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The Brisbane Effect: GOMA and the Architectural Competition for a New Institutional Building

This paper will consider the use of architecture to build a particular institution, both literally and figuratively – Queensland’s Gallery of Modern Art. Procured via a competition in 2002, the commission was eventually won by Architectus (design directorate Kerry Clare, Lindsay Clare and James Jones) with Davenport Campbell, and completed in 2006. Part of the museum collection as much as it provides space for exhibition, the resultant GOMA building both contains and manifests the identity of the institution. But more than that, the building is also frequently framed as part of an authentic local architectural tradition, as responsive to the characteristics of the sub-tropical climate, expressed through architectural gestures such as an expressive verandah roof. But in all its apparent place-specificity, the GOMA building can be seen in a much longer historic continuum of attempts to make culture visible in a state defined by its lack, underscored by an economy based on ‘crops and rocks’. The growing contemporary attachment of Queensland cultural institutions and architecture to notions of climate and place thus inverts earlier tensions between architecture, climate and culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But the paper goes beyond old ‘Brisbane versus Melbourne’ debates through an examination not only of the completed GOMA building, but also the architectural competition, examining whether the competition itself predicated a museum building that would express place, manifest identity, and build the institution through architecture. GOMA offers a fascinating example of converging discourses of art and architecture, state policy, identity, and the role of ‘place’ in constituting the museum as institution.¹

On the opening day of Queensland's new Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), in December 2006, local commentator Des Houghton began his regular opinion column in the *Courier Mail* with the assertion that "[t]he thing I like best about Brisbane's new art gallery is its unrelenting Queenslandness. Gaze at it across the muddy river and it looks a bit like a Noosa beachhouse on steroids."² In an article peppered with references to an architectural "Queensland vocabulary," "Queensland vernacular" and "Queensland dialect," Houghton celebrated the building's transparency, its use of timber ("wooden screens are quintessentially Queensland"), and its opening to its own "backyard" in the riverside park beyond. "GoMA is itself a work of art," he writes, "as Queensland as an over-ripe mango and as laid back as a squatter's chair."³

While we might find Houghton's account to be almost caricatured in its jingoistic parochialism, the purported 'Queenslandness' of the building was also noted elsewhere. Stuart Glover and Stuart Cunningham described the design as "tropical and tricky" in comparison with the "heavy modernism" of the neighbouring suite of cultural buildings by Robin Gibson.⁴ It was widely described, in both popular and architectural media, as part of an authentic local architectural tradition, being responsive to the characteristics of the sub-tropical climate, and manifesting this through architectural gestures such as an expressive verandah roof, filigree screening, and outdoor terraces.

This paper will explore whether the place-specificity of the GoMA building was an article of rhetoric on the part of the architects themselves; an artefact of reception and media construction; or evidence of a more thoroughgoing state approach to cultural policy, as set out in the briefing and design philosophy in the architectural competition documents. If the former, then such accounts would fall into a longstanding stream of architectural ideology – that the uniqueness and value of Queensland architecture lies in its response to heat, landscape, climate, and place; a valorisation of practical approaches to limited means and materials most authentically expressed in the Queenslander house. If a matter of media construction, it would be part of a related, and equally well established strand of popular culture, celebrating the unique place identity of Queensland as a barefoot subtropical idyll: authentic, pragmatic and laid back, with particular local colour and customs. If a matter of state policy, however, then the implications are more far reaching. What might be the benefit for a state government, and its instruments in the culture industry, in building an art gallery institution that celebrates the place-specific, both local and regional, climatic and site-based?

In order to explore these questions, the paper will draw upon secondary literature, in the popular and architectural media reception of the GoMA project, as well as archival research into documents related to the gallery's procurement and competition process. The author was given access to the stage one, open competition entries that were not shortlisted, as well as access to the files of Gallery Director Doug Hall, who was the director of the Queensland Art Gallery from 1987 to 2007 and oversaw the development of the GoMA project. This included email exchanges discussing the relative merits of the five entrants to the second stage competition, and (unsigned) critical notes and scoring of entrants to the first stage

competition – an extraordinarily rich archive, which will be only touched upon here, and made the subject of other, future discussions.

The archive also contained, disconcertingly, a memo in which John Macarthur and I were both named.⁵ While this is no more than a piece of marginalia, it does open a considerable irony, so is worth mentioning here: the memo concerned a proposed informal ‘Salon de Refuses’ exhibition proposed, to exhibit the unsuccessful entries in the open competition.⁶ The memo sets out the gallery’s general discouragement of this idea. Eventually Macarthur’s request to borrow and exhibit the entries was partly declined “to ensure the preservation of the only complete set of original archives.” The irony of this is that, following the gallery’s own later exhibition of the shortlisted and winning entries, these exhibits were all lost, and have never been seen again. The stage two competition entries of the five shortlisted firms, including the winning consortium, have not made their way back to the archive. Furthermore these firms’ earlier, stage one ‘architect selection competition’ entries were also apparently not returned from the same exhibition. At the heart of the archive, at the centre of the historic account, is a yawning gap – which has necessitated an adjustment in the approach of this paper, drawing on secondary accounts beyond primary archival work.

The GoMA project

Completed in 2006, commissioned by the Queensland state government, and designed by Architectus (design directorate Kerry Clare, Lindsay Clare and James Jones) with Davenport Campbell, the GoMA building effectively doubled the size and the program of the pre-existing Queensland Art Gallery, which occupies a prominent site on the riverfront in the city’s centre. Like many contemporary museums, the building is clearly part of the museum collection as much as it provides space for exhibition.⁷



Fig. 1 Location map of Gallery of Modern Art in relation to nearby buildings on Brisbane’s south bank. Photograph by Naomi Stead, 2013.

GoMA was to become the largest exhibition space for modern art in Australia, doubling the space available to show the gallery’s collection of contemporary, indigenous and Asia-Pacific art.⁸ This emphasis on both *contemporary* and *Asian* art, marked the orientation of the gallery away from a Eurocentric, ‘old masters from the old world’ model, and was central to the strategy of the new institution. This approach was manifest most directly in the gallery’s flagship exhibition – the Asia Pacific Triennial, or APT. The idea of QAGOMA as a frame and portal, opening to the world of Asia-Pacific Art, is a key point to which I will return.

The GoMA building is large – covering more than 25,000 square metres, over five levels. In addition to its ‘white box’ galleries (which range between 10-20 spaces, according to circumstance), the public spaces of the building include two ‘black box’ cinemas with associated exhibition space, a dedicated children’s art centre, a shop, a café, restaurant, education facilities, and a rooftop-level deck open to the river, used for functions. Staff offices are stacked against the Western edge, with views of the adjoining riverside park, and storage for the collection is on the very top level, just under the roof – a necessary expedient for a building beside a river which floods. The building was very inexpensive for its size, with a final total cost of around 107 million dollars.

Commissioned as part of the Millennium Arts Project, GoMA shares a director with its parent institution the Queensland Art Gallery, in a “two sites, one vision” arrangement. The success of GOMA has led to the pair being collectively rebranded with the acronym QAGOMA. The Millennium Arts Project was a five year program which aside from the new GoMA building, proposed a redeveloped State Library of Queensland, and linked the two buildings with a new plaza and gardens. In addition, it included alterations to the existing Queensland Art Gallery and Queensland Museum, the construction of new off-site storage for the museum, and a refurbishment for the Queensland Theatre Company. Architects Cox Rayner prepared the Strategic Planning Framework for the precinct, which had an initial total budget of \$228.8 million.⁹



Fig. 2 Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane. The facade facing the river. Architectus and Davenport Campbell in association. Completed 2005. Photograph by Naomi Stead, 2013.

The GoMA design was arrived at through a two-stage competition process, with the first being an ‘architect selection competition’.¹⁰ It was advertised internationally, clearly with the aim to attract the “best in the world,” as numerous politicians said at the time, and with an initial field of 174 entrants from 24 countries there was certainly a strong response.¹¹ For this reason, there was some murmuring in the architectural community when the final winners were announced: Architectus was a decidedly local winner, since the Clares were key proponents of the ‘Sunshine Coast school’ of architecture, and were most well known at the time for the design of houses. For an ostentatiously international competition, which attracted several international ‘starchitect’ entrants, this was something of a surprise pick.¹²

Nevertheless, at the announcement of the eventual winners, Peter Beattie claimed that “the huge interest from architects around the world highlighted Queensland’s growing stature as an international centre for the arts and culture.”¹³

There has not yet, to this author’s knowledge, been a sustained scholarly attempt to analyse and interpret the unsuccessful entries to the GoMA architectural competition. Partly this is a matter of practicality – there are so many of them, they are extremely heavy and stored stacked in a small set of plan drawers, there is little lay out space in the archive, and a member of Gallery staff must be present at all times. While it was the original intention of this paper to undertake a thoroughgoing analysis of the 169 unsuccessful entries, that project has had to be deferred. It is however possible to make a brief account, using the index of competition entrants, of some of the high profile architectural firms that entered, and to note the geographic spread of the Australian entries – the gallery had previously released an analysis of the entries’ international origins, but did not break this down by state.

Of the Australian entries, the majority were from Queensland (47 entrants) followed by Victoria (23 entrants). Significant figures in the architectural culture of both states were represented, with the local entrants including M3 Architects, Richard Kirk, John Mainwaring and Associates, Cox Rayner, Gall and Medek, Russell Hall, Elizabeth Watson Brown, Diecke Richards with Rex Addison, and several (then current) staff of the Schools of Architecture at UQ and QUT. Victorian entrants, in turn, included many of the most prominent figures in the Melbourne architecture scene – Edmond and Corrigan, ARM, Shane Murray Architects, DCM, Jackson Clements Burrows, Lab architecture studio, Kerstin Thompson, and John Wardle, amongst others. The third most represented state was New South Wales (22 entrants), with entries received from Choi Ropiha, Alex Popov Architects, Lippmann Associates, Stutchbury and Pape, and Tonkin Zulaikha Greer. In all, it is fair to say, the competition represented a snapshot of many of the most significant architects and practices working in Australia, as well as the distinct architectural cultures of the Eastern Seaboard states.

Architectural rhetoric and intention

The five shortlisted firms, which proceeded past the anonymous first stage to the second, invited competition, were Architectus with Davenport Campbell (the eventual winners); Benson and Forsyth with Peddle Thorp; Massimiliano Fuksas Archietto with Hassell; Durbach Block with Bligh Voller Nield; and Lab Architecture studio with B+N and Bligh Voller Nield. While Hall’s correspondence makes it clear that the Fuksas scheme was, at one time, his own personal preference, in the end the decision was made that “the project was simply too risky, especially in terms of cost.”¹⁴

The Clares’ concept was for a “lightweight, open riverside pavilion” based on a cruciform plan. The orientation of the building is thus important – the architects had tilted their building off the shared axis of all the other buildings on South Bank, and turned its face to address the curve of the river. Designed to respond “through its form, materials and disposition to its location, climate, site and use,” the architects described as “critical” the building’s “response to the site, its natural topography, existing patterns of urban generation and the

river”.¹⁵ In this sense, the idea of the building’s being ‘open’ is doubled: it was intended to be open both to environmental elements – notably natural light – and also to human movement, such that visitors could wander freely from the city, through the parks and gardens of the south bank, and amble without obstruction into the space of the gallery. Connecting the institution to the atmosphere and life of the city, the building would be a kind of permeable, ambient mediator. As Lindsay Clare said at the time of the building’s opening, “It’s a building connected to its place. The brief called for these big spaces and we wanted people to move freely into the building without being interrupted or challenged ... When you get to the centre of the foyer, you can read the clarity of the building.”¹⁶

In the architects’ own account, a special place was given to the local quality of light, and to a particular roof form which would control and mediate that. Lindsay Clare noted that

We had to be aware of the light, how to introduce it into the building, to control it and balance it. Queensland light can be harsh and strong, so to reinforce the idea of the building connected to its place, we created lightness around the edges of the building with ... a roof to economically bring light in and overhanging the edge of the building to form verandahs.¹⁷



Fig. 3 Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane. The Western façade, showing timber screening. Architectus and Davenport Campbell in association. Completed 2005. Photograph by John Macarthur, 2013, used with thanks.

Reception in the popular and architectural press

Perhaps following the architects’ lead, the GoMA design was widely described in the popular press as having been inspired by the Queensland verandah.¹⁸ One commentator discussed the building’s timber interior and exterior finishes as lending it the “shipshape feel” of an “arty beach house.”¹⁹

Within the architectural media, commentators were a little more circumspect. Davina Jackson, writing in *Architecture Australia* found that the building “is elaborated externally by

a range of sun-responsive devices and materials – metal panels, timber slatting, projecting balconies, and a timber-decked dining terrace,” and therefore that “GOMA strongly alludes, at a much larger scale, to the Clares’ and many other Queensland houses”.²⁰ Describing such buildings as being “characterised by light, open edges intended for occupancy”, Jackson finds that the GoMA building, too, incorporates “many thoughtful devices that allow flexible interactions between the architecture and its atmospheric conditions”.²¹ Ultimately Jackson finds the building to be a response to a typically-Queensland “preference for practical achievements,” rather than “cranial pretensions.” It is largely not, she argues, in the mode of a building as “artistic statement.”

A similar sentiment was set out by Haig Beck and Jackie Cooper, writing in *UME*, for whom the very ‘ordinariness’ of the building was recast as a virtue, whereby “grandeur and hauteur are exchanged for ideas of accessibility and the ordinary; and at the same time these experiences are refined and made beautiful and extraordinary.”²² Of all the architectural commentators, Beck and Cooper were perhaps the most explicit supporters of the idea that the GoMA building was place-specific, a response to local traditions, conditions, and climate, raised to a metaphysical level of artistry.²³ Framing the building as an “architectural interpretation of what it is to be present in Brisbane, on the river, at the edge of the city, in the subtropical climate, in a contemporary public space,” the authors describe it as a poetic transcendence of functional or budget constraints. Furthermore, they find that “[w]ith its large overhanging roof, open verandahs and timber batten screening, the building conveys a typical, familiar and regional expression of subtropical informality at a civic scale.”²⁴

Beyond the rhetoric

So as we have seen, accounts from both the popular and architectural media served to frame the building as a kind of scaled up vernacular house. But such accounts are in fact at odds with reality. The large flying roof does not slope downward to create a low shaded edge, in the way that every Queenslander verandah does. If anything, it is closer to a modernist flat roof, or the pavilion roofs of some South East Asian temple buildings, and in fact it is closest of all to a particular thread of contemporary buildings, including Jean Nouvel’s Lucerne Cultural and Congress Centre, as some have observed.²⁵ Likewise the edges of the building are not feathered into a gradient of habitation between fully enclosed and fully outdoor, as Queenslander houses tend to be, and as the rhetoric of the building would have us believe. The demands of a contemporary art gallery simply do not allow the unfettered flow of light and air. It is true that this is an art museum with unusually high levels of natural light in its public spaces, and some of the non-gallery spaces – for instance the functions deck and cafes – are truly open to the outside, and connect to their surroundings and environment. But the architects’ original intention that the glass cladding which encases much of the museum would provide a space for digital interactive artworks has not often been realised – leaving what is usually a blank, opaque glass wall on the southern facade, facing the main approach. Likewise the first-floor outdoor walkway running the length of this wall is rarely used.

This disjunction between rhetoric and reality has been observed by others. Andrew Leach for example, writing in *Architecture New Zealand*, described the use of timber batten screening as “decorative,” and found that the building, while alluding to traditional Queensland houses, “refuses to adapt the precedent” to a civic scale, and hence ends as “neither properly domestic nor monumental.”²⁶ He found that

The building regularly out-scales both art and visitors with the giganticist tendencies of its larger interior spaces, while the ‘homely’ devices that the architects have used ... are at best rhetorical, even when the building can transcend its domestic precedent.²⁷

Taken altogether GoMA is actually quite generic in its materiality and its spaces: it is a large, sealed, secure, air-conditioned box, with something of the feel of a contemporary high-end shopping centre. The idea that this is some kind of light, permeable, timber vernacular building, something like a scaled-up house, is simply not true, as even the most cursory inspection reveals.

Nevertheless, while we can see that the arguments for GoMA as a mode of vernacular architecture are flimsy, they build on a much older narrative, which frames the ‘regional’ architecture of Queensland as place-specific, climate-responsive, and especially as attuned to heat.²⁸ Brisbane is viewed as a place of warm, humid sensuality, with an architecture to match, while the cooler south – Melbourne, for example – is viewed as a city of objective, dry intellect with a corresponding (capital C) Culture of architecture. The rhetoric surrounding GoMA both grows from and reinforces this larger myth.

But for our purposes here, the question is whether this narrative, and its particular architectural expressions, was actually foreshadowed in the briefing and competition documents: whether it was an intention, or solely an incidental outcome, of the competition.

Architectural approach and institutional objectives

In order to understand the Gallery’s own intentions and hopes for the new building, it is worth examining how these were set out explicitly in the competition documents for the stage two architectural competition. Here the gallery’s aims for the design of the new building are quite explicit:

The gallery seeks a building design which will respect our audiences, enhance works of art, affirm the Gallery’s identity and role in the life of the community, the City and the State, celebrate the best art and interpret and chart new directions in art and its place in society.²⁹

The competition documents are lengthy – six volumes including the competition conditions, design brief, terms of reference for consultancy services, drawings of the existing buildings, site data, and strategic planning framework. The second volume, the functional brief, calls for a building that will “stand as an architectural and civic landmark set against Brisbane’s

skyline and commanding the river-bend at Kurilpa Point.”³⁰ Elsewhere there is mild, though perhaps not entirely conclusive, evidence of a leaning towards a sub-tropical architectural approach, and the semi-open integration of buildings and public open space. In the executive summary, for instance, the list of essential factors includes consideration of “the need for a high quality, open-air environment,” as well as “access to and the use of the surrounding parklands and the Brisbane River.” Likewise “the interrelationship between the open spaces, the buildings and structures,” is matched by an attention to “solar orientation and other climatic considerations.”³¹ In addition, specific reference to views, the geological condition of the site, noise, and the possibility of flooding, might all be described as externally-oriented environmental or site conditions, rather than social or cultural ones. In contrast, the “historical and heritage context of the site” is mentioned only once, as is the regulatory or governance framework of “planning authorities and regulations.”

Later in the brief document the value is reinforced more powerfully – Appendix 1, which sets out the ‘vision for the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art’ within the Millennium Arts precinct as a whole, states that it should be “a clearly identifiable stand-alone building of architectural excellence on a unique site.”³² Elsewhere this extends into the revealing, if slightly convoluted, idea that

Cultural institutions and particularly museums or galleries for modern and contemporary art embody links between the creativity and spirit of people and places with the exchanges and fascinations of an increasingly ubiquitous world view of international competitiveness and cultural globalisation. These are the places for participation on the wider stage in performances of the uniqueness of our own special contributions.³³

The brief also sets out a long list of architectural ‘references’ or precedents.³⁴ The purpose in naming these, it notes, is not to suggest that the competition schemes should seek “either to mirror or imitate these examples,” but rather that they stand as “noteworthy comparisons.”³⁵ The list is revealing for its categories – first, 40 exemplary “projects which have attracted significant architectural commentary,” which includes almost every major international art museum of the previous 20 years, and goes as far back as Kahn’s Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, of 1972.³⁶ Next, a shorter set of projects “noteworthy in terms of their functionality and programming” is listed, the eleven including Steven Holl’s Kiasma museum, Helsinki, of 1998, and Herzog and de Meuron’s Tate Modern, London, of 2000.³⁷ Following this are three more categories: projects noteworthy in terms of “addressing the integration and presentation of screen arts and the culture of the moving image and new technology practices;” “being part of a cultural precinct;” and “being part of a twin, or multiple, site Gallery operation.”

Of these groupings, we might categorise the last two as being concerned with masterplanning, and the previous one as being concerned with integrating new technologies and thus media of new art work. The projects exemplary for their functionality and programming have a self explanatory value, while we can take the major category, of

projects which have attracted architectural commentary, as having the imprimatur of the architectural community, thus constituting the canon of contemporary museum buildings – the kind of critically acclaimed building the gallery would like for itself. One of the buildings mentioned in this list is Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, completed in 1997.

The ‘Brisbane Effect’

At the time of the formal public announcement that there would be a new gallery of modern art in Brisbane, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao was the precedent on everyone’s mind, given that it had opened only three years previously. When then-premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie, announced funding for the GoMA project in May of the year 2000, he was explicit: “I want it to be an icon. I want the gallery to be the best that we can have. I am tired of the fact that people look for cultural interests in other parts of Australia. We want to build the best and that’s what we will do.”³⁸ Local commentators in the popular press agreed, hoping “that the new building will be Brisbane’s answer to the Sydney Opera House or the Guggenheim.”³⁹



Fig. 4 Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, Frank Gehry and Associates. Completed 1997. Photograph by Naomi Stead, 2000.

Brisbane was no different from many other cities throughout the world in its wish to cash in on the ‘Bilbao effect’ benefits of ‘iconic’ architecture, and these ideas played out in the local popular media. A few days after funding for the GoMA project was announced, a representative of the Convention Centre described the gallery as Brisbane’s “best chance”: “Sydney has the Opera House, Melbourne has its cosmopolitan culture, we have the lifestyle and our South Bank precinct which we could develop into something sensational.”⁴⁰

This rhetoric, of the museum as an icon attracting visitors and residents from other places, was congruent with the rhetoric of the government itself. In announcing funding for the project back in 2000, then-Queensland Arts minister Matt Foley explicitly underlined the link between art, flagship buildings, and cultural tourism, stating that “Queensland’s profile as a leader and cultural tourism destination will now be enhanced through a world-class gallery rivalling the landmark galleries of Europe and America.”⁴¹ Likewise the Gallery itself, in explaining the trustees’ decision to use ‘Modern art’ in the institution’s title, argued that “museums of modern art are common in major international cities, contributing to urban

identity and encouraging cultural tourism.”⁴² Furthermore the Gallery’s own ‘two site strategy’ had the explicit aim to, amongst other things, “promote and market the Gallery as a major tourist attraction,” and to “attract new audiences.”⁴³

But of course, GoMA is no Guggenheim, and here we begin to see a curious convergence of a tendency towards local traditions and place specificity, and an anti-spectacle approach to museum architecture – a combination that we might call the ‘Brisbane effect’. In the competition archive, the recommendation is made that “the Jury Panel will be seeking a balance between vision, ideas, aesthetics and functional detail.”⁴⁴ But perhaps more revealingly, the (unnamed) author/s also caution that “it is important to distinguish between overt public spectacle which so often attends of [sic] competitions as barometers of architectural taste and the more fundamental issue of ensuring the compatibility of the design with the museological objectives of the Client.”⁴⁵ Here we see the pursuit of a local museum architecture, beyond the starchitect model.

Wayne Goss, who had been involved in the genesis of the project, later confessed that “I’ve got to be honest, I had my doubts when [the expert competition advisory panel] chose the [winning] design. It looked a bit ordinary,” he said.⁴⁶ Goss would later accept that within the allotted budget, “we weren’t going to get the Guggenheim,” and profess great enthusiasm for the completed building. Thus it is the *contrast* between GoMA and the Guggenheim that becomes instructive here. While the Guggenheim is a glimmering, alien formalist object dropped as though from space, GoMA (at least nominally) is framed as having grown from its site, as a genuinely regionalist building which responds to local architectural traditions and the local climate.

Conclusion

At the time of its opening, one commentator described the building as seeking to “‘look like it belonged’, as a subtropical design for a river city with its face turned towards Asia.”⁴⁷ Here we see that it is in fact the curatorial strategy that leads the architecture. The inaugural exhibition in the new GoMA building was APT5, the fifth in the Asia Pacific Triennial series, and the wildly successful APT has become the jewel in the gallery’s crown – its point of distinction in the international museum world. The APT strongly features indigenous art, as well as work drawn from our Asia-Pacific neighbours – and this local curatorial orientation is very much supported by the architecture of the museum. In the end, the apparent climate-responsiveness of the building itself is really only an image – as it could only ever have been, given the program. A contemporary art gallery requires such rigorous and precise climate control that a truly ‘climate responsive’ building would have been simply impossible, from the beginning. Thus GoMA is, after all, a heavily air-conditioned, sealed box, with a big roof and some decorative timber screening. Yet it is the building’s everyday subtropical localness, its domesticity, its very ordinariness, that has emerged as its principal value.

This paper set out to examine whether the place-specificity of the GoMA building was influenced by the rhetoric of the architects themselves; from reception and media construction; or from state cultural policy. As we have seen, there is indeed evidence

that the architects' own account of the building played into popular media descriptions, and both conformed to a longstanding narrative about Queensland architecture – that its uniqueness and value lies in its response to place and climate, and particularly heat, a pragmatic ethos most powerfully expressed in the Queenslander house. On the question of museum architecture as statecraft, the connection may be less explicit, but is still clear – not just a museum, not just a curatorial strategy, but a building orientated towards its regional neighbours, and its local context.

This paper was updated on 21 July 2016 to clarify several details in the interests of historical accuracy. The author thanks Lindsay and Kerry Clare for their advice on these matters.

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- 1 This paper draws upon an earlier version presented by Naomi Stead at the conference “Images of the Art Museum: Connecting Gaze and Discourse in the History of Museology”, hosted by the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max-Planck Institut, Florence, September 26-28, 2013. A different version of that paper is in press at the time of writing, to be published as Naomi Stead, John Macarthur and Deborah van der Plaats, “Building Flagships: Regionalism, Place Branding and Architecture as Image in the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane,” in *Images of the Art Museum: Connecting Gaze and Discourse in the History of Museology*, ed. Melania Savino and Eva Troelenberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, in press 2015). These publications and presentations are outcomes of the ARC Discovery project “The Cultural Logic of Queensland Architecture: Place, Taste and Economy” DP110101711 (2011-14), led by Professor John Macarthur at the University of Queensland. With thanks and acknowledgement to the ARC.
 - 2 Des Houghton, “It’s Classic Queensland,” *Courier Mail*, December 2, 2006, 30.
 - 3 Houghton, “It’s Classic Queensland,” 30.
 - 4 Stuart Glover and Stuart Cunningham, “The New Brisbane,” *Artlink* 23, no. 2 (2003): 16-23.
 - 5 A memo dated 30 August 2002, from William Fleming (Coordinator of Building and Strategic Development at QAG) to Doug Hall, Gallery Director, detailed the attempts that John Macarthur had made (partly on behalf of Andrew Wilson) to mount the Salon de Refuses exhibition – initially of those entries made by then-current staff of the school of architecture at the University of Queensland (UQ). After some shifts in the expected scale and venue of the exhibition (originally to be shown at UQ, it later moved to MetroArts) it had duly gone ahead, and it seems that Hall had requested an explanation from Fleming as to why and how that was. Memo from William Fleming, Coordinator, Building and Strategic Development, to Doug Hall, Gallery Director, dated 30 August 2002, “Salon de Refuses” for Stage I Submissions for the QGMA Architect Exhibition at Metro Arts. Item 612E record 02/00373 QAGOMA Library Archive.
 - 6 The Salon des Refuses was proposed by UQ lecturer Andrew Wilson. In the memo, Fleming describes how, when discussing the idea of the exhibition with Macarthur, he had questioned its value, given that “technically speaking at least, there was no ‘Salon de Refuses’ as such for the Competition, merely a ranking which placed the five shortlisted submissions into Stage 2.” Fleming continues, “I also questioned the educational value of the showing, particularly given the lack of any supporting interpretive material.” Noting that the exhibition had nevertheless gone ahead, Fleming notes that he did attend the exhibition opening “at the last minute” and “did not see anyone else attached to the Competition, eg jurors.” The final line of the memo notes that Naomi Shead [sic] has been commissioned to write a review of the exhibition for a forthcoming volume of *Architecture Australia*. The memo demonstrates the political sensitivity which surrounded the competition.
 - 7 At the exhibition Placemakers: Contemporary Queensland Architects, mounted at GoMA in 2008, the museum building in which the exhibition took place was also featured in the exhibition.
 - 8 Rosemary Odgers, “Gallery Design Plays it Smart – Project to draw on local talent,” *Courier Mail*, April 9, 2002, 3.
 - 9 Document 1: Competition Conditions, Architect Selection Competition, Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, 3.
 - 10 The jury consisted of Gary May, then Deputy Director-General of the Department of Public Works; Michael Keniger, then the Queensland Government Architect; Doug Hall, Director of the Queensland Art Gallery; Elizabeth Smith, Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and Tom Heneghan, Professor of Architecture at the Kogakuin University, Tokyo. The jury was supported by

- expert advisors, to assist with understanding “the technical issues, and the needs and concerns of the Queensland Art Gallery.” These expert advisors were specified in the competition documents as being representatives from Arts Queensland, QAG and its Board of Trustees, and the Department of Public Works, and “specialist advisors, as required.” Document 1: Competition Conditions, Architect Selection Competition, Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, 8.
- 11 Jane Albert, “Beattie Bets on a Modern Exhibition Space,” *The Australian*, April 12, 2002, 17. Having looked at the index of entries it appears that the figure of 174 entries may be incorrect due to at least two duplications.
 - 12 Amongst the accepted entrants (and aside from the five finalists) were some notable international firms – including Alsop Architects, WOHA, Fumihiko Maki, Ken Yeang, Richard Rogers Partnership, Kas Oosterhuis, and Ushida Findlay Architects, amongst others.
 - 13 Press release, “Landmark Queensland designs to showcase arts to the world,” April 8, 2002, GoMA archive, 612A, P+12, doc. No 21.
 - 14 Email from Doug Hall to Wayne Goss, Tuesday, March 19, 2002, marked confidential, titled “Immediate Forward Program.”
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