

# The Week in Art

by Daniel Thomas

**ARCHITECTURE** is sometimes art, though not often. Most buildings are, inevitably, not works of art, but only of design, like a motor car or a toaster or a cigarette packet. Few buildings today are meant to be permanent.

When there is the likelihood of permanence, and more important, the likelihood of remaining unaltered from the architect's original conception, then the architect might attempt to create a work of art.

There are one or two masters — Corbusier or Wright—whose every building is a work of art, but in Australia only Walter Burley Griffin has approached this condition.

As a rule, then, it will be the churches and public buildings that might aspire to art. Or houses, which are cheap and where a personal short-lived work of art can be afforded (though in past centuries houses too were meant to last and were expected to remain unaltered).

Architecture can be the most pure of the art forms, that is the most abstract, like music. Great architecture has been called

## WHAT'S ON

**TODAY AND NEXT WEEK**  
Art Gallery of N.S.W.: Special exhibitions. Old master drawings, and minor Australian impressionists from the permanent collection.

**ALL NEXT WEEK**  
Komon: Jon Molvig and the Brisbane School.  
Farmers: Australian Fabric Design Competition.  
Frances Jones studio: Ballet Designs by Ann Church.  
Campos, 34 St. Ives Centre: Barry Taffs.

**OPENING MONDAY**  
Walk Gallery, Pacific Highway and Edgeworth David Avenue.  
Hornsby: Inaugural Exhibition.

**OPENING TUESDAY**  
Dominion: Greeting card competition.

**OPENING WEDNESDAY**  
David Jones Fine Arts Dept.: Old Master Drawings and antique silvers.

Macquarie: Ralph Balson.  
Barry Stern: Moya Dyring.  
Terry Clune: Five Woman Painters.

**OPENING FRIDAY**  
Von Bertouch, Newcastle: Elwyn Lynn.

"Frozen music." It cannot become mixed up with literature, like painting or sculpture.

At its best, when it becomes a beautiful composition of solids and spaces, it becomes inhabitable sculpture; sculpture which can be experienced the more richly since it can be entered, not merely observed.

Commercial buildings cannot be expected to become art-works. They are better advised to remain clean, neat, packages for their goods and services.

But the spaces between carefully arranged buildings that are neutral in themselves can create a city that is a work of art.

Most old Italian cities, Venice above all, give this supreme pleasure even though the buildings need not be individually interesting.

Such cities, with their variety of open plaza and narrow passage, of dignified peaceful use adjoining animated shops and entertainments, generate an atmosphere of exhilaration.

There is a proposal to give the Sydney Cove area this atmosphere.

More than a year ago the Minister for Local Government suspended the area from existing town-planning regulations, for several property owners in the area had formed a Sydney Cove Improvements Committee and had commissioned an overall plan in three dimensions for the land between Macquarie, Bridge and George Streets and Circular Quay.

The City Council of Sydney was asked to report on the Committee's plan, prepared by the town planners Clarke, Gazzard and Yeomans.

Last week the Committee's model was exhibited in the Town Hall, with another, presumably rival plan.

The rival is a plan for traffic only. The streets have chamfered corners to make the spaces amorphous and flabby; there are wide boulevards to duplicate the Cahill Expressway, and to put in islands where flowers may wilt or where unused, inaccessible park benches can be placed.

It is a limbo for lost souls to scuttle through on their way from one place to another. It will create delinquency.

Of course when all Sydney is remodelled like this for traffic but not for people, Sydney will no longer exist.

It is no use having good transport if there is no worthwhile place to go, and it is time to start making places, not passageways. Especially at Sydney Cove, the very spot where Australia was founded 175 years ago.

Sir Herbert Read, in Sydney recently, when asked about our level of sensibility said he "found it difficult to think of another level low enough for comparison."

The Improvements Committee's scheme is based on humane principles. It should be taken seriously, if only because the desirable and attractive kind of

area it could create would also give the City Council a much higher rate value.

## Exhibitions

At Farmers are the entries for a fashion fabric design competition, that is fabrics for making women's clothes.

It was sponsored by an Australian weaver, a textile printer and a fashion house, in the hope that local designers and especially local artists not in contact with the textile industry might be attracted.

About 20 designs have been translated into printed terylene taffeta.

In very few cases have the designer's colors been retained, something quieter, indeed duller, and more elderly being thought more suitable.

Of the artists, John Coburn's designs were excellent. He received fourth prize. Clem Meadmore, a designer after all, as well as an artist, was second. Salkauskas' crisp black and white, surely admirable, was not used.

The winner, Veronica Noach, and most of the others were, understandably, trained designers rather than painters or sculptors.

The lesson would seem to be that most painters and sculptors cannot be expected to enter competitions anyway, and if they do they will not have enough knowledge of the technical problems.

The best solution may be to use trained designers, but to make sure they get out to see all the most vital local art, and take from it what suits their special purpose.

The Brisbane School at Rudy Komon's is a school created by the presence in that city for the last seven or eight years of one genuinely creative artist, Jon Molvig.

His principal follower, Andrew Sibley, has also recently shown an awareness of Ian Fairweather, a much older man, who lives in isolation not far from Brisbane.

John Aland and Shepherdson, especially the latter, are beginners who are still good Molvig men, fond of large-scale expressionism, aggressively womanising or speculating about the Earth Mother.

Mervyn Moriarty's large still-lives have some of the same vigor, but Joy Rogkamp's delicate Cezannish watercolors belong to a different world.

Neville Matthews, Bronwyn Yeates and Adrian Linden should have been there for completeness.

Molvig himself is still with the primitive, the geometric Adam and Eve and the wheelflowers on blowtorch textures.

Sadly, his Georges Art Prize nude, soft and luminous against a warm night sky, has not been shown here.

She was a most convincing emanation from that dreamy libiscus city.