RMIT SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

Candidate Name: Stuart Harrison (MArch)   Supervisor: Dr. Shane Murray

** Section B - For Reviews of Research in Progress (second or subsequent reviews)

B1. Title of study
Is the candidate's orientation toward the identified theme enabling fruitful development of the research?

Designing Appropriately: Project strategies to design distinguishable civic buildings for non-urban places in Australia.

B2. What are you researching and with what end in mind?
Is the research gaining clarity and focus through the refinement of questioning?

How can architectural design projects embody qualities of civic presence in an undistinguished typically suburban landscape?

This masters investigates contemporary architecture's difficulty in demonstrating new buildings as distinguished from the commercial or generic, as occurred historically. Through projects it attempts to formulate strategies to do this. The research aims to consider architectural language so that it can be used in the context of new public buildings to establish a distinguished sense from dominant urban typologies, and be grounded within a contemporary reading of the civic.

This sixth presentation will overview the masters to date; the first design project (a Civic Centre in Mildura) and the second project (civic offices for the City of Hume, Broadmeadows), and a reworked third project, a new 'civic school' on the Melbourne outer suburb of Mill Park. This last project uses a real 'P9' school brief and extends trends toward community use of school buildings to make the key facilities of the complex the key civic building in a suburban context devoid of one.

The projects investigate the possibility of how architects can reclaim parts of the architectural project through urban design, study of appropriate precedent and engineering. Each one tackles the opening problem in a different way with different briefs, the third project attempting to 'learn' from the first two, along with case studies, writing and a series of conference papers delivered over the last four years.

B3. Outline of progress to date
How has the research developed since last being reviewed?

The research was reviewed in June 2006 in presentation concentrating on the third design project. Since then, there has been a dual focus on reflecting and overviewing the whole body of work, to package this together into an overview document (a draft DVR). At the same time, the third project has been entirely reworked and has simultaneously developed with the overview task as it develops a concluding role in the research.

B4. Changes to candidature
Are the changes made to the research program likely to improve the quality of the research?

The title of research / research question has changed several times as the aims/provision outcomes have shifted. Originally the title of the research was: '*The Civic Face: propositions for a contemporary architectural language for new Australian public buildings.*', and this has subsequently changed to the more general '*The Design of Civic Buildings in Non-Urban Australia*', and then to the more question based '*How are contemporary suburban and regional public buildings distinguished as such?*' and then in 2006 to the multiple line, *'Are contemporary civic buildings undistinguishable from other building types? How can contemporary civic buildings demonstrate the civic? How does my design process tackle one over riding issue across different projects? How can my design process be recorded?*'. The question as to whether contemporary civic buildings are undistinguishable from other building types has, through the examination of contemporary examples, been answered – most are undistinguishable

but there are several recent projects that attempt and succeed in doing so. The issue of 'how can' is to be answered through the presentation and reflection on the undertaken projects as samples of how this can be addressed, with the final project attempting a summation of strategies that learnt from the two main previous projects, as series of supporting projects undertaken during the course and before this work; and from examination of successful precedents.

The current title, '*Designing Appropriately: Project strategies to design distinguishable civic buildings for non-urban places in Australia.'* Reposits the key research question as '*How can architectural design projects embody qualities of civic presence in an undistinguished typically suburban landscape?'.* This relocates the concerns of the research to encompass the processes undertaken in the completion of projects – the use of precent, brief, site, architectural language, and association; and the projects themselves as a series of possible solutions to the stated problem. This is then intended to be of use to myself and others in the undertaking of real-world projects that demand, either through brief or social obligation (or both) to create distinctive (but not iconic) civic buildings in a variety of non-urban (suburban and regional) places in Australia.

B5. How should the research be evaluated?
Is the candidate locating their work and critically reflecting upon their work in a broader context?

The work is being seen against recent projects aimed at similar goals. The research locates itself into the wider question of the role of architectural expression in a time focussed on ethically important questions of sustainability and the zeitgeist of the digital. Both these often separately seen areas of concern are currently, and will continue to, affect architectural discourse and practice. The aim of this research fits in to more direct social question of how new buildings can have a presence in their context that is both appropriate for their (public) program and appropriate for their site. It draws upon digital techniques along side traditional architectural methods of development and representation, and continually addresses and incorporate environmental sustainable design.

The work should be tested against this aim, as to whether the designed projects register as buildings with a public or civic presence, and how it improves urban design aspects of its immediate surroundings and both describes and affirms the particular place it has been located with in.

B6. Future schedule
Is the candidate directing their resources appropriately and realistically?

The masters aims to complete in October this year (2007).

B7. When do you expect to submit your research for examination?
Is the candidate's research on a path to complete within the standard duration of candidature?

October 2007 for examination. This is a part-time masters which was first presented in October 2003, and over the last two years been presented yearly. Work in the last six months has been aimed at completion.

B8. Attach a concisely selected and annotated bibliography of readings and references.
Is the research situated in relationship to appropriate areas of work to which it contributes?

Please refer attached document.

***Section C - Penultimate review
C1. Approval for examination: *To be examined a candidate is first required to get formal approval from a panel at Review of Candidature. You are required to submit a draft copy of your durable visual record / thesis at the Review of Candidature at the Graduate Research Conference approximately 6 months (3 months in the case of candidates who are enrolled full-time) prior to your expected date of submission- for-examination in order to gain panel recommendation of your readiness for examination.*

This is a penultimate presentation. Draft DVR to be submitted at presentation.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Boyer, Christine, The City of Collective Memory, MIT Press, 1996
Boyer's work discussed typology at several key moments, particularly through the work of Aldo Rossi.

Broadbent, Geoffrey, Emerging Concepts in Urban Space Design, Spoon Press, 1990
Broadbent's often person based summary of the key ideas in urban design deals extensively with 1980's Post Modern urbansim. It also discusses townscape and architecture through urban terms.

Cullen, Gordon, The Concise Townscape, Architectural Press
The source text on townscape, and ideas clearly explained with diagrams and photographs of 'good' urban form. He states townscape as,

the art of giving visual coherence and organisation to the jumble of buildings, streets and spaces that make up the urban environment ...

the reason being to

take all the elements that go to create the environment ... and weave them together in such a way that drama is released.

Examination of existing urban configurations is to be used in new work and to great a 'sense of place'.

de Botton, Alain, The Architecture of Happiness, Pantheon Books, 2006
Alain de Botton is a popular philosopher and in this book he attempts to discuss the reason for an absence of beauty in the modern city. His argued suggests balance and harmony are important criteria. He attempts to decode the reasons for architectural expression.

Pevsner, Nikolaus, History of Building Types, Princeton, 1976
The key text on typology, the large book's conclusion features the line 'My own answer is this: every building creates associations in the mind of the beholder - whether the architect likes it or not.'

Kohane, P & Hill, M, 'The eclipse of a commonplace idea: decorum in architectural theory', ARQ: Architectural Research Quarterly 2001, v.5, n.1
In this paper the authors describe a pre-Modern sensibility of appropriate architectural treatments based on urban locations and the relative importance of 'civic hierarchy of individual buildings. From the paper,

the rejection of decorum was part of a general rejection of the past, something especially justified following the disasters of the First World War. Little could be salvaged from what as thought to be the West' decadent cultural traditions, least of all its systems of courtesy - it was best to start anew.

... the core of the idea of decorum remains valuable, illuminating the relations of social ideals and overall urban form, and providing a model of the way buildings 'speak' to their audience and other buildings, comprising a permanent display of utterances that contribute to the making of self-awareness of the public realm.

Architectural Design, editions in 1980s, such as AD58 The New Classicism and AD Profiles 18:Rob & Leon Krier
The 1980s editions of AD catalogue the shifting into critical popularity of Post Modern classicism, and then Deconstruction. Charles Jencks and the Krier brothers are dominant contributors.

Goldhagen, Sarah Williams, Louis Kahn's Situation Modernism, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2001.
This comprehensive book dispels several myths regarding the work of Kahn, and makes clear his in the intellectual context and desire to produce new civic form,

Like other space frames, City Tower symbolically re-enacted the hidden order underlying nature, and because the project was based on geometries found in organic and inorganic form, it would be more universally accessible that the Beaux-Arts city hall nearby, which relied on cultural precedents and so implied a more restricted audience that was familiar with them. In its realization the project would manifest the aesthetic of authenticity; in its symbolism and planning, it would set forth a civic idiom for all by representing the commonality of humanity in nature, from microcosm to macrocosm.