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**Renewed vows: Centre Five and the post-war remarriage of  
Melbourne sculptors and architects**

**ABSTRACT**

In Australia in the 1950s and '60s — years of post-war economic growth — a rapprochement of sorts took place between architects and sculptors. Both groups were thought to share a similar aesthetic sensibility, favouring simplicity over ornamentation, and an allied social purpose: namely, to influence the way in which people experience the built environment. This paper will examine the results of this rapprochement, focussing on the work of a group of mainly European émigré sculptors, based in Melbourne, who styled themselves as Centre Five. For over two decades the group courted the attention of architects, holding their earliest exhibitions at Melbourne University's School of Architecture, hosting studio visits and demonstrations for architecture students, contributing essays and photographs to journals such as *Architecture and Arts*, and successfully winning commissions from such firms as Grounds Romberg and Boyd, and Eggleston Macdonald and Secomb. Their attempts to foster links with the architectural community arose from a keen awareness of the paucity of commissions offered to sculptors in Australia, as opposed to the close collaboration between architects and artists in their countries of origin: Britain, Germany, Hungary and Lithuania. To date, scant attention has been paid to the reciprocity of ideas exchanged between Australian architects and Centre Five sculptors. Why were certain materials chosen for particular sculptural commissions or buildings? To what extent were sculptural commissions fully integrated into modern architecture? This process of exchange deserves detailed consideration in order to better understand the role played by sculptors in shaping the Australian post-war urban landscape, and is particularly timely in light of recent reappraisals of brutalist and internationalist architecture both locally and abroad.

**Renewed vows:**

**Centre Five and the post-war remarriage of Melbourne sculptors and architects**

In Australia, from the early-1950s and throughout the 1960s, a rapprochement of sorts occurred between sculptors and architects to bridge a perceived divide between their two fields and find a meaningful way of integrating the arts and architecture. As shall be argued, this rapprochement was due in large part to the concerted efforts of a small group of Melbourne sculptors, originating variously from Australia, Britain, Germany, Hungary, and Lithuania, who styled themselves as Centre Five.<sup>1</sup> Mutual

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I am grateful to the State Library of Victoria for permission to quote from the papers of Clifford Last, Brian Lewis, Alan McCulloch, and Lenton Parr; the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, for permission to quote from the papers of Lyndon Dadswell and the records of the Society of Sculptors and Associates; the Shaw Research Library at the National Gallery of Victoria for access to the Centre Five Archive; and the University of Melbourne Archives for permission to quote from the Registrar's Correspondence files. Thanks also to Inge King for making her archive available to me. This paper was presented in an earlier form at the Association of Art Historians (UK) symposium, 'Architectural Objects: Discussing Spatial Form Across Art Histories', held at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds. Attendance was possible owing to a University of Melbourne travel scholarship as well as funding from the Faculty of Arts and School of Culture and Communication. I also wish to thank Associate Professor Charles Green and Doctor Anthony White, both University of Melbourne, for their sustained interest in the wider project that informs the present paper.

interests brought the members of Centre Five together in 1961 and, as a semi-professional organisation, they exhibited together in state and regional galleries throughout New South Wales and Victoria for more than twenty years.<sup>2</sup> A key aim on their foundational five-point program, from which they derived their name, was 'to foster a closer relationship with architects.'<sup>3</sup> The members of Centre Five forged strong links with Melbourne's architects during the 1950s and '60s, and continued to develop their interest in matters architectural throughout their later careers. They effectively infiltrated the architectural schools at Melbourne University and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) by exhibiting on campus, lecturing, running workshops, and inviting architectural students to studio demonstrations. In this way, they endeavoured to awaken the interests of emerging architects to the possibilities of commissioning modern abstract sculpture either as integral to, or set off against, modern architecture. As will be seen, their efforts were largely rewarded in the pages of the journal *Architecture and Arts*, where their work was regularly profiled, alongside a series of features on Australian and international sculpture. Their attempts to breach the apparent divorce between sculpture and architecture deserve recounting, as they illuminate the means by which a generation of artists, whose development was interrupted or delayed by war, resumed and renegotiated earlier attempts at a synthesis of the arts.

Australian sculptural historians have long acknowledged that Centre Five produced much of the most artistically advanced sculpture in the country in the post-war period, while stopping short of ascribing to them the role of a local avant-garde.<sup>4</sup> Margaret Plant, in her survey of the group's activities in the 1960s, briefly referred to their attempts to court the Melbourne architectural fraternity, but without broader consideration of the group's engagement with international debates about the integration of the arts.<sup>5</sup> In addition, she generally avoided consideration of architectural commissions, or indeed of any individual works, on the basis, she argued, that 'their work presents complex and disparate approaches which cannot be grouped together.'<sup>6</sup> Graeme Sturgeon gave considerable space in his historical survey of Australian sculpture to a discussion of Centre Five's individual members, but was primarily concerned with their stylistic influence on subsequent generations.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Centre Five comprised Vincas Jomantas (1922–2001) from Lithuania, Julius Kane (born Kuhn, 1921–62) from Hungary, Inge King (born Neufeld, 1918) from Germany, Clifford Last (1918–91) from England, Lenton Parr (1924–2003) and Norma Redpath (born 1928), both from Australia, and Teisutis Zikaras (1922–91) from Lithuania.

2. Centre Five exhibitions were held at Newcastle, 1963; Paddington, 1964; Sydney, 1965; Geelong, 1973; and Langwarrin, 1973. To this list may be added Melbourne, 1959 (which involved six of the seven members of the group; only Parr was excluded), and Paddington, 1968 (which featured King, Last and Parr, at a time when the group's membership was reduced to five, after Kane died in 1962 and Redpath withdrew in March 1964). A retrospective of the work of all seven members was held at Bulleen, 1984.

3. Undated typescript copies of the five-point program can be found in Last papers, box 5, folder 2; Parr papers, box 6; and King papers, file 156. While the program was most likely drafted in 1961, it was not published until 1973; see: Geelong, 1973, p. [1].

4. Any consideration of the avant-garde nature of Centre Five's work would have to address the relative absence of social critique in their work and is beyond the scope of the present essay.

5. Plant, 1970, pp. 103–112. This survey has regularly been cited as the authoritative text on Centre Five.

6. Plant, 1970, p. 106.

7. Sturgeon, 1978, pp. 137–143, 152–177, and 196–197.

Similarly, while Gary Catalano devoted the greater part of a chapter to the group in his history of Australian art of the 1960s, he focused on their sources of imagery and stylistic affinities, rather than their interests in architecture.<sup>8</sup> The most recent publication on the group, by Ken Scarlett, concluded that the single most significant feature of Centre Five's aims and activities was their emphasis on establishing links with the architectural profession, a focus that — he believed — distinguished them from the Victorian Sculptors' Society (VSS) and their Sydney counterparts, the Society of Sculptors and Associates (SSA).<sup>9</sup> Scarlett felt that Centre Five, by virtue of their being a small, like-minded cohort, were well placed to make personal overtures to architects. However, while his essay highlighted the importance of architectural commissions to Centre Five's aims, it did so, once again, without reference to art and architectural synthesis, which was, as will be argued, pivotal to the group's philosophy.

In the field of architectural design, historians have begun to examine the relevance of integrationist theories to Australian architects. Max Delany has written of the creation, in the 1950s, of 'a framework of cultural institutions, publishing and criticism, and collaboration between architects, artists and designers'.<sup>10</sup> However, the only artists he referred to in these terms were Clement Meadmore and Leonard French, both of who, while close to the Centre Five sculptors, were never members of the group.<sup>11</sup> Philip Goad has for many years carefully documented the rise of regional modernism in post-war Australian architecture. Yet in the landmark exhibition *Modern Times*, co-curated by Goad with Ann Stephen and Andrew McNamara at the Heide Museum of Modern Art in 2008, the only instance of integration that was examined was a car-park in Brisbane's Wickham Terrace, designed by James Birrell, 1958–61, and incorporating a form-cast cement mural by James Meldrum.<sup>12</sup> Most recently, Hannah Lewi and Caroline Jordan have examined the dichotomy between figurative and abstract art used in public buildings in Australia from the interwar period up until the birth of community mural painting schemes in the 1970s. Their revisionist defence of figurative sculptors of the post-war period, such as Tom Bass, led them to conclude that the post-war call for a 'new monumentality' in art and design, 'while predicated on modernity and social renewal, was in form and content often derivative and traditional.'<sup>13</sup> Again, however, the authors failed to consider the

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8. Catalano, 1981, pp. 106–10, 114–20.

9. Scarlett, 2006, p. 13.

10. Delany, 1996, p. 59.

11. Meadmore was a good friend of both Inge King and Grahame King's (a small maquette of his work still being in Inge King's collection), and of Lenton Parr's, touring the Melbourne galleries in Parr's company, commissioning him to write a catalogue essay, and calling upon him to open one of the earliest exhibitions at Gallery A, as attested to in Parr papers: box 6, file marked 'Biographical notes, etc'. However, Meadmore left Melbourne for Sydney in 1960, before moving on to New York in 1963, and was therefore not present in Melbourne when Centre Five was founded in 1961. French shared a studio in Cheltenham with Vincent Jomantas from 1963 to 1965 and recommended Jomantas to his dealer, Rudy Komon (French, 2010).

12. Illustrated and discussed in Wilson, 2008, pp. 166–171. Ironically, while the Wickham Terrace mural was entirely abstract and largely decorative, Birrell had earlier criticised the founding member of Centre Five, Julius Kane, on the basis of his work being too abstract and unintelligible to wider society; see: Birrell, 1953, pp. 26–28.

13. Lewi and Jordan, 2010, p. 225.

work of Centre Five.<sup>14</sup> Clearly, there is a need to breach this gap between the Australian art historical literature, which confers great status upon Centre Five while neglecting their role in the integrationist debates, and the architectural literature, which has begun to address matters of synthesis and monumentality but has overlooked the role of Centre Five in these matters.

### **Synthesis of the arts**

Synthesis and integration were key terms in discussions of art and architecture during the post-war period, particularly in Britain and France where it has recently begun to receive serious historical attention.<sup>15</sup> Generally used interchangeably, synthesis and integration referred to the harmonious union of painting and sculpture with architecture. The applied arts of tapestry, stained glass, mosaic, and ceramics were also commonly brought into the discussion, although the primary emphasis was on mural painting, sculptural relief, and freestanding sculpture, and their potential for communicating social cohesion and the much vaunted ‘new monumentality’ that was deemed desirable in the wake of World War II. Yet, contrary to the amenable-sounding nature of the goal of integration, a distinct sense of loss and alienation, expressed through the metaphor of estranged lovers and divorce, pervaded much of the post-war discussion of art’s relationship to the built environment. The machine-age aesthetic of the early-twentieth century and its concomitant functionalist principles meant that, throughout the interwar period, a building’s massed volumes and clean lines were increasingly deemed sufficient unto itself. Indeed since the advent of the machine age, art’s role in relation to architecture had frequently been relegated to decoration, which in turn was rapidly acquiring connotations of excess and corruption.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, medium-specificity, a key interest of many early modernists, drove a wedge between art that existed in tandem with buildings and art that existed for art’s sake. Both developments problematised earlier Beaux-Arts conceptions of the peaceful coexistence and interdependence of art and architecture.<sup>17</sup> While this apparent rift was addressed by the founders of the Bauhaus, where the goal of integration was expressed in socially utopian terms, it continued to widen, so that

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14. This is all the more surprising an omission given that, on p. 215, Lewi and Jordan made reference to an article that architect David Saunders wrote about the members of Centre Five (Saunders, 1966, pp. 129–135), but used the article simply to argue for Melbourne’s preeminence in the fields of both modern art and modern architecture.

15. Some of the more useful recent discussions on the subject are to be found in Pearson 2002, pp. 209–227, which identifies Le Corbusier’s controversial role in the debate and situates it against developments in Paris such as the founding of Groupe Espace; Gathercole, 2006, pp. 887–925, where a study of the British Constructivists’ involvement with urban planning projects in the 1950s is used to reflect upon different kinds of artistic synthesis; Amsellem, 2007, particularly pp. 192–225, which surveys debates in France concerning ‘the new monumentality’; and Golan, 2009, particularly pp. 181–247, in which, contrary to the present paper, she argues that a de-coupling of architecture and art took place in the post-war period, in favour of art that adopted a mode of ‘precariousness and impermanence’ (p. 181), such as tapestry, demountable murals and migratory mosaics.

16. The denigration of decoration was most notoriously given expression in Adolf Loos’s essay of 1908, ‘Ornament and Crime’; see: Loos, 1998, pp. 167–176. Half a century after Loos’ writings, decoration was still considered ‘a naughty word’ among the architectural fraternity, or at least so wrote Tom Heath in 1959, before going on to argue that some of the best architects in the world had made use of decoration in their work; see: Heath, 1959, p. 103.

17. Senie, 1992, p. 61, refers to a ‘Beaux-Arts mentality’ to describe the formulation of art’s relation to architecture from the Renaissance era until the late-nineteenth century.

by the post-war era artists felt effectively abandoned by their former architectural partners.

The sculptor and physician Clive Stephen was one of the first in Australia to enunciate this sense of estrangement. In 1948, with the apparent prospect of post-war prosperity, Stephen attempted to direct architects' and patrons' thoughts towards sculpture, declaring that 'the geometric simplicity of modern architecture ... opened up new possibilities in the remarriage of architecture and sculpture, which have so long been divorced.'<sup>18</sup> A decade later, the then newly appointed Director of the National Gallery of Victoria, Eric Westbrook, re-employed the nuptial analogy when he wrote that 'the somewhat puritan tendency of much modern architecture has meant the too frequent divorce of sculpture from its natural relationship with building',<sup>19</sup> while yet other writers wrote of the rift that had developed between architects and artists.<sup>20</sup> However, Aline Saarinen, art critic for the *New York Times* and wife of architect Eero Saarinen, described the relationship in terms of new lovers, rather than old, writing in 1955 that 'the flirtation between modern architecture and modern art ... seems to be ripening into a marriage.'<sup>21</sup> In doing so, Saarinen detected that the alliance of modern art and architecture was fundamentally different in kind to the earlier Beaux-Arts alliance, describing the relationship as a burgeoning romance rather than renewed marital vows.

Local and international debates on integration were followed with close interest by the members of Centre Five, who were able to keep abreast from Australia through such journals as *Domus* and *Art International* (to both of which King subscribed), *Architectural Review*, *Art d'Aujourd'hui* and *Studio International*. Contemporary books on the subject, usually heavily illustrated, such as Paul Damaz's *Art in European Architecture: Synthèse des Arts* and Urs Boeck's *Sculpture on Buildings*, found their way into the artists' personal libraries.<sup>22</sup> These same publications were also available to other sculptors in Australia at the time and, to an extent, some of these did take up the debate, with Tom Bass and Peter Gelencsér each publishing an article on the subject.<sup>23</sup> However, the majority of the Centre Five sculptors were also born and trained overseas in cities where architectural sculpture was the norm rather than the exception.<sup>24</sup> This arguably gave impetus to their calls for artistic synthesis, while the simple fact of collegial support gave strength to their cause.

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18. Stephen, 1948, p. 28.

19. Eric Westbrook in Melbourne, 1959, n. p.

20. Internationally, some of the best known authors who described the alienation of artists from their social role as co-designers of the built environment include Le Corbusier, 1944, pp. 152–155; Bloc, 1945, pp. 79–81; and Cassou, 1950, particularly p. 140.

21. Saarinen, 1955, p. 21.

22. Vincas Jomantas owned copies of both Damaz, 1956, and Boeck, 1961; these remain in the possession of his widow, Laima Jomantas. Inge King still retains her copy of Damaz, 1956, as well as numerous volumes on high-profile architects such as Oscar Niemeyer who regularly worked with artists in his public buildings.

23. Bass, 1955, p. 51, 54; Gelencsér, 1967, pp. 52–54. At least one member of the SSA was also familiar with Damaz's book: George Lister Clark (known as Jack Clark), who was President of the Amateur Camera Club of Australia and an Associate member of the SSA, responsible for much of the photographic documentation of the Society's activities. He referred to the Damaz volume in a letter to Lyndon Dadswell, 22 March 1962 (Dadswell papers, box 1).

24. The Lithuanians Jomantas and Zikaras trained in the studios of their respective fathers, who both executed numerous architectural commissions such as Juozas Zikaras's circle of severely classical

## The Group of Four

In June 1953, Julius Kane, Inge King, Clifford Last and Norma Redpath first exhibited together under the banner of the Group of Four.<sup>25</sup> The exhibition took place in an old Nissan hut that then housed the University of Melbourne's School of Architecture, under the auspices of the first Chair of Architecture at the university, Professor Brian Lewis. Although historians have frequently cited this exhibition as an important step in the advancement of modern sculpture in Melbourne, nothing further of its genesis has ever been uncovered. In part, credit must be given to Lewis: while his personal tastes in sculpture did not extend much further past *fin-de-siècle* symbolism (his favourite work in the National Gallery of Victoria being Bertram Mackennal's *Circe*, 1893), he appears to have been in full agreement with the relevance of sculpture to architecture, granting the Group of Four a second show in June 1955 and, a decade later, inviting them to exhibit in the foyer of the then newly opened Architecture building alongside a proposed loan exhibition of academic sculpture from the National Gallery.<sup>26</sup> Lewis's involvement with the group began shortly after he took up the post at Melbourne. In November 1948 Clifford Last (then established in the city for less than a year) wrote to Lewis in connection with the latter's commission to design University House for the new National University in Canberra. At Last's request, Lewis agreed to recommend to the university's council the appointment of an in-house sculptor to be based in Canberra during construction of the building, with three specific pieces of architectural sculpture to be commissioned for the building and scope granted for further works of freestanding sculpture for the building's courtyard.<sup>27</sup> A lengthy process of negotiation ensued, only to terminate ten months later when the Canberra authorities decided to abandon the

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Atlantas figures supporting the dome of the Lithuanian Bank in Panevėžys (1931), and Vilius Jomantas's three-metre wide painted panel for the *Romovės* or Officers' Club in Kaunas (1930). Berliner Inge King supported herself while a student at the Berlin Academy by carving architectural ornaments, such as a bas-relief panel to be set into the side of a staircase, for one of her teachers, Otto Hitzberger (1878–1964). Kane, who studied in Munich after the war, had earlier lived in Budapest and Vienna where he encountered a range of different conceptions of art's relation to architecture, from a simple Beaux-Arts conception, through to the fully integrated ethos of the Vienna Werkbund. Finally, Last studied interior design and then sculpture in London, where he was surrounded by a wealth of symbolically ornamented facades and public statuary as befitted a seat of Empire.

25. The Group of Four was effectively a precursor to Centre Five. Jomantas was then working in a factory in Moorabin and had not yet resumed his sculptural practice since emigrating from Germany; Zikaras, although then sculpting again, had not yet shown outside the confines of Melbourne's Lithuanian community and was therefore unknown to the other sculptors; and Parr was still a student at RMIT.

26. Lewis papers: letters from Brian Lewis to Inge King and Eric Westbrook, both dated 30 July 1965, box 2, folder 14 (d) and box 3, folder 14 (i) respectively. In his letter to Westbrook, Lewis wrote: 'You hinted that we might be loaned some sculpture now in storage with you and could get the Trustees' decision in August. We could place it safely at any time now and it would do the students good to see it. It would be behind glass and protected from Carlton visitors and engineering students. From my adolescent memories I think I would like to live with [Bertram Mackennal's] *Circe* — she would be backed up against the glass at the South end of the concourse'. Neither the NGV nor the Centre Five displays proposed in 1965 eventuated.

27. Last papers: letter from Brian Lewis to Clifford Last, 9 November 1948, box 8, folder 5. In this, Lewis acknowledges Last's letter of 2 November, although a copy of this was not found in either the Lewis papers or the Last papers.

commission.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the memory of these aborted efforts lay behind Lewis's willingness to help Last and his colleagues in 1953.

While little documentation of the Group of Four's exhibitions has survived, it can be deduced from the catalogues and from illustrated reviews that both featured mainly small freestanding works with little to no figurative reference. Owing to the marked abstraction of much of the work, at least one critic, Alan McCulloch, deemed it appropriate for an architectural environment. McCulloch envisaged Kuhn's *Progeny*, which was exhibited at the 1955 show, 'as a decorative relief note to the severe right angle or the long straight wall of exterior architecture.'<sup>29</sup> The organic forms of Kane's work were therefore seen as a potential counterpoint to the rigid geometries of architecture, contrasting with the building rather than entirely attempting to integrate with it. Similarly, the work that King showed in 1953, though entirely abstract, echoed the tensile strength of tree trunks and other natural forms, revealing her early debt to Moore and Hepworth (indeed they were all works she had carved in England in 1947–49).<sup>30</sup> Redpath's work was also then heavily influenced by the Moore-Hepworth school of carving, with some works employing string and wire; they too could only be imagined as a foil to the more rational geometry of a building.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, Last's work adopted what James Johnson Sweeney had termed 'a kinship of form' with architecture, taking on the strict vertical and horizontal struts of an upright cube, with rectangular and circular areas cut away in shallow relief.<sup>32</sup> While this series of works would prove to be uncharacteristic of Last's oeuvre, it did reveal the influence (freely admitted by him) of the sculptor Robert Adams, who Last met on a six-month visit to England in 1951–52.<sup>33</sup> Adams was then engaged on work for the Festival of Britain and the first of seventeen architectural commissions he was to

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28. Last papers: letter from RA Hohnen, Registrar, the Australian National University, Canberra, to Clifford Last, 13 September 1949, box 8, folder 5. Four years later, ANU commissioned Gerald Lewers to carve a Moore-esque stone reclining figure, *Relaxation*, 1953, for the entrance of University House, where it remains today. This was the only sculpture specifically commissioned for Lewis's building in the 1950s.

29. McCulloch, 1955. *Progeny*, although now lost, is visible in a photograph reproduced in Bow, 1955 a, p. 54.

30. King exhibited *Reclining Torso*, 1947 (Sicilian marble, 25 x 13 x 13 cm, collection of the artist), *Animal Shapes in Space*, 1948 (marble, 24 x 27 x 18 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra), *Crouching Birds*, 1948 (English alabaster, 27 x 32 x 22 cm, NGA), *Treeform*, 1948–9 (English boxwood, 60 x 15 x 15 cm, the artist), and *Wrench*, 1948 (Belgian marble, 41 x 19 x 13 cm, NGA).

31. One of Redpath's earliest commissioned works dates to this period. It was a tall, untitled form in plaster and wire, commissioned c. 1953–4 by architects Muir and Shepherd for WG App and Sons funeral home, 88 Carlisle Street, St Kilda. Built in a restrained classical style, the App's was nevertheless the first identifiably modern funeral home to be built in Victoria after World War II. Redpath's enigmatic form echoed the classical strains of the building while yet existing as a modern, non-objective work of art. Visitors to the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games were exhorted to visit the funeral home specifically to view Redpath's work (*Art News*, 1956). The work was later moved to beneath the front entrance canopy of the building — added in 1962 — where it remained even after the firm changed hands and became part of the Le Pine Funerals group, until it was finally destroyed in severe weather c. 2005. For a photograph of the work, in situ, by Wolfgang Sievers, see: Sievers, 1962: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-vn4465176>; accessed 16 January 2012.

32. Sweeney, 1952, p. 58. Examples of Last's work of this period can be found in Sturgeon, 1978, p. 168, fig. 101, and Melbourne, 1989, pp. 37–38, cats 9, 11, 12.

33. Last papers: box 4, diary entry for 19 January 1952. Last may have been introduced to Robert and Patricia Adams by the Australian-born assistant to Henry Moore, Oliffe Richmond, or through contact supplied by artist and critic Alan McCulloch, who had visited Adams in Northampton earlier in 1949 (McCulloch papers: box 39, letter from Robert Adams to Alan and Ellen McCulloch, 27 July 1949).

receive between 1950 and 1984.<sup>34</sup> Certainly, Last's works of 1952–3 share the same cool restraint of much British constructivist art of the period, while remaining faithful to the earlier modernist preference for carving over assemblage.

### Architecture and Arts

Both Group of Four shows received considerable publicity in a new journal called *Architecture and Arts*, edited by a group of graduates from Melbourne University's architecture school under the leadership of architect-cum-painter-and-sculptor, Peter Burns.<sup>35</sup> Their first exhibition was reviewed for the journal in a highly sympathetic and supportive manner by David Wynn.<sup>36</sup> Sculptor Ian Bow reviewed their second exhibition for the same journal in equally positive terms, even issuing a call for an architect to commission a relief sculpture from Kane in order to compel the sculptor to work in a more durable medium than the plaster he typically used.<sup>37</sup>

These two reviews were among the first of many articles to appear in *Architecture and Arts* that not only dealt with sculpture, but also broached the topic of artistic synthesis. The first Herald Chair of Fine Arts at Melbourne University, Professor Joseph Burke, raised the issue in 1954 in a letter to the editor of the journal. For Burke, wider public acceptance of 'progressive' art was dependent upon architects' willingness to include such work in their buildings, calling for 'the integration of architecture, painting, sculpture and industrial design, on which artistic revival in this country essentially depends.'<sup>38</sup> Burke's letter may have arisen from his sympathy with the Group of Four's mission; certainly, he was already familiar with Last's work, having attended the opening of Last's exhibition at George's Gallery in 1948, and he would have also no doubt seen the group's exhibition the previous year at Melbourne University. Later, in 1965, King was to supply Burke with a detailed list of Centre Five architectural commissions, testifying to an engagement between Burke and the sculptors.<sup>39</sup> The Group of Four may therefore have been the anonymous lobbyists responsible for the issue of integration being first raised in the journal.

The first sustained article on integration appeared in an *Architecture and Arts* editorial of 1955, reprinting an extraordinary address by Aline Saarinen in which she argued that art must be subordinate to architecture, content to accept the role of decoration.

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34. Grieve, 2008, p. 63.

35. At the time of its launch in July 1952, *Architecture and Arts* was the only critical forum for arts writing in Australia outside newspaper criticism. Sydney Ure Smith's *Art in Australia* had ceased publication in 1942 and was not revived until 1963, while the Contemporary Art Society's *Broadsheet* only came into existence in 1954. The title, *Architecture and Arts*, was a deliberate inversion of the name of a North American journal, *Arts and Architecture*, edited by John Entenza.

36. The founder of Wynn's Coonawarra Estate wines, David Wynn was a great patron of Last's and Kane's. Among his collection were Last's *Mother and Child*, 1948 (illustrated in Melbourne, 1989, p. 34, cat. 4), and Kane's *Wanderer*, 1948 (illustrated in Parkville, 1975, p. 12, cat. 2), *Equestrienne*, 1952 (NGA, Canberra), and *Group*, 1953 (illustrated in McCulloch, 1984, Vol. 1, Fig. 48). His brother, Doctor Allan Wynn, also collected Last's work, and in 1949 commissioned Last to model a portrait bust of his wife, the dancer Sally Gilmour, in her role as *Lady into Fox* (McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, Langwarrin, Vic.).

37. Bow, 1955 a, p. 54.

38. Burke, 1954, p. 11.

39. Centre Five archive: folder marked 'Misc. correspondence', letter from Inge King to Professor Joseph Burke, 27 July 1965.



Modern architecture, she claimed, derived beauty and meaning from ‘the honest, logical and revealed use of its architectural vocabulary.’<sup>40</sup> As such, the only conceivable role for artists was to supply the sort of applied ornament that architects themselves no longer produced and, in that way, enhance particular formal or expressive characters of the building. Saarinen’s marriage to a world-renowned modernist architect likely inflected her stance, which was less one of integration (indeed she specifically avoided the word) and more one of, what she described as, ‘a happy and fruitful union.’<sup>41</sup> Other, lesser references to synthesis were carried in the journal, although it was another six years before *Architecture and Arts* directly broached the topic again, with an article by an English illustrator, Sylvia Adburgham, proclaiming a resurgence of interest in artistic synthesis in Britain. Adburgham’s article surveyed mosaics, murals, and stained glass, but was conceptually weak, arguing for nothing more than art’s ability to ‘give visual pleasure’.<sup>42</sup> A stronger case was made the following year by Sydney architect Neville Gruzman, who, while reflecting on his collaborative work with artist Eric Smith, chastised ‘the current splatter of structure with meaningless decoration which makes no contribution ... other than to conceal some architectural fault’, and instead advocated a close working relationship with artists to address common structural problems.<sup>43</sup> While the Melbourne sculptors would have doubtless approved of Gruzman’s stance, geography meant they had little chance of collaborating with him and few other architects were as sympathetic as Gruzman.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the attention paid to integration and to sculpture, the Group of Four and Centre Five received considerable coverage in the magazine, accounting for twenty-one per cent of all articles on sculpture.<sup>44</sup> In the journal’s third issue, in 1952, Clifford Last contributed an article calling upon architects to incorporate wall niches for sculpture in their plans and to design staircases and outdoor terraces that could specifically be used for the display of freestanding works of sculpture.<sup>45</sup> Limited though this conception of collaboration may be, Last was clearly drawing upon his experiences of the Festival of Britain, where such works as John Passmore’s mural of painted tiles marked the stairway entrance to the South Bank site from Hungerford Bridge and large sculptural works, such as Powell and Moya’s *Skylon*, dotted the terraces between the pavilions.<sup>46</sup> Last’s article drew a response in September 1953 from the director of the design school at Woollahra Art Centre, Dora Sweetapple, who agreed with the tenets of his proposal, while also calling for sculptors to develop ‘an intuitive understanding of man’s need for warmth

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40. Saarinen, 1955, p. 22.

41. Saarinen, 1955, p. 22. This is not to imply that Aline Saarinen was intellectually dependent upon her husband, Eero. Indeed, in the same essay, she went so far as to criticise the work of Carl Milles, the sculptor of choice of her father-in-law, Eliel Saarinen, renowned for his many figurative commissions for the latter’s Cranbrook Academy. For a reflective discussion of the Milles Saarinen collaboration, casting light on the conservative aspects of their work, see: Curtis, 2008, pp. 42–57.

42. Adburgham, 1961, p. 27.

43. Gruzman, 1962, p. 30.

44. The author’s survey of all 167 issues of the journal, which ran from 1952 to 1967, found 116 photographs of sculpture depicted in situ in domestic and commercial settings, 48 photographs of sculpture on its own, and 29 articles on sculpture.

45. Last, 1952, p. [8].

46. For further description of the artworks commissioned for the Festival of Britain see Garlake, 1998, pp. 217–223.

and fun, without any sacrifice of design or formal abstract values.<sup>47</sup> Seemingly Last's massively carved figures and blocky abstracts were deemed unsympathetic and insufficiently playful. This was typical of the critical reception to Last's works of the early 1950s, leading him to change direction and return to the sinuous organic forms that had first attracted him to Moore's work. By 1954, when *Architecture and Arts* next illustrated his work, Last was employing organic shapes intertwined with wire and hanging mobile-like from the ceiling, a possible result of his then present concern designing light-fittings for the Mirka Café in Collins Street, for which he had to work with metal and suspended forms in space.<sup>48</sup>

*Architecture and Arts* also ran illustrated features on Inge King's *Dewdrop Fountain*, 1959, which was produced largely to a design by Robin Boyd for the Fitzroy Gardens; a review of Zikaras's exhibition of drawings at Brummel's Gallery in 1957; features on both the British Petroleum (BP) administration building at Westernport and the BP headquarters in South Melbourne, both with bronze reliefs by Redpath; a two-page profile of Redpath by Gordon Thomson; and another double-page profile on Last by designer Ron Opie.<sup>49</sup> When reviewing large group exhibitions, it was often Centre Five sculptors who were picked out for special mention; for example, their work was illustrated alongside Ian Bow's review of the 1955 VSS exhibition and James Meldrum's review of the 1967 Mildura Prize for Sculpture.<sup>50</sup> It is perhaps too strong to claim that Centre Five members were responsible for the wide coverage of their work in *Architecture and Arts*, but the journal's editors certainly listened to their case and acted in sympathy, devoting a fifth of their articles on sculpture to Centre Five, while the raised awareness of the issue of integration was arguably also beneficial to the other sculptors profiled.

### **'Sculpture in architecture, idiot!'**

Melbourne's sculptors were not alone in their call for integration. From the time of its inception in 1951, the SSA was equally vocal in calling for the use of sculpture in architecture, lecturing the Royal Institute of Architects in Sydney on the subject in 1954, inviting architects and town-planners to give slide talks on their work, and calling (unsuccessfully) for the appointment of a part-time lecturer in sculpture in Sydney's two university faculties of architecture.<sup>51</sup> Their greatest effort towards

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47. Sweetapple, 1953, p. 29.

48. *Architecture and Arts*, 1954 May, p. 41, black and white illustration of Last's *Bird Form in Space* (present whereabouts unknown). Both Last and Kane were involved that year in fitting out Georges and Mirka Mora's new café *cum* gallery in 185 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, with Kane carving the bar out of wood and Last designing the lights. Neither artists' fittings have survived (Mora, 2011).

49. *Architecture and Arts*, 1960 Nov., p. 48; *Architecture and Arts*, 1965 Jan., p. 13; *Architecture and Arts*, 1957 Sept., p. 44; *Architecture and Arts*, 1966 March, pp. 16-17; Thomson, 1964, pp. 39-41; and Opie, 1964, pp. 48-49.

50. Bow, 1955b, p. 15, illustration of Zikaras' *St Francis*, 1955 (patinated plaster, 84 x 22 x 15.5 cm, present whereabouts unknown; bronze cast in the collection of the McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, Langwarrin, Vic.); Meldrum, 1967, p. 12, illustration of King's *Monitor*, 1967 (bronzed steel, 176 x 50 x 70 cm, private collection, Canberra).

51. Indeed the Society's name was to have originally been the Australian Society of Sculptors, Architects and Associates; it was soon agreed, however, that Associate members included those from the architectural profession (SSA records: box 5 of 11, minutes of meeting at the home of Gerald Lewers, 56 Murdoch St, Cremorne, 28 October 1950). Lyndon Dadswell, Paul Beadle and Tom Bass gave a lecture on 'Sculpture in Architecture' at the Institute of Architects, Sydney, 16 November 1954.

publicising the need for integration came in 1957, when they organised an exhibition of photographs demonstrating the use of sculpture in overseas buildings, alongside models of architectural sculpture by some of the society's members.<sup>52</sup> At the SSA's specific request, George Molnar (himself a professor of architecture) produced a topical cartoon for *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Fig. 1).<sup>53</sup> Captioned 'Sculpture in architecture, idiot! Not architecture in sculpture', Molnar portrayed a hapless architect who, having muddled his messages, tried to incorporate examples of classical architecture inside the traditional form of a reclining female nude. For once, Molnar resisted the opportunity to mock abstract sculpture, instead employing a Beaux-Art conception of both art and architecture in order to help publicise the SSA's message.



Fig 1. George Molnar, *Sculpture in architecture idiot! Not architecture in sculpture*, 1957. Published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 February 1957. Original pen and ink drawing on paper, 23.6 x 23.6 cm (image), 32.8 x 26.7 cm (sheet), Canberra, National Library of Australia, PIC/7345/2397 LOC 9431-9440. (National Library of Australia)

Calls for a part-time lecturer in sculpture were made by Arthur Baldwinson and Michael Nicholson; see for instance Nicholson, 1962, p. [7].

52. Sydney, 1957. The photographs were sourced from the United States Information Service among others, and were afterwards sent to the Queensland Art Gallery, under Robert Haines's directorship, for exhibition.

53. According to Joan Kerr (Kerr, 2003, p. 91), Molnar's cartoon was inspired by the Society of Sculptors' exhibition and published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 2 January 1957 — a date suggested by the pencil inscription on Molnar's original sketch for cartoon (Fig. 1). However, the cartoon was produced at the specific request of the SSA (see SSA records: box 2 of 10, minutes of Executive meeting, 11 January 1957) to publicise their forthcoming exhibition with its theme of 'Sculpture in Architecture', which opened at the David Jones Gallery, Sydney, 4 February 1957. The cartoon first appeared in print in the *SMH* on Saturday 2 February 1957, p. 9.

However, while Sydney sculptors enjoyed a degree of success in winning some corporate commissions during the late-1950s and early-'60s, agitation for architectural integration was arguably louder and more sustained in Melbourne.<sup>54</sup> Throughout the late-1950s, the Group of Four and their future colleagues in Centre Five participated in larger group exhibitions in which the role that sculpture could play in architecture was repeatedly stressed. One such was the exhibition of sculpture that took place during the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne University's then newly-rebuilt Wilson Hall, designed by Bates, Smart and McCutcheon. Kane, Last, Redpath and Zikaras took part in this. Photographs of the exhibition reveal small- to medium-sized works of sculpture on white plinths, flanked by display-boards with photographs of contemporary Australian architecture.<sup>55</sup> However, Alan McCulloch was to complain that any message intended on the part of the organisers was effectively lost owing to the various features of Wilson Hall that shouted in competition, such as the birch-panelled ceiling and walls, marble-clad columns, patterned tiled floor, and enormous Douglas Annand intaglio wall mosaic.<sup>56</sup>

Another such event was the 'Exhibition of Paintings in Settings of Fine Office Furniture', held at the Australian Galleries, Collingwood, in August 1958. Despite the title, this included works of sculpture by Last, Redpath and Zikaras, alongside furniture arranged by Dudley Peck and drapes and rugs supplied by Peter Bray.<sup>57</sup> According to one newspaper review, the aim of the exhibition was 'to show the busy Australian business executive how to make his office into a home away from home.'<sup>58</sup> Art was clearly deployed here as a civilising element — one that would soften the otherwise severe lines of modern office buildings.

Two competitions for sculpture in a library setting were also held in these years. The first was for work to be incorporated into the public library in Queensland, with the entries exhibited at the Queensland Art Gallery in September to October of 1958. Jomantas, Parr and Zikaras all took part in this.<sup>59</sup> The second — and better-known — competition was for Melbourne University's Baillieu Library, designed by the university's staff architect John Scarborough and officially opened in 1959. Ten artists from Victoria, including Parr, Redpath and Zikaras, as well as the painters Arthur Boyd, John Brack, and Leonard French, were invited to submit designs for a

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54. For examples of architectural sculpture in Sydney from the 1950s and '60s, see: Lumley, 1990, pp. 13 (Tom Bass, *Research*, 1956–9), 16–7 (Margel Hinder, *Growth Forms*, c. 1959, and *Free Standing Sculpture*, 1962), and 73–74 (Robert R. Woodward, *El Alamein Fountain*, 1960).

55. See Sievers, 1956: [http://buffy.lib.unimelb.edu.au/cgi-bin/mua-search?interest=exhibition;list\\_name=title;interestb=;list\\_nameb=title;dropa=;items\\_page=10;button=Search;search=yes;tdetails=1411#liststart](http://buffy.lib.unimelb.edu.au/cgi-bin/mua-search?interest=exhibition;list_name=title;interestb=;list_nameb=title;dropa=;items_page=10;button=Search;search=yes;tdetails=1411#liststart); accessed 16 January 2012. Also Shmith, 1956:

[http://buffy.lib.unimelb.edu.au/cgi-bin/mua-search?interest=exhibition;list\\_name=title;interestb=;list\\_nameb=title;dropa=;items\\_page=10;button=Search;search=yes;tdetails=1351#liststart](http://buffy.lib.unimelb.edu.au/cgi-bin/mua-search?interest=exhibition;list_name=title;interestb=;list_nameb=title;dropa=;items_page=10;button=Search;search=yes;tdetails=1351#liststart); accessed 16 January 2012. The exhibition took place in Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne, 21 November – 15 December 1956.

56. McCulloch, 1956. Robin Boyd would later dub Wilson Hall 'the crowning jewel of Australian Featurism'; for this and further description of the building see: Goad and Tibbits, 2003, pp. 58–59.

57. Collingwood, 1958.

58. *The Age*, 1958.

59. Scarlett, 1979, p. 101, 172, and 232.

mural or relief that would be displayed in the foyer of the library.<sup>60</sup> This was a challenging task given both the relatively small size of the foyer and the fact that the wall that was to support the artwork was located above head-height, perpendicular to the entrance, and wedged between a mezzanine balcony and the glass curtain wall of the building's façade, with its overpowering grid formed by six-metre high aluminium mullions and opaque glass spandrels.<sup>61</sup> The submissions were exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in Melbourne's Tavistock Place in November 1958 and, towards the end of the month, Redpath was announced the winner. In the statement that accompanied her submission, Redpath detailed the symbolism of the work's constituent parts, linking it with the competition theme (taken from John Milton's tract of 1644, *Areopagitica*, which advocated freedom of access to knowledge both good and evil), before going on to explain how she envisaged the work would fit into the designated space:

The top section is approximately at eye level of persons standing on the balcony of the first floor, the books in the lower section are at the feet of the viewer, the abstract elbow on the level of the balcony rail — all of this suggesting an organic participation controlled by the vertical static elements of the design in keeping with the feeling of the architecture.<sup>62</sup>

Regardless of the rather derivative nature of the work's iconography (with its flying, comet-like heads in profile more than a little reminiscent of Picasso's *Guernica*), Redpath demonstrated an acute awareness of how the work would relate to, reinforce, and yet resist the nearby curtain wall grid. This was architectural integration at a sophisticated level.

In July 1959, Clement Meadmore and entrepreneur Max Hutchinson opened Gallery A in Melbourne's Flinders Lane. According to an editorial notice in *Architecture and Arts* announcing the new venture, Gallery A had as its 'policy the integration of art and architecture'.<sup>63</sup> The same article continued: 'the gallery is designed along clean modern lines with a system of moveable walls hung from the ceiling. Special exhibitions will be arranged from time to time showing ways in which art can be used in architecture, such as the October show featuring door furniture in the form of original pieces by sculptors.'<sup>64</sup> As a sculptor and industrial designer himself, Meadmore was acutely aware of integration and sympathetic with Centre Five's work. King had a joint show there with her husband in 1960, Jomantas and Parr both

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60. The ten artists were: Len Annois, Arthur Boyd, John Brack, Leonard French, Roger Kemp, Clement Meadmore, Lenton Parr, Norma Redpath, Ellen Rubbo, and Teistutis Zikaras.

61. For further reading on the design of the Baillieu Library see Kilpatrick, 2001: <http://www.alia.org.au/publishing/aarl/32.2/full.text/kilpatrick.html>; accessed 22 March 2010.

62. Redpath, 1958. For a contemporary photograph of the work in situ, see: Sievers, 1961: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-vn4466283>; accessed 16 January 2012.

63. *Architecture and Arts*, 1959 July, p. 23.

64. *Architecture and Arts*, 1959 July, p. 23. Inge King had already produced one such item of door furniture (1958), in cast aluminium, and in the following decade was commissioned to produce bronze door handles for George's Hostess Store in Melbourne (1963–4, removed in 1990); see Trimble, 1996, pp. 196, 198. Likewise Clifford Last provided bronze doors for St Aidan's Uniting Church at Balwyn in 1965, and the cast aluminium doors on the Raymond Priestly Building at the University of Melbourne, 1969, while Jomantas carved a wooden door handle for the Carlton offices of Eggleston MacDonald and Secomb in 1965.

participated in Gallery A group exhibitions, and Redpath held her first solo show there to critical acclaim, her work displayed to spectacular effect on suspended plinths, upon which her works crouched like creatures dropped from the sky.<sup>65</sup>

One year after Centre Five formally banded together, in 1961, they succeeded in bringing their cause before a panel of architects at a one-off event: the Conference of Victorian Sculptors. Held in August 1962 at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), all members of Centre Five attended other than Redpath, who was in Milan on an Italian government scholarship, and Kane, who had suicided the month before. Kane's death at this juncture must have seemed a bitter blow, coming at the very point at which he and his colleagues were beginning to receive serious attention from the art establishment. The efforts of both Kane and Gerald Lewers (who had recently died in a riding accident) to promote modern sculpture were solemnly acknowledged by the conference delegates.<sup>66</sup> Yet, interestingly, the following year Parr referred to the conference as 'a promising start to a project to foster local interest and patronage.'<sup>67</sup> Apparently he saw the conference as a beginning, rather than a culmination of earlier efforts and activities of the 1950s.

Sympathy with the sculptors' cause continued in 1965, when the NGV organised a travelling exhibition, 'Sculpture in the Community', with the joint help of the VSS and the Council of Adult Education. King, Last, and Parr all took part in the exhibition, submitting small discreet works in steel and wood. As in the 1956 Olympic exhibition, these were shown alongside a series of photographs illustrating sculpture in relation to architecture. The catalogue contained a short essay by architect Douglas Alexandra and a quote from Sigfried Giedion, emphasising the need for sculpture to give spiritual meaning to modern architecture. The Centre Five platform was seemingly taking effect.

### **Strengthening ties:**

#### **Centre Five's educational program and Melbourne's architectural schools**

Education played a key role in Centre Five's activities, which was perhaps unsurprising given that, by 1961, five members of the group were in either full- or part-time teaching posts.<sup>68</sup> Individually, they gave practical studio demonstrations to the architecture students from both Melbourne University and RMIT, with small groups of students invited into each of the sculptors' studios to learn about the different methods by which sculptors manipulated materials, ranging from wood to *ciment fondu*.<sup>69</sup> At the invitation of Neville Quarry, then Senior Lecturer in Architecture at Melbourne, Inge King lectured architecture undergraduates on modern

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65. For catalogues of the Kings' and Redpath's shows, see: Melbourne, 1960, and Thomson, 1963.

66. Conference of Victorian Sculptors, 1962, p. 2.

67. Parr, 1963 a, p. 23. Parr's view may have been slightly coloured by the fact that he was still a student throughout the first half of the 1950s and therefore not involved with the earlier efforts to raise an awareness of integration.

68. Clifford Last was then in charge of art at Mercer House Teachers' College in Malvern; Teisutis Zikaras, Lenton Parr, and Vincas Jomantas were all teaching in the sculpture department at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), while Inge King was lecturing at the Institute of Early Childhood Development, and from 1962–65 was as an external examiner for the RMIT sculpture course.

69. Plant, 1970, p. 107; King, 2010.

sculpture, while her friendship with Ann Rado (né Taylor) at RMIT led to further lectures there.<sup>70</sup> King also ran workshops with the architecture students, setting them the task to make small mobiles in order they might gain a more sculptural appreciation of space and form.<sup>71</sup>

Lenton Parr was active in publishing articles and a slim book on Australian sculpture, often raising the issue of integration. With a modesty typical of the group as a whole, Parr did not use these publications as a forum for promoting either his work or that of Centre Five, but instead spoke in general terms, giving generous coverage to a wide range of Australian sculptors, such as Margel Hinder, whose work for the Western Assurance building in Sydney Parr described as the acme of perfection in terms of matching sculpture to architecture.<sup>72</sup> In an article of 1963 for the *Australian Planning Institute Journal*, concerning the positioning of public monuments, Parr wrote that architecture should ‘evoke feelings, to create frames of mind that are appropriate to the activities we carry on within [the building]’.<sup>73</sup> Echoing the concerns of architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, Parr wrote about the emotional and spiritual aspects of the spatial environment in terms that shared affinities with the new minimalist language of physical engagement and theatricality:

Sculpture is almost purely aesthetic in function, which is to say that it exists simply to stimulate feeling responses in those who behold it ... Its scale and its concentration make it a focussing device, a way of intensifying feeling; ... of providing a point of especially charged stimulation. It can have virtually supernatural attributes. In an empty landscape, such is its power that it transforms the environment from one *encountered* to one *participated in*.<sup>74</sup>

In 1966, an article on Centre Five appeared in the newly revived journal, *Art and Australia*, written by the architect and historian David Saunders, then lecturing at Melbourne University.<sup>75</sup> Saunders’s sympathies for brutalist architecture were evident in the lively interest he paid to the sculptors’ raw materials.<sup>76</sup> He considered the work of Centre Five to have ‘recently displayed a new level of quality’ and believed that it deserved to be included in public buildings where many people would see it regularly.<sup>77</sup> Crucially, Saunders advocated that architects work with sculptors to solve particular spatial problems, citing the case of Vincas Jomantas’s work with Eggleston, MacDonald and Secomb.<sup>78</sup> Here, Jomantas had resolved the issue of acoustics in a lecture theatre at Monash University by designing concrete formwork walls with raised cubes and rectangular blocks that diffused echoes. The work hinged on the exquisite contradiction of using a hard, apparently brutal material to soften the aural

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70. Centre Five archive: folder marked ‘Misc. correspondence’, letter from Neville Quarry to Inge King, 7 June 1963; also King, 2010.

71. King, 2010.

72. Parr, 1961, p. 5.

73. Parr, 1963b, p. 183.

74. Parr, 1963b, p. 183. Original emphasis.

75. Saunders, 1966, pp. 129–135.

76. Saunders visited Britain on a Nuffield Fellowship in the early 1960s and, on his return, designed his own house at Parkville (1962) in a style that had distinct affinities with New Brutalism.

77. Saunders, 1966, p. 129.

78. Saunders, 1966, p. 129. The work is illustrated in Langwarrin, 2003, p. 43, cat. 49.

environment. Both the aesthetic and ideology employed reflect an awareness of constructionist interventions such as those of the Groupe Espace in France in the 1950s and '60s, and Kenneth and Mary Martin in England at the same time.<sup>79</sup>

### **Architectural commissions**

One of Centre Five's earliest architectural commissions was given in 1957 to Teisutis Zikaras by the architects Eggleston, MacDonald and Secomb, who wanted a series of eight low-relief cement panels to adorn the outside windows of the new private dining rooms at Melbourne University's Union House (Fig. 2). Zikaras explained that he aimed 'to give the idea of unity of shape and form', in keeping with the building's name and purpose.<sup>80</sup> He had also to work to the architects' demands for 'a robust unit which would contrast with the precision of the glass and aluminium and which would be somewhat in keeping with the Tudor quality of the building', an effect he achieved by means of decoratively piercing the panels, paying 'special attention to the solid and void effect as seen from the lounges, and from the outside at night.'<sup>81</sup> One of the university's more progressive lecturers in architecture, Fritz Janeba, commented favourably on the work, saying: 'It's a very interesting combination against glass. It has a psychological effect of looking like a balustrade and is not merely an addition or decoration to the building but is part of it.'<sup>82</sup>



Fig. 2. Teisutis Zikaras, *Relief panels for Union House*, 1958. Eight form-cast concrete panels, each 2.0 x 3.0 m approximately, Parkville, Victoria, University of Melbourne, Union House. (Photographer unknown, courtesy Marcus Zikaras)

79. For examples of Groupe Espace work, see: Paris, 2010; for Kenneth and Mary Martin's works, see: Gathercole, 2006, pp. 909–917.

80. Zikaras quoted in *The Herald*, 1958, p. 3.

81. University of Melbourne Archives: file 1957/1381, letter from Roderick MacDonald of Eggleston, MacDonald and Secomb, to Sir George Paton, Vice-Chancellor, 11 November 1957.

82. *The Herald*, 1958, p. 3. This effect of looking like, but not acting as, a balustrade, was perhaps less appreciated by a later architect, Peter Elliott, who, during alterations to the building in 1997, relocated the panels, with four now floating against the brick façade of the west wall, two brought down to ground-level, where they are partially hidden beneath shrubbery, and another two placed either side of a staircase, reminiscent of handrails.



Indicative of a surge in public expenditure on university campuses, Lenton Parr received three commissions in the early-1960s from Eggleston, MacDonald and Secomb, all for the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra.<sup>83</sup> Two of these were for wall murals. The first (Fig. 3) was commissioned in 1961 for the external south wall of the chemistry school. The design consisted of a long vertical axis with horizontal blades projecting either side, apparently inspired by the chemical processes of ‘crystal formation and X-ray diffraction’.<sup>84</sup> For this project, Parr used eight panels of form-cast concrete with inset pebbles, an atypical material for him, indicative of his desire for the work to integrate with the building’s concrete beams that extend vertically to the roofline and the matching cross beam that demarcates the first storey ceiling. The second commission, 1963, was a mural for the ANU geology school, consisting of various Australian stones arranged with Mondrianesque simplicity in a geometric pattern, outlined and highlighted by bands of black stone. The design took into account the location in a stairwell, directing the eye and funnelling the walker along the narrow stairway, while its use of Australian rock samples was highly appropriate to the location.<sup>85</sup>

Norma Redpath received two commissions, both for BP but from different architectural practices. The first, *Stair Relief*, 1964, was for the stairwell of the main foyer of the BP administration building at Crib Point, Westernport, south of Melbourne.<sup>86</sup> The commissioning architect Don Fulton later recalled, that ‘it was to be integral with the building demonstrating an affinity with the architectonic space and it was to have some abstracted depiction of industry as associated with oil.’<sup>87</sup> While the relief did certainly suggest a geological stratum of shale and oil, this was largely because Redpath’s work as a whole reflected these interests. However, consideration was given to location of the work and the effect of the movement of the spectator, so that the high relief could be viewed from multiple angles as a person ascended or descended the stairs. As with virtually all of Redpath’s bronzes, different sections were polished in order to reflect light, while other areas were left matt and dark, emphasising the chiaroscuro play between undercut and high relief surfaces.<sup>88</sup> The second BP work, *Theatre Lobby Relief*, 1964, commissioned by the architectural firm Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong and Orton for BP House, was site-

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83. Parr had earlier, in 1958, received a commission from the same firm of architects for four black-painted steel balconies, each representing the four humours, for the Des Connor rehearsal studio, part of the remodeled Union Theatre at Melbourne University.

84. Canberra, 2005, p. 48.

85. Unfortunately, the meaning of this was lost in 1991, when the building changed function and became the engineering school and, as the plaque on the wall omits any mention of Parr’s name, the work has since languished in obscurity and miscomprehension. The plaque reads: ‘Department of Geology 1963-1991 / This feature wall of selected Australian building stones was commissioned by the Staff and the Founding Professor of Geology, Professor D.A. Brown’. There is no record of the work in the university’s art register, nor does it appear in any of their literature on the art collection; see for instance Canberra, 2005.

86. Architecture and Arts, 1966 March: photographs of work in situ, pp. 16 and 17.

87. Don Fulton, quoted in National Trust, 1994.

88. National Trust, 1994. Unfortunately, in 1985 the relief was relocated to an external brick wall of BP House on Albert Road, where it was dwarfed in scale by the size of the wall and largely lost from sight behind bushes. In 1994, BP House was sold to a firm who planned to convert it into apartments; the relief was removed and later gifted to the McClelland Gallery, Langwarrin.

specific only in so much as it required an expanse of high wall, with no surrounding visual clutter.<sup>89</sup>

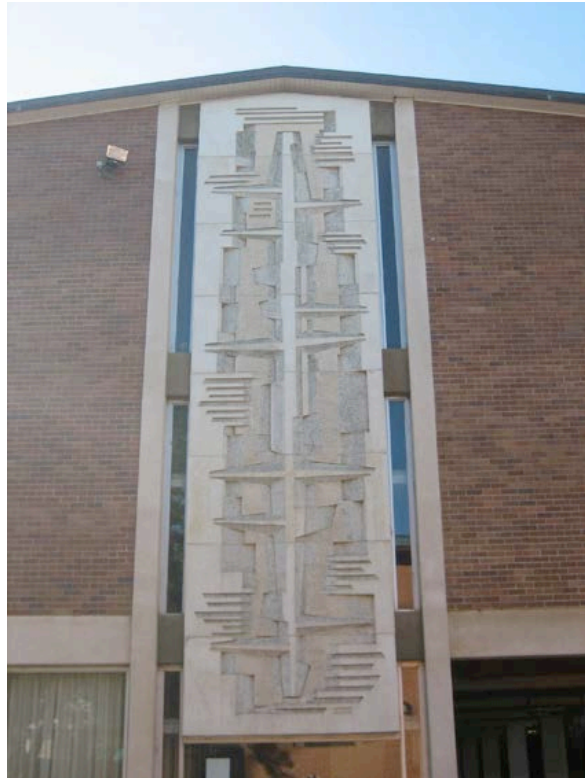


Fig. 3. Lenton Parr, *Relief for Chemistry Building*, 1961–2. Pre-cast concrete in eight panels, 9.8 x 2.6 m, Canberra, Australian National University, acc. no. 859. (Lenton Parr Estate and the Australian Galleries, Collingwood; photograph by the author)

Inge King's *Euridice* existed as a maquette, from 1964, before Eggleston, MacDonald and Secomb commissioned a full-scale version for the Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP) research laboratory at Clayton in 1965.<sup>90</sup> The final version consisted of multiple, jagged steel sheets, arc-welded together with thickly encrusted flux emphasising the hand-made nature of the joins, and lozenges of steel 'appliquéd' in vertical columns on the surface. Any risk of the work becoming a static monument to crude steel was cancelled by the forward thrust of the work, which rendered it as if poised for take-off. Together, the brutal surfaces and hovering verticality contrasted with the rational, horizontal geometry of the building beyond, with its machined steel beams and glass curtain façade, and the emphatically flat surface of the pond, with its three subdued jets of water making no attempt to compete in height with the sculpture. The work created a focus in an otherwise empty courtyard and, while it could not be considered site-specific — indeed the maquette pre-existed the commission — in the words of Parr, it transformed the environment from one 'encountered to one participated in'.<sup>91</sup>

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89. *Architecture and Arts*, 1965 Jan.: illustrated p. 13. This effect was maintained when, in 1994, the building was sold, and the work likewise donated to the McClelland Gallery, on whose external wall at the rear of the building it now hangs.

90. Eggleston, MacDonald and Secomb, 1969: illustrated p. [30].

91. Parr, 1963b, p. 183. *Euridice* was later sold through Christies, Melbourne (6 May 2003, lot 71), and is now in a private collection in Melbourne.

## Conclusion

Centre Five's public and corporate commissions of the 1960s were, in many respects, a culmination of their agitation for integration of the arts and architecture, which they had called for since the early-1950s. The majority of the group were well acquainted with architectural sculpture from their early years and training in Europe and Britain, and were living witnesses to the widening rift — identified by some as a divorce — between modern sculpture and architecture. As their work became progressively more abstract in the 1950s, they became increasingly attuned to contemporary debates, originating from French and British journals of the 1940s and '50s, regarding artistic synthesis and the need to renegotiate the former Beaux-Art conception of a natural alliance. Their commissioned work represents a number of different formulations of integration: art that reinforced a building's symbolic significance (for example, Zikaras's Union House panels, Redpath's *Stair Relief*, and Parr's ANU concrete and stone walls), art that shared an affinity with the formal and structural properties of the building (again, Parr's ANU commissions), art that sought to solve architectural problems (Jomantas's auditorium walls), and art that contrasted with a building by creating a complementary foil or focal point (King's *Euridice*). Works such as these received considerable attention in the journal *Architecture and Arts*, contributing to local discussion on integration, while Last and Parr (as native English speakers) wrote about the issue for both this and other Australian journals. When considered alongside Centre Five's activities as educators — particularly their guest lectures and studio demonstrations for architectural students — and the ties they fostered with architects and art administrators in the National Gallery, it becomes apparent that Centre Five were prime forces behind the 'renewing of vows' between Melbourne's architects and sculptors.

However, the degree to which many of their commissioned works have since been removed from their original context, as the buildings changed function or were sold on, highlights the precariousness of art that depends upon an architectural setting for its survival. Despite this, repeated calls for collaboration between contemporary sculptors and architects continue to be made.<sup>92</sup> Given the continuing interest in integration, it is all the more imperative that post-war sculptors such as Centre Five are studied in detail and their architectural work carefully considered against the backdrop of international calls for the remarriage of art and architecture.

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92. For instance, in 1989 Rod Roach FRAIA gave a lecture, *The Place of Sculpture in Architecture*, at the Bonython-Meadmore Gallery in Adelaide, to coincide with an exhibition of Inge King's work. See also: Brenner, 1976, pp. 46–49; Marter, 1989, pp. 315–320; and McQueen, 2002, pp. 20–22.

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