

TRANSGRESSIVE TRANS FORM ATION

DELVING INTO THE GREY AREAS OF REGULATION AND CONVENTION, ARTIST AND ARCHITECT RICHARD GOODWIN AGITATES FOR NOTHING SHORT OF RADICAL CHANGE

WRITER *Nicole Thomas* PHOTOGRAPHER *Paul Barbera*

In Richard Goodwin's Leichhardt studio, embedded within each of his models, sculptures, books, paintings and photographs, is the stirring of a revolution. Rather than a quiet murmuring, each of these artefacts shouts its intention loud and clear: radical transformation. In a society where the status quo is firmly set, these are fighting words. Goodwin is clearly a fighting man. He's been in and out of court for the past six years trying to get approval on his latest project, the Deepdene Penthouse, in particular the "parasite" addition on the apartment block's roof.

"In order to make this we had to call it public art, because it goes outside all of the restrictions. And yet, paradoxically, it's a private thing. We had to take that to court for six years ... and what is it? It's really not so profound," Goodwin says.

It's hard not to feel exasperated for him. Located in a late-1960s building designed by Stuart Murray (from Ancher Mortlock Murray & Woolley), the Deepdene apartments were asbestos-ridden and had "sick" air conditioning, says Goodwin. "A lot of the problems that we were fixing up were due to the way it was put together, but the design of the interiors is beautiful, actually."





GOODWIN'S FIGHTING WORDS

ON MINIMALISM AND FUNCTIONALISM:
 "The idea that you have to be slavish to desires supposedly about function is bullshit. We're so adaptable and we have such good imaginations."

ON MELBOURNE:
 "Instead of having a dialogue like Sydney has with the developers, [Melbourne] had a dialogue with the intelligentsia. They listened and they learnt that they had to run competitions where the people who won them got to build them, not always Lend Lease and the cohorts. And things started to happen."

ON HERITAGE ARCHITECTURE AND DEEPDENE PENTHOUSE:
 "Heritage architecture really has to take a look at itself; it's disgraceful as far as I'm concerned. It's inflexible and also makes rabid claims about architecture that are often not worthy. They would endlessly cite that [Deepdene Penthouse] was inappropriate in Elizabeth Bay. Elizabeth Bay is a fucking dog's breakfast, but I love it. I would like to live there eventually. It's a place with a community and a density and the water and everything and that's what makes it so beautiful."

ON CITIES:
 "Ultimately the city is healthy when its social construction drives urban planning decisions rather than capital alone."

Once the development approval was passed, Goodwin worked on the inside of the building fixing the air conditioning and myriad other cancers decaying it. This reconditioning is literally topped off with a trademark Goodwin parasite – a rooftop shade structure as much sculpture as architecture – that not only reduces the heat load of the building but is destined to become a heritage monument in its own right.

This heritage tag would undoubtedly infuriate Goodwin no end, and is counter-productive to his cause: don't protect when you could be enhancing. It's no secret that Goodwin is an anti-functional, anti-minimalist thinker, in direct opposition to many of his Sydney-based peers. Rather than create new sparkling white boxes and stamp them as sustainable and liveable, his projects are attachments to existing fabrics – making their footprint far lighter than any new structure. And while aesthetically his vision appears a little apocalyptic thanks to a mish-mash of re-used materials and its industrial masculinity, he is not clinging to that actualisation. It is the concept that he holds sacred; he is open and willing for other designers to take on the task of reinventing our cities.

Goodwin's idea of nirvana is a complex cityscape of interconnected buildings where the interior is key, rather than the grand old facades society has come to fawn over. "That's why my next book is called *Porosity: The architecture of invagination*. It's political, I guess; far be it for me to be the feminist, but this is the inversion of the phallus-centric box. So that will be the revolution in the future. Unfortunately not in my lifetime, but it will happen." He cites slums as an example of this kind of architecture and marvels at their complexity and reliance on social constructs. "You'll notice if you're in a slum the architecture seems to dissolve, whereas it's actually very strong. It's more about social construction and so the interiority becomes the thing."

Goodwin's work is intentionally complicated and transgressive, but that could be put down to a number of causes. The most likely ones are perception and conditioning: his work is considered outrageous only because we have been brought up to hail the modernist regime of tidy minimalist spaces that dictate our spatial and lifestyle needs. We haven't been conditioned as yet to this alternative view that spaces should be dictated by us and

LEFT: Richard Goodwin, at work in his studio of revolutionary ideas. An anti-minimalist thinker, his personal space in Leichhardt is packed with his models, sculptures, books, paintings and photographs.

our movements. If such thinking becomes the dominant mode, harmony will lie within the organic chaos of our own creation, much like Goodwin's studio.

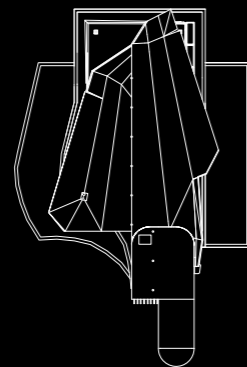
Currently, Goodwin is working with Russell Lowe on a project called Real-Time Porosity in the Sydney CBD with the Emergency Information Coordination Unit, mapping a particular area of the city and how people move within it. While this sounds strangely conventional for a revolutionary, it's not. The collaboration is part of an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant that is based on Goodwin's original ARC Discovery Grant, which looked at how, by tracking public movements throughout space, parasitic structures could be attached to buildings in an organic addition to the public's movements.

Real-Time Porosity sees Goodwin and Lowe model all underground train and mall structures into a gaming system where real-time scenarios, such as bomb explosions, are played out as tools for security.

Goodwin is out to prove that creating more connections between spaces is far safer than restricting exits – the current mode of thinking – and to thereby develop systems for urban planners to get involved in. Goodwin is planting the seeds of revolution. Whether they are given the daylight to grow is another matter entirely. **m**



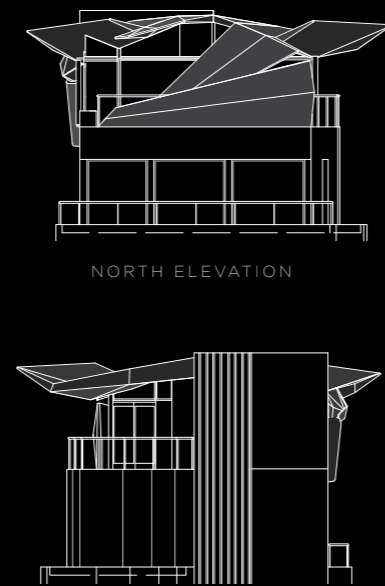
vision
first always



ROOF PLAN



NORTH ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION

PROJECT DETAILS

ARCHITECT: Richard Goodwin Pty Ltd
PROJECT/DESIGN ARCHITECT: Richard Goodwin, Team Fernando Pino, Tia Chim and Tom Cole
ENGINEERS: Partridge Partners
BUILDERS: Keith March Constructions
ROOF CONSTRUCTION: Murlin/Azzura Marine
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 12 months
FLOOR AREA: 200sqm
FURNISHINGS: Metropolitan seating by Jeffrey Bennett from B&B Italia; Fat Fat coffee table by Patricia Urquiola from B&B Italia; Richard Goodwin-designed table custom-made by Laidir; white goods by Miele
LOUVRES: Aerobrise from Hunter Douglas

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