



Don Watson – 26 November 2021

Distinguished guests, distinguished students, their families and friends, and colleagues – welcome to this exhibition of the work of the graduating classes of 2021.

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

I also acknowledge all those architecture students who have studied and exhibited architecture at The University of Queensland since Robert Percy Cummings was appointed first lecturer in architecture in 1937.

Queensland’s earliest architectural exhibitions were public displays of drawings entered in competitions under a pseudonym, which occurred frequently during the nineteenth century.

In the twentieth century, exhibitions were held of the work of the profession as a whole, including students, or of student work only. Two weeks ago in a presentation supporting the nomination for heritage listing of the (former) Methodist Memorial Church at Wilston, I included a photograph from an annual student exhibition of 1939 showing young Theo Hutton with a model of a house he had designed. Theo later designed the church (Ford Hutton and Newell, 1955), which is now on the Queensland Heritage Register.

End-of-year exhibitions have long been a highlight of the School of Architecture. I don’t recall an exhibition when I graduated, but I remember the exhibition of the class of 1963 when I enrolled. It was still on display when I started in 1964. I was impressed. So will be visitors to this exhibition, held sixty years later.

When I started at The University of Queensland, the School of Architecture occupied the Forgan Smith tower and the basement of the Social Sciences Building. Crits were held on the third floor of the tower. Within a few years the School moved into the Michie Building. By the time I joined the part-time staff in 1978, the Zelman Cowen Building had been occupied and Projects Review exhibitions, as they were then called, were held annually. An initiative of Brit Andresen, they involved the entire School. Their catalogue, an envelope of folded A3 sheets, including one for each year and a couple for research, are useful historical records. As well as opening the exhibition, my equivalent also gave a lecture. I'm glad that this practice has been forgotten.

In the second half of their history, annual exhibitions often left the Zelman Cowen Building and ventured further afield, both on campus and into the Brisbane CBD.

It has been a pleasure to teach ARCH7007 this semester, in a productive collaboration with John Macarthur, the students and the tutors – Jinx Miles, Peter Roy, Matthew Caswell and many others who made useful contributions. I particularly thank all the students involved.

The title of this exhibition is PRACTICE.

The 2021 project team is Isabella Reynolds and Ben McMillan as co-curators; Varish Patel for logistics; Jun Rong as treasurer and Chelsea Dwan for communications. I congratulate them on an excellent result.

After three or five years practicing, you are now ready for professional practice. Practice is more broad ranging than just employment. I encourage you to become involved with the profession, and with design and environmental issues wherever you venture. Graduates of this school now work throughout Australia and worldwide.

As with all graduates, your individual practice will be different from any other. But unlike your predecessors, within your lifetimes the future of this planet will be decided. As practitioners, my generation has left it in a fragile condition. I urge you to make good our failings as a matter of urgency. It's in your hands and those of your colleagues around the world. Your training has well equipped you for the task.

I congratulate the curators and exhibitors on their successful work and wish you all good luck.

It is a pleasure to declare PRACTICE open.