywhere, with their largest Art Deco treasure, a monument of Christ the Redeemer, looking over the city from the 810 meter high peak, named Corcovado. We visited grand apartment blocks of the 1920s and 1930s with richly decorated lobbies and entrances, as well as magnificent residences in Art Deco style. Local members of the Art Deco Society generously opened doors of their homes to show us their own collections of decorative and applied arts of the era. The number and quality of objects would rival quite a few

museums of decorative arts.

All lectures, simultaneously interpreted into any language via head phones, were informative and well illustrated. Highlights were too numerous to mention. The lecture on the evolution of electric light fittings presented by Alastair Duncan, the renowned Art Deco specialist, and the lecture on the work of Ferdinand Preiss presented by Alberto Shayo, the author of books on sculptors Chiparus and Preiss, are two presentations which come to mind.

Apparently, there is a legal battle still raging over creative rights to the sculpting of the face and hands of Christ the Redeemer statue. A threat of legal challenge was thrown into the debate of this topic between the great-granddaughter of the Brazilian creator of the monument and an art historian Michele Lefrancois, an expert on the body of works of the French member of the original team. It certainly spiced up the proceedings.

The optional trip to Petropolis proved to be a mixed bag of delights and disappointments, with the interior design of the former casino complex demonstrating the perils of blending Art Deco with Rococo.

Our initial safety concerns were soon forgotten in the seeming prosperity of the city. At least in Copacabana everyone looks middle class and fit, soccer is played everywhere and at any time, and everyone owns a pet dog. The seedy part of Rio's life – its famous favelas – can be visited with a tour guide as part of the cultural experience.

On the whole, the Brazilian economy is currently riding high on profits derived from its advanced manufacturing sector and wealth of natural resources. The country seemingly healed scars of devas-



Army Physical Education School, 1934, Saint John Fort.

tating political instability during years of military rule. Undeniably, there are still pockets of poverty, mainly among its descendants of African slaves. Illiteracy in rural areas is still a problem.

The financial crisis of the 1980s resulted in severe cuts in government spending on all levels of community services such as education, including teacher training. With the end of dictatorship in 1985 things changed for the better, and from 2000, with improved economic conditions, Brazil adopted policies to ensure that every child had access to education.

The poorest families are, in fact, paid a stipend if their children attend school on a regular basis. Further government investment in education and, of course, creation of job opportunities will help to alleviate poverty for the next generation of Brazilians.

Overall, our time in Rio de Janeiro was an unforgettable experience, with dreams of one day coming back to see again this beautiful city and explore more of this vast country.

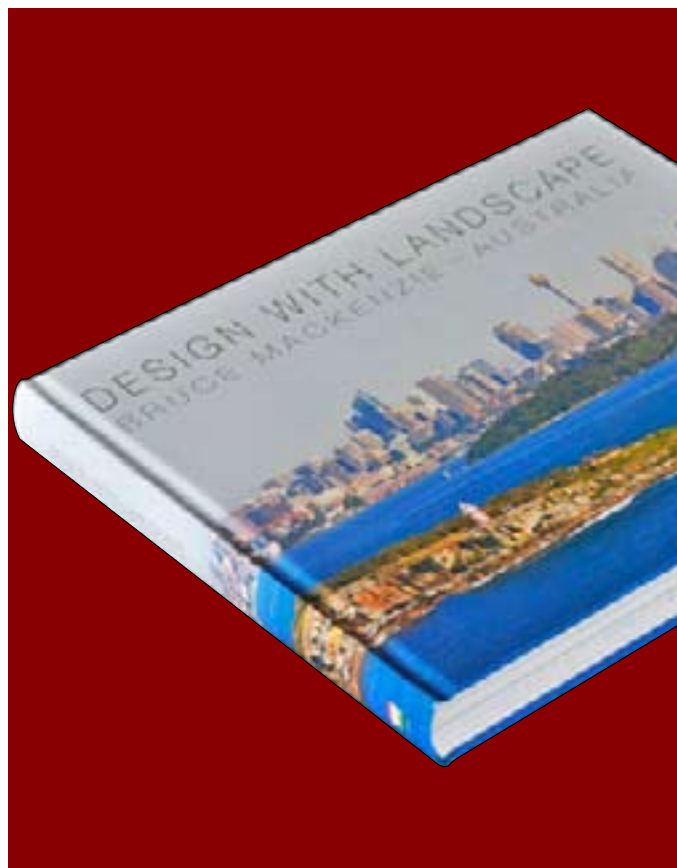
More images of Rio de Janeiro congress at
www.rioplustours.com/artdeco/galeria/index.html



Entrance to the former Basbaum residence, 1931(?), Urca.



Detail of the lobby of the Itahy apartments, 1932, Copacabana.



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Bruce Mackenzie is a fellow of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects. In the early 1980s he was first the NSW state president and later the national president of AILA. He served on the AILA council for a period of nine years and chaired the Environment Committee for a further three years, assisting with the development of AILA's environment policies.

Mackenzie is an enthusiastic writer and photographer and has had articles published in professional journals. He has presented papers at conferences in Australia and internationally, and lectured in town planning, landscape architecture, architecture and horticulture at universities and colleges throughout Australia. In 1986 he was presented with the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects' Award in Landscape Architecture, for services and contributions made to landscape architecture, and in 1999 he was made a member of the Order of Australia.

Bruce Mackenzie is known for his contribution to the emergence of an Australian consciousness that respects the indigenous environment. This concern for the true nature of Australia and the special qualities of its natural sense of place underlies a design ethos which he promotes and admires.

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