

**Tom McKendrick and Elliot Langdon, *Built Perth: Discovering Perth's Iconic Architecture*, Fremantle Press, 2019, pp. 112; RRP \$29.99 hardcover.**

*Built Perth: Discovering Perth's Iconic Architecture* by Tom McKendrick and Elliot Langdon demonstrates the importance of publishers and authors in producing works that invigorate the intellectual debate and life within local communities. McKendrick and Langdon aim to celebrate the 'most prized architecture' in the Perth's central business district and the surrounding metropolitan region. Based on professional expertise as architects, the authors critique the local built environment with flair and their engaging discussion is accompanied by sleek graphic-designed illustrations.

There are fifty case studies included in the text which consider a range of structures that are grouped under the following headings: Civic, Bridges, Education, Entertainment, Spiritual, Hospitality, Office, Residential and Industrial Housing. Through these categories the authors trace the transformation of Perth from an isolated European settlement, reliant on convict labour for public works, to a modern metropolis with innovative world-leading architecture.

The authors argue that the built environment 'is a reflection of who we are' and through this text they provide a medium to consider what Perth is. Each entry contains up-to-date information about iconic local architecture with enduring social and cultural value. Many of the buildings have undergone significant adaption and have been used for a variety of purposes. In many entries there is also information about the building materials, particularly those that were locally sourced. Each entry in the book contains an architectural description and details about the architect, cost, client and year of completion.

The early structures featured in *Built Perth* include the: Western Australian Museum (former Perth Gaol, 1856), Fremantle Prison (1859), Barracks Arch (1866) and Perth Town Hall (1870). There are also a variety of more contemporary structures, for example, the Bell Tower (2000) and Cadogan Song School (2017) and Yagan Square (2018). Overall, the book provides a sound overview of how the architecture within the west of Australia has adapted. The changing architectural styles, phases of building and details of building companies, architectural firms and building materials tell a story about the peaks and troughs and development of the state.

The cultural significance of those places explored in *Built Perth* is based on the values set out in *Burra Charter* and these include: aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual value. Determining whether a structure meets these values to a significant extent is a subjective process. It is interesting to note the limited number of buildings of a spiritual nature. Churches, for example, were once the focal point of Australian towns and cities and were invested in accordingly. In fact, John Septimus Roe, the first Surveyor General of Western Australia, designed the then town of Perth around a square which,

like many other British colonial settlements, was intended to hold an Anglican church. However, these structures are not necessarily popularly considered as central to the civic square as they once were.

Appropriately the authors have included a range of recent developments that resulted from the public building boom generated by the significant investment of State funds in updating infrastructure over the last decade. The entries on these buildings highlight the willingness of Western Australian state authorities to invest in upgrading outdated public facilities and a desire to construct buildings that sympathetically responded to the surrounding built environment. Further these buildings focus on the user's experience. For example, in the entry for the Perth Children's Hospital, the authors' note that it was designed from 'a child's perspective' and therefore 'Perhaps the greatest success of the building is its ability to feel entirely unlike a hospital' (30). As a parent, I can attest that this building achieves its purpose. Other public projects included in the text are Perth Stadium, the State Theatre Centre of Western Australia and Yagan Square. Public-Private partnerships are also featured, including the Old Treasury Buildings.

As we enter a new decade and reach ever closer to the bicentenary of European settlement, it is timely to consider who we are as Western Australians. The architecture we build, and conserve, will help to re-enforce our values and may also help to embrace new values. Tom McKendrick and Elliot Langdon have created a thing of beauty. It is also an important map of and reflection on the advances in Western Australian architecture and the state more broadly. I highly recommend you add this work to your collection.

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