

PROF LEON VAN SCHAİK AO:

Thank you, Shiqiao. We both have unpronounceable names, so we've coached each other.

I am very honoured to be here. What can somebody who first visited China in 1987 and has come to Hong Kong every other year since really offer in a forum like this? But I do take courage from the presentation that you've just made, because, really, living heritage is precisely about what you said at the end of your talk: nothing really matters to us unless we can build a story about its past, about its present and about its future.

That's why I started with this image, which is about a constructed landscape. Of course, landscapes are just as constructed as cities are. When you asked me to think about talking here, I started to think about this avenue that we see on the screen, which was planted by my grandfather when he was a very young man. He was alone and far away from anywhere and he planted these trees, one oak, one plane tree, one oak, one plane tree down the 3-kilometre length that you see there. Every morning before the sun rose, he would walk down the avenue inspecting the trees and see how they were getting on. In order to maintain concentration, he started to name them after characters in Shakespearian plays and then he would also -- he was very much alone -- quote sections of the plays to them as he went along.

I see that as a way of nurturing and building a story about something that you're planting and growing.

In years to come, I played under those trees, my children played under those trees. His heirs have replanted the trees that were struck by lightning and those that have died from getting stag headed.

I said to you that there was something very similar to me about that venture and to what it is that those of us who care about our cities do when we try to help our cities become more interesting.

Melbourne is now recognised, as you mentioned, as a designed city. Designed cities are places that swell up in the international consciousness from time to time.

Barcelona was one, Graz was one. And of course the Ramstedt in the Netherlands has been one for a while. The mantle keeps being shifted around as our fashion and our attention clears.

The interesting thing about all of these and I think any city that you look at, why Melbourne is in that situation at the moment is there's a period in which we're very alive to the whole history of what went on in that city. The city was founded with higher architectural ambitions, not to imitate anybody else but to actually compete with what already existed. It was one of the most important cities in the empire. It grew up at the same time as Manchester, it was known as marvelous Melbourne. In the State library hung ten photographs from the Architectural Association of great buildings in the world and underneath was an injunction: "Let's do better than this."

So every generation in that city has tried in some way or another to actually do something better, although it is a matter of troughs and peaks. There are generations who forget.

What is it that makes a designed city? There have to be people who are helping architects and clients to understand the cultural capital of their city and their role in growing that capital. We can't be passive about it, we can't just expect it to be something that happens automatically by itself. We have to encourage a tripolarity of discourse. Almost every city that has ever succeeded culturally has done so after a ferment of discussion and that's usually when there are three positions being strongly argued.

We need then also to be commissioning local architects, not imagining that we can import innovation, we have to innovate from what we have ourselves. We use, in the process that started 20 years ago when I arrived in Melbourne, we started by calling for expressions of interest, evaluated them against criteria that

showed evidence of ambition in design, and we didn't ever ask anybody whether they had designed a building like that before. Then we short-listed and ran short listing competitions and we completely avoided icon chasing, the notion that you can somehow kick start a culture by importing a large object.

How do you help understand the cultural capital? Partly it's the telling of the stories of the civil mission of the city. Its spaces and places, events and interiors.

That's a kind of version of history in which you try to get people to see that what we have presently hasn't simply manifested out of immediate economic situations but is actually a thing that has grown from the first picnic held on a site to that first moment when people loved a place to what they then tried to do to it afterwards as they tried to inhabit it.

We have to work very hard to build tripolar discourse. There's far too much of a belief that we must all agree. Most of the really good things that happen in creative circles are to with disagreement and out of that a firming up of different positions and a strengthening of those positions.

It's also an illusion to think that you can do this in architecture alone. As in Antwerp at the moment, quite famously, that culture is being built up because of friendships, between people in the arts, crafts, fashion, jewellery, furniture, graphics and so on. A city needs to cultivate those friendships between the players and not simply sit in its silos.

We also have to ensure that people from the different domains meet informally. It's a difficult balance. You can't structure it bureaucratically and you do need to achieve it somehow informally. And bars and restaurants really play an important part in that.

Then I think we have to identify who are the people who are doing most to actually further our aims in a particular time and support, in our instance in particular, practitioner academics, those people

who believe that practice must be what leads the creativity in the academy, rather than the other way around.

So how do we go about this? One of the things is to understand the curatorial armature of your city. In Melbourne we're lucky because we have a classical grid layout and there is a civic axis and the experiments which are done by young architects, when tested and validated, arrive eventually on that civic axis which you see here looking from a helicopter from the imperial domain right up through the heart of the city towards RMIT and Melbourne University.

I've done a lot to make idiograms about that axis, trying to sketch in around it in a way that I can't dwell on here, the ideas that have thrust themselves upon that axis, the stories that have lodged on it. They're all describe in the book "Design City Melbourne".

But that axis has lodged against it some of the most marvelous spaces in the world. Here at Newman College, Marion Mahoney and Burley Griffin built this fabulous dining hall which lurks in the mind of every architect in the city. You cannot avoid it. Right near it, Edmond and Corrigan have made this very recently completed library which is a homage to but an extension of that former space. That encapsulates what I understand by "living heritage". We see something wonderful, we try not simply to replicate it but actually to discover its essence and do something which goes a little bit further.

We were bequeathed some quite amazing things by the Griffins. It's not icon architecture because they came and lived in Melbourne for quite a long time. I have no problem with people moving around the world, I just have a problem with importation of icons from people who don't even visit the cities where their icons get built.

This wonderful theatre built in 1924 applies all of their beliefs in colour theory, which they derived from Goethe and the atomic structure of the universe which they were fascinated by and it forms a precedent for the city of Melbourne's great interest in fractal

architecture which next manifests itself in a major way in the redesign of RMIT's Storey Hall. You see there on the left, the 1880s assembly hall, which was -- and on the right the 1920s building and in the middle, the foyer building which links these two and turns them into a single entity. And a canopy which has just been completed which we'll come to in a moment.

Inside that assembly hall, which had been gutted in the 1960s, this amazing interior was constructed, designed in 1992 and completed in 1996, and here we have something which clearly owes a lot to the Griffins and yet is working with Roland Penrose's non-periodic tiling system, a very recent mathematic invention.

Then later, in 2004, we get the fractals being used in Federation Square by Lab Architecture. So there's another story that starts to build in the city, where people look over their shoulders at what other people have done and see how they can comment on it and take it further.

We also have a lot of more classical architecture, the wonderful State Library, 1913, which belongs to that family of buildings which are fascinated with pure geometry. And that fascination with geometry is now being reinterpreted through the new mathematics. In this completely beguiling dome by Minifie Nixon which uses a (indistinct word) surface which is so fit to-to-purpose that it's quite startling. It's a paradoxical form, you're either inside out or outside in, it's very hard ever to tell where you are. Yet, seen from a distance there's a certain platonic sobriety about it, another kind of comment, on a long investigation which has been going on in the city.

It's not enough for this simply to happen. Somebody has to be commenting on it, it has to be exhibited, it has to be explored, the different positions have to be teased out. We need critics. We need people who think about these things, exhibit them and argue them.

In this ideogram, I look at Melbourne's three poles and it wasn't until -- when I arrived, civics was the main one that was in place, tectonics was in the background but unarticulated, poetics arrived and then the whole place took off. In the second line you see my deliberate mistake of today. That should be not Vasari but Vitruvius. I just spotted that while you were talking. In some ways, this tripolarity has been in architecture ever since there were critics of architecture and Vitruvius, of course, is one of the oldest and most famous, writing 2,000 years ago. You probably know of equivalent texts in Chinese. What does this mean? Here is a recent Civic Narrative Expression building by Lyons architects being inspected by (indistinct words) gallery in Berlin.

Here is a most fabulous example of a tectonics pole by Sean Godsell, his Peninsula house of 2002.

Here is the Tarra Warra Museum of Art itself by Allan Powell.

Those three utterly different approaches to architecture sit together in this city arguing with each other, arguing about what is the right way to approach architecture.

Not arguing alone. Many of the arguments are prefigured in art and Callum Morton, currently in the Venice Biennale, the art biennale, did a series of very fascinating works which took bits of the city back into the gallery and made us look at them again and it heralded the engagement of the poetics of the every day and it encouraged architects to start talking about this sort of stuff.

The Australian Centre of Contemporary Art marks the arrival of the poetics pole along the civic spine. And a new tectonics pole arrived on the civic spine with Minifie Nixon's Centre for Ideas at the VCA in 2003, a delightful little building which uses (indistinct word) cells to resolve a very difficult facade issue.

Here I've used it on the cover of the book, "Mastering Architecture" which is all about the way one works with people to get them to understand what they're doing and to augment and enhance what

they're doing so that they can play a role in building the arguments, which make a city's fabric have a history.

We work with them to talk about the individual in mastery, how they tend to come from provinces, creative people tend to come from provinces, but be aware of The Metropolis. They find their peers, people they want to work with, they explore their chosen terrain, they pick an abiding interest, they become isolated by a sense of break through that they can't explain and they crave recognition, but even when looking for recognition, they always maintain marginality.

One of the case studies in that book is about Paul Minifie.

But people aren't alone in this ever. We all of us as creative individuals, engage in a public order of a domain but we maintain marginality.

We are enchained in small groups. In other words, there are people we admire whom we may not have met or have met who come from previous generations. There are people in our own generation that we admire and there are people in coming generations that we admire and we bind with them and these, the law of small numbers is about how we always bind in groups of three. It's never more than three arguments at a time, but historically speaking, every city that has contributed to the creative construction of living heritage, intellectual change, has been characterised by the three poles.

So the group, and these are all the architects who contributed to that particular exhibition.

But we have to understand also that those groups don't simply behave in an untaught way. Architecture has been written about for two thousand years. Many of the ways in which we talk about it and many of the ways in which we engage with it has stayed the same for hundreds of years, as was demonstrated in the introductory talk.

We need to think about that when we want to understand how to build connections between people so that we can actually make the stories go from the past through the present to the future.

Different disciplines have completely different ways of behaving. This is a series of photographs of environmental scientists and architects, the environmental scientists on one side, every time they want to make a point, they point at a graph. The architects on the other side of the table, every time they want to make a point, they pick up a model. The two sides failed to communicate at all because they didn't understand their own ritual behaviours.

Although culture, I believe, is city/region based and it's a fascinating thing to me, that even in a country as new as Australia, every city is so different from the other, it's culture is so different. It is meaningless to talk about Australian architecture. You have to talk about the culture of each individual city. It's because city regions foster mastery. It's a local phenomenon but it must be elevated into a metropolitan discourse if it's not simply to be tribal and self-serving.

Here's is little sequence of something that's happened to one of our attempts in Melbourne to build a landmark. There's a certain Sydney envy in Melbourne, we've never managed an Opera House. This was to be in the 60s our answer to the Sydney Harbour Bridge which was even then a landmark which Melbourne couldn't equal.

It was to be a copper-sheathed witch's hat sitting on a platonic solids design. Here is what Tom Kovac, hearing a sniff of a job for redoing the spire, proposed in 2006. And here on the left you see the thin littlespire that actually got constructed when they worked out that the wind load on the copper witch's hat would require that construction to have such massive foundations that they couldn't afford to build it.

I make another point with this slide. I may seem to have been talking about very special buildings, and I have, but those special buildings are what actually leaven the rest the city and a remarkable



design like the Eureka Tower by Katzelidis has completely transformed a mediocre clump of second rate stumps into a quite sparkling sector of the city.

It takes me back to that first set of things of what we need to do to make a designed city, which is a business of actually constantly growing our heritage, because the heritage of the next ten years is what we've done this year. It's not simply what happened at the beginning of the city, but it is all those things. Helping people to understand their cultural capital, encouraging the intellectual discourse in a tripolar way. Modernity did us a huge disservice by suggesting that there was one true path. Commissioning local architects and eschewing icon chasing.

In "Design City Melbourne", I try to track many of the interactions between people in architecture, in the arts and crafts and in all of the creative disciplines, including engineering, planning, economics and the law, and never forgetting infrastructure, because some of the most beautiful things in Melbourne will never be seen, such as the outfall sewer which stops the sewage from going into the sea.

These stories, I believe, are the things that we need to tell over and again if we are to have a living heritage. Thank you.