

Thursday, 14 June
14.30-17.15

Track: Peripheries
Room: *National Library, Corner Hall (Nurgasaal)*

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE TASMAN WORLD, 1788–1850

Session chairs: G. A. Bremner, University of Edinburgh
Andrew Leach, University of Sydney

The nineteenth-century architectural history of what Philippa Mein Smith (among others) has called the ‘Tasman world’ has long been shaped by the nationalist historiographies of twentieth-century Australia and New Zealand. Developments in the region’s colonial architecture from the 1780s onwards have thus fed later narratives of national foundations. The call for this session invited scholars to work against the grain of that problematic nationalism by addressing the architecture and infrastructure of those colonial industries operating across the early colonies of New South Wales, Van Diemen’s Land and New Zealand, and connecting that ‘world’ to the economies of the British Empire, the ‘Anglosphere’, and architectural geographies defined by trade. These papers thus return to the colonial era of the South Pacific informed by the gains of post-colonial history, four-nations British historiography, studies of global colonial networks and systems, and an appreciation for ‘minor’ forms of historical evidence and architectural practice. Armed thus, the papers in this session consider the architecture of the Tasman world from the 1780s to the 1840s in its historical circumstances, exploring architecture across three different registers: intentioned works definitively cast as Architecture; the ‘grey’ architecture (after Bremner) of industries, transshipping and colonial infrastructure; and as an analogy for the relationships, systems and structures of the colonial project and its economic underpinnings. Papers move around and across the Tasman Sea.

Philippa Mein Smith begins the session by exploring how the concept of the Tasman World and trans-colonial historiography activates the industrial architecture of sealing. Stuart King then homes in on the timber industry of Van Diemen’s Land and its import for a geography spanning from the Swan River Colony to California. Harriet Edquist considers the role of the Vandemonian Henty brothers in the settlement of Western Victoria, tempering a celebration of their pastoralism by recalling the displacements and disruptions wrought by their arrival. Bill Taylor attends to the informal ‘industry’ of pilfering and looks through the lens it offers on the Australian ports and their relationships with Britain. In the final paper, Robin Skinner pursues the matter of representation in his treatment of Burford’s dioramas of the three colonial ‘capitals’ of this period. Together, the papers in this session contribute to a post-nationalist architectural history of the Tasman colonies that figures the place of this region in the nineteenth-century British world and beyond.

PAPERS

Sealer Dealers and the Architecture of the Tasman World

Philippa Mein Smith, University of Tasmania

This study rethinks the colonial buildings and architecture of the Tasman world through a case study of the sealing industry, where the ‘Tasman world’ is conceived of as a working region defined by traffic between Australia and New Zealand – traffic initiated by seal hunting. Through studies of such colonial industries, the aim is to research the ways in which architecture (business and domestic) and building can be understood as elements in a global and imperial assemblage of corporate and private profit, speculation, and investment in the South Pacific. The paper shows how sealing entrepreneurs – sealer dealers – shaped the colonial built environment in New South Wales, Van Diemen’s Land, and New Zealand, and in turn depended on the ‘grey architecture’ of maritime industries, such as wharf facilities and warehouses, for their success.

Through an adaptation of staple theory and trans-colonial as opposed to transnational perspectives, the paper situates early colonial sealing enterprises within the oceanic networks that connected the Antipodes to Britain and Asia, and criss-crossed an increasingly British world south of Asia by the nineteenth century. It traces trans-colonial links and relationships that literally built on the profits, and establishes new connections between the histories of colonial architecture and industries in the colonies around the Tasman Sea. One avenue developed concerns the accumulation of wealth and the cultivation of propriety through domestic architecture, built by trade throughout the British Empire and the 'Anglo world'. Another is to enlarge the theoretical framework by analysis of connections between the dynamics of settler capitalism and the colonial built environment, as well as eco-colonialism in the form of plundering indigenous animal species. The study relocates and recasts cultures of colonial architecture between land and sea, in Sydney Cove and beyond.

The Architecture of Van Diemen's Land's Timber

Stuart King, University of Melbourne

Early interest in the timber of the Tasman world centred on supplies for ship building in the British navy, as well as colonial construction and trade, with the commodity rapidly translated into a significant industrial enterprise. In Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), colonised by the British in 1803, this enterprise generated an infrastructural architecture extending from remotely located huts, sawpits and sawmills, to shipyards, shipping routes and ports. Produced by private and government enterprise, the most complex sites included the industrialised penal stations at Macquarie Harbour (1822-1835) – dedicated to the harvest of the island's endemic Huon Pine and shipbuilding – and Port Arthur (1830-1871), while the more remote sites were concerned with private timber-getting, settlement and shipyards, such as Port Davey (c.1840s). These sites and structures were a kind of 'grey architecture' that, in turn, supported another mobile grey architecture of timber ships, building components and buildings that effected settlement and urban expansion regionally and globally. Vandemonian architects, builders, merchants and entrepreneurs supplied building timbers as well as speculative shipments of locally manufactured, prefabricated timber buildings to the free settlers of the new southern Australian colonies of Western Australia (1828), South Australia (1836) and Victoria (1837), and to global gold prospectors in California (1849), Victoria (1851) and, later, Otago (1861).

This paper approaches architectural history from the perspective of a staple resource. It investigates the architecture of Van Diemen's Land's early nineteenth-century timber-getting, production and trade as one of the infrastructural layers, or working connections, that may be understood to have constituted the Tasman world of the early nineteenth century. It aims to challenge the limits of Australia's early colonial architectural histories, largely inscribed by colonial (now state) boundaries, institutions and individuals, by re-framing Van Diemen's Land's building and architectural production within the historical circumstance of the Tasman world and its global connections.

The Architecture of Pastoralism and the (De)industrialization of Port Phillip

Harriet Edquist, RMIT University

This paper is part of an ongoing investigation into the impact of pastoralism on the building of early colonial Port Phillip. As Pearson and Lennon noted in their study of Australian pastoralism 'droving routes to metropolitan sale yards, wool stores, abattoirs, wharf facilities, railways, roads, and river and ocean transport systems [. . .] were developed to link the pastoral interior with the urban and market infrastructure needed to distribute the pastoral product'.

The Henty brothers and other Vandemonians who first took up land in Western Victoria demonstrated the truth of this statement with great clarity. The Hentys spearheaded permanent settlement around Portland from 1834 and, after 1837, occupied the rich

pastoral country on the Wannon River. Their first successful ventures were in the whaling industry, sea trade and agriculture, and they laid down the infrastructure (the 'grey architecture') of Portland from 1834. They chose to take the risk of occupying this southern outpost of Port Phillip illegally because they recognized its rich pastoral possibilities and the strategic importance of Portland in the trade networks of the Tasman world. They anticipated that, in the scheme of things, they would be granted tenure of the land they expropriated.

But in doing so the Hentys, and those who followed, dispossessed the Gundijimara people of western Victoria, forcing them into a condition of semi-nomadism. This paper will argue, following Sashi Tharoor's observations on the impact of British trade in India, that the success of European settlement and the pastoral industrialization of western Victoria was in fact contingent on the 'deindustrialisation' of the Gundijimara, whose expert land management and cultural modification of the lava flows had created settled habitation in village-like communities, abundant food resources, and a country that to Major Mitchell, entering from New South Wales in 1836, had looked like 'Eden'.

Pilfering and the Tasman World: Commerce, Criminal Cultures and the 'Securitisation' of Space in Early Colonial Sydney and Hobart

William M Taylor, University of Western Australia

Exported from Great Britain across the Anglosphere and into the fledgling commercial centres of the Tasman world, larceny was as a way of life and not easily contained. Many of the transported convicts and emancipists in Sydney and Hobart found themselves in the antipodes because of their thievery. The deprivations of transportation and inadequate stores, shortages of skilled labour and monopoly-induced scarcity, and a country resistant to old-world agricultural and commercial practices, further encouraged crimes of property, raising parallel fears for the colonial economy. The porousness of Sydney's urban landscapes in particular was additional provocation for the period's criminal population to continue pilfering goods, to embezzle and abscond. At the same time, illicit incursions into the so-called 'grey architecture' of colonial docks, shipping facilities, and harbour-side industrial sites showed the deviants to be a heterogeneous mob. These pilferers comprised not so much a distinct 'class' or stratum of the colonial community as such, but were rather disgruntled seafarers 'spiriting away' their just measure of pay in stolen rum, starving settlers 'pinching' produce from government plots and orchards, worn-out labourers 'trousering' scraps of firewood from the lumberyard, or aboriginals simply 'hunting and gathering' as their people had done for millennia. The paper takes its cue from language alerting us to the cultural aspects of pilfering and the different understandings of economy involved. It describes the spatial dimensions of pilfering's threat to colonial power giving rise to stronger store-rooms on ships, higher walls around factories, and intensified surveillance nearly everywhere. It proposes that architecture was both a source of functional response to these deprivations (in higher walls, barred windows and the like) and an indicator and target of thievery, as signs of propriety signalling the profits of illicit trade or alerting housebreakers to goods worth stealing inside.

The Earle Panoramas of the Tasman World

Robin Skinner, Victoria University of Wellington

In the late 1820s and 1830s London society had the opportunity to experience the Tasman world in the round through Mr Burford's large panoramas of the harbour settlements of Sydney (1828-30) Hobart (1831), and the Bay of Islands, New Zealand (1838). These circular spectacles were based upon drawings of the travelling artist Augustus Earle who had visited these settlements in the 1820s and were each accompanied by published commentary with illustration. As well as indicating the sites' natural resources and showing the signs of the colonial establishment and its infrastructure, the panoramas illustrated penal establishments, industries, docks, shipping, whalers, missionaries and indigenous people.

Superficially, these appear to be uncomplicated presentations. However, reception was mixed. Sydney's advance – with grand buildings, agriculture, grazing, warehouses, roads, bridges, manufactories and building regulations – was praised, while the convicts of Hobart were foregrounded visually and in the English reviews. On the eve of its systematic colonisation, New Zealand was presented one-dimensionally as a land of rich resources, albeit with a benign and declining Maori population.

Shipping at anchor indicated the network of labour and industry around the Tasman, which in turn connected with the commerce of the northern hemisphere. This paper considers these shows and the responses that they drew in Britain to determine various understandings in the 1830s of these activities in the colonies and their impact and connection to the metropolitan world.