

Interstate – Conversations Across Borders – 2012 AIA Talk Series – 26 June/ 17 July/ 20 Nov

The Proposition

We live and work in a globalised economy. Much of the work of Antipodean architects could loosely be described as being part of a global contemporary idiom. And yet work from a particular city or geographic area is often identifiable as being from that place. Most of us could make an educated guess as to the location of a piece of architecture and be right as often as not.

Why is that? It's not just the climate. It's not just the topography. It's not just the economy. It's not just the availability of certain materials, the influence of the local vernacular; although these all play a part. There is a silent conversation going on. One work of architecture responds to another. Not across the street, but across the city.

Clusters of architects use a recognisable architectural language or at the very least a dialect of a common globalised language. These architects are not consciously copying each other's work. Rather, they are participating in a cultural discussion using architectural form and detail as words. British ethnologist and evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins coined the term *meme* in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*.

(/'mi:m/; meem)) is "an idea, behavior or style that spreads from person to person within a culture. A meme acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols or practices, which can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals or other imitable phenomena. Supporters of the concept regard memes as cultural analogues to genes in that they self-replicate, mutate and respond to selective pressures. (Source: Wikipedia)

For artists of a particular city the meme may be the use of certain materials or motifs, for teenagers the clothes that they wear or the music that they listen to, for chefs it might be certain ingredients or methods, for dogs and their owner's certain facial expressions, for cyclists the bikes that they ride. It happens globally. It happens locally.

Some Questions

Do you agree with the proposition?

Is a contemporary vernacular developing in your city?

What role have mentors played in the development of the architectural thinking and language of your practice?

How has architectural culture of Brisbane/ Perth/ Wellington informed your work?

Would you agree that your practice is participating in a silent conversation within in your city? Are there aspects to that discussion that are expressed in a distinct language or dialect?

If so, what cultural ideas are being exchanged, and how are those ideas expressed in form and detail in your work?

The Venue

'Tusculum', 3 Manning Street, Potts Point, NSW

The Format

Speakers Arrive 6.00 pm

Start 6.30 pm

Finish 8.00 pm

45 minute talk by invited architect/ practice

15 – 20 minute panel discussion and audience Q&A

followed by drinks

Thank you for agreeing to participate. We are really looking forward to seeing your work and hearing what you have to say.

Sam