POSITION PAPER

The Gold Coast Moment

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This inaugural professorial lecture discusses the roles and responsibilities of the architectural historian.
It reflects on the work of Manfredo Tafuri, but also the institutional circumstances and settings in which
the author's own formation as an historian of architecture took place. It concludes with an introduction
to the themes of the author's current research on the Australian city of the Gold Coast.

Introduction

In the tympanum above the south door of the Baptistery of the Italian town of Parma (**Fig. 1**), the sculptor Benedetto depicts a parable from the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat — a popular Christianised version of lives and events long held to have occurred in the fourth century AD, but understood by scholars from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards to have their origin many hundreds of years earlier with the life of Gautama Buddha (see, for example, Cambrai 2014). The story of Barlaam and Josaphat (or Joasaph) was first published in Latin in 1048 on the basis of a Greek edition of this book, although it appeared, too, in Arabic, Hebrew, Polish, French and many other languages in the early centuries of the medieval epoch.

  In the broadest of strokes, the story depicts the young Indian prince Josaphat as isolated in a magnificent castle by a regal father wary of his conversion to Christianity. With time and persistence, Josaphat persuades his father, the king Abbener, to allow him to roam beyond the limits of his seclusion. In these periodic forays he meets a leper, a blind man and an old man, and thereby garners some understanding of the finitude of health and life. These encounters get him thinking and draw him toward a life of reflection and piety. Josaphat eventually chances upon the hermit Barlaam, who introduces him to Christianity by means of a series of allegories that have now been embedded into the history of western culture. Anyone who states that 'all that glitters is not gold' is quoting William Shakespeare's rehearsal, in *The Merchant of Venice*, of Barlaam's parable of the three caskets, a theme on which Freud likewise judiciously spilled a certain amount of ink; these are just two instances of the uptake of a single episode from their legendary discourse (Freud 1958: 289–302). Upon the hermit's death Josaphat assumes Barlaam's mantle as a holy man; both were eventually canonised, in the least contestable sense of the term, on both sides of the East-West Schism (Lopez 2014).

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Figure 1: Tympanum, Parma Baptistery, by Benedetto, from 1196. Image from Wikimedia Commons. Photo by Sailko (Creative Commons license).

  The parables conveyed to the young prince by Barlaam were without doubt well known throughout the medieval world, and when Benedetto committed one to the exterior fabric of the Parma Baptistery at the end of the twelfth century it would have spoken to a public fully conversant with its iconography and significance. As Giuseppa Zanichelli has most recently observed, the relationship between the text of this story and its depiction at Parma contains a number of quick changes in detail that would have been as legible as they would have been unproblematic to Benedetto's audience (2014: 44). And just as Benedetto plays fast and loose with the parable while making a record of it — reducing it to essentials — I am inclined to forgive the elasticity with which the twentieth-century architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri treats his sculpture, rendering its story a metaphor for the imperatives of those who would see in the critical mission of his discipline something of a vocation akin to the piety of Barlaam.

  Tafuri introduces this work at the outset of a lecture he delivered to inaugurate the 1992–93 academic year of the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (Tafuri 1993). Its central figure is a young boy held in the

Figure 2: Piazza San Marco with the Basilica, by Canaletto, ca. 1730. Photo courtesy of Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

branches of a tree in which, according to legend, he has taken refuge to escape a marauding unicorn — although both Benedetto and Tafuri omit this detail. The boy is safe for the moment, but just beneath him a dragon lies in wait. At the very base of the tree two wolves (originally mice) gnaw on the trunk. The boy is distracted by his discovery of a trickle of honey and he begins to forget the dangers below. But eventually the wolves will make their way through the tree and then the boy is toast. The wolves are depicted respectively as white and black, symbols of day and night repeated in the iconography of two charioteers whose encircled figures flank the tree — one depicting the sun and the other the moon. The inexorable march of time, Tafuri tells us, paraphrasing Barlaam's lesson to Josaphat, pays no heed to the importance we see ourselves as having to the world, while we, like the boy, enjoy our honey oblivious to the peril to which, as surely as day follows night, we will inevitably succumb.

As has been observed by Arthur Kinglsey Porter, a pioneer in the study of Romanesque architecture and sculpture, the tympanum at Parma encapsulates the profound theme of the insignificance of man, which Benedetto exercised across the entire surface of the Baptistery. As the historian notes, the 'west portal [depicts] the six ages of the world, the six ages of man, the six works of mercy and the six scenes from the parable of the vineyard, all put in parallel'. They portray, as he states simply, 'some of the deepest thoughts of the medieval philosophers and theologians' (1915: 150).[1] Tafuri, however, renders the parable as a fundamental choice: between treating the present as inevitable and inert, a kind of natural state, or as a confluence of circumstances and choices, a moment forged out of chaos and pregnant with possibilities.

The Dignity of the Moment
I have long found Tafuri's work important because of the obligation it imposes upon the historian of architecture to stage a confrontation between the past and present; because of his assertion of the fragility of the historical images from which we draw so much authority; and because of his insistence upon the open nature of what comes next. The poignancy of this lecture rests in no mean way on its status as one of his last (perhaps even *the*

last of his) public lectures, delivered under circumstances in which he was well aware of his own mortality. As it happened, he died one year and one day after delivering this oration. It was entitled 'Le forme del tempo' (February 22, 1993) and given in the Aula Magna of the Tolentini complex at Venice, where in the course of his twenty-five years as chair of architectural history he had, arguably, gone further to clarify the responsibilities of those who would enter that field than any individual of his time. As in Benedetto's retelling of the medieval parable of the besieged boy taking solace in the pleasure of his honey, Tafuri sought to persuade us that the goal of history is to foster a critical consciousness that is not blind to the conditions in which each of us works and thinks and that returns to the present, rather than the past, responsibility for the future.

In February 1993, Tafuri's subject was Venice and the way its temporality is absorbed and interiorised to render the island-city as a mask. He gestures to an essay by Georg Simmel (1907), in which the Berliner observes that the Venetians 'are somewhat like actors who vanish to the left and to the right of the scene, where alone the play takes place, being without causality in the reality of what occurred before, and without effect in the reality of what comes after' (**Fig. 2**). A little later he continues: 'And here is the true cause of Venice's dreamlike character which has long been noticed. Reality always startles us' (Simmel 1907: 44).

To the figure of the imperilled medieval boy beset by wolves and dragons Tafuri adds that of the tricipitium, famously captured in Titian's *Allegory of Time Governed by Prudence* (1565–70) (**Fig. 3**). Exercising a figure that embodies distrust in the future — almost taken, as Tafuri suggests, as 'the public symbol of Venice' — Titian rehearses the ancient notion of time as cyclical: youth (represented by the figure of the dog) gives way to maturity (the bear), which in turn gives way to age (again the wolf). Above each head of Titian's tricipitium we read the words 'Ex praeterito / praesens prudenter agit / ni future[m?] actione[m?] deturpet' — 'from the experience of the past, the present acts in prudence, lest it spoil the actions of the future' (Tafuri 1993: 182–83; also 1985: 20–23). But always the wolf, ready to consume. And always reality, ready to startle.

For the past is not like Venice. It does not have, to again quote Simmel, 'the ambivalent beauty of an adventure that is immersed in a life without roots, like a blossom floating in the sea' (Simmel 1907: 46). It is messy, rife with conflict and compromise, in every respect as complex and contradictory as the present. Hence the importance of the *moment* as that unit of historical time in which intentions, circumstances and their respective limits converge. History is less an arc than an accumulation; less a line than a series of points marking the intersections of all manner of lines — it is always a mess, and where the past is a mess, the historian has one of two jobs to do: to play the housekeeper, putting things in order, defining for each bit of detritus a proper place, to determine what belongs and what does not — to suppress chaos and focus on enjoying the sweet honey one discovers under difficult

Figure 3: Allegory of Time Governed by Prudence, by Titian, ca. 1565. Photo courtesy of National Gallery, London. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

circumstances; or to agitate, rendering everything banal, declaring the past a crime scene and documenting as best one can those traces and effects that remain to be found — to refuse the mask and to foster a healthy distrust of the comforting effects of narrative.

Hence the title under which Tafuri's lecture would eventually be published: *La dignità dell'attimo* (The Dignity of the Moment), referencing the concessions one makes to the past as something that can be dealt with on its own terms. According dignity to the moment is to wake up to the world as it was and to give up on the past we want in the present.

Critic and Conscience

The idea of intellectual responsibility this suggests lurked in the background during my time as a student at Victoria University of Wellington, with special reference to a defining line of New Zealand's Education Act of 1989. This Act of Parliament was drafted and debated under a succession of education ministers, but first and most notably under Prime Minister David Lange, who had assumed that portfolio to oversee a series of sweeping education reforms. He pushed these through amidst an ugly breakdown of the Labour Party's leadership around economic issues that had become all consuming in the wake of the '87 Crash, which saw Geoffrey Palmer assume the premiership and steer Labour towards the opposition benches for most of the following decade. Perhaps as a consequence of these more immediate and unsettling events, the Act responded to Lange's vision of the special burden borne by public institutions in maintaining the long view.

The Act stipulated that beyond being simply a place of advanced education and research, 'a repository of knowledge and expertise,' the university should also 'accept

a role as critic and conscience of society' (New Zealand Government 1989: 162, subss 4[a][iv-v]; also Jones, Galvan and Woodhouse 2000).

Discussion around the role of the university — and especially of the humanities therein — was noticeably punctuated by this motif across the 1990s, especially as during that decade, the university sector was squeezed in a way that seems fairly mild now, while also grappling with the nature of its basic obligations. Having left New Zealand a decade ago, I see no reason to discard this idea of the university, imbued as it is with the notion that academic freedoms are bound up with intellectual and social responsibilities. Of course, as Stefan Collini observes at the outset of his book *What Are Universities For?* 'Asking what something is *for* all too often turns out to be asking for trouble' (2012: 1). The same can be said for asking what something *is* when what it *is* implies what it should *do*. This applies to architectural history as much as to any form of intellectual work. And we are not doing our job if we don't court trouble by asking.

Books on Rome

Historians of all specialisations subjected their field to intense scrutiny across the twentieth century's middle decades, in part responding to a paradox, exposed around the Second World War, of history's capacity to serve as both a civilising force and a legislation for the most horrific acts of inhumanity. Marc Bloch's posthumously published *Apologie pour l'histoire*, which he wrote in 1944 (the year of his execution), is an urgent expression of this intellectual crisis. The progressive French debate in which he played a major part, anchored to the journal originally called *Annales d'histoire* économique *et sociale*, explored the political effects of writing a history concerning neither great deeds nor great men (Burke 1991). It gave new meaning to the idea of *faire l'histoire* as an act of perpetual reconstruction — discovering new images and relationships through the erosion of historical certainties (Le Goff and Nora 1974). It demonstrated the capacity of narrative to exclude and alienate, and provoked a search for new bases for writing history, new tools and tactics that could attend, layer by layer, to a 'total history' that would always and necessarily remain beyond reach. The totalitarian regimes that had arisen in the 1920s and '30s served as a close reminder of the dangerous ends to which historical abstractions, like the imperial model of ancient Rome, could be enlisted.

Post-war scholars of intellectual history at Cambridge likewise argued against the kind of historical clarity that can only come from preventing, as the saying goes, the facts from getting in the way of a good story. This kind of history, claimed Quentin Skinner, is mythology, rather than history, and to 'demand from the history of thought a solution to our own immediate problems is [...] to commit not merely a methodological fallacy, but something like a moral error' (1969: 53). In the conclusion to his seminal article 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', Skinner draws the distinction between 'what is necessary and what is the product merely of our own contingent arrangements' (1969: 53) — a distinction that recalls

Figure 4: The Gold Coast, 2012. Photo by John Gollings. Reproduced with permission of the photographer.

the operative difference between chaos and the tidy room, consciousness and nonchalance.

The ethical imperative of all of these ideas of history, its uses and its tasks, finds an extreme expression in the final gesture made by the poet and aviator Lauro De Bosis. In the midst of Mussolini's rule of Italy, the 29-year-old took to the skies above the capital in October 1931 to distribute two documents respectively exhorting King Victor Emmanuel III to act in a manner worthy of his office and the citizens of Rome to recall the virtues of personal freedom. De Bosis traded fuel load for printed matter and after a half-hour flight across Rome dropping antifascist tracts he drifted out to sea where he is presumed to have crashed (Mudge 2004). An extraordinary episode on its own, it takes on greater meaning when we factor in the note he penned in the early hours of the morning of his final flight. He dispatched it to his friend Francesco Luigi Ferrari to publish in the Belgian review *Le Soir*, a final testament that first appeared in French as *Histoire de ma mort* (1931), and eventually in English as *The Story of My Death* (1933).

When my wife showed me an anthologised version of this note, I was in the middle of writing my dissertation. The imperative of this young writer seemed to resonate perfectly with the mission of my own subject: to absorb into the study of architectural history Mario Tronti's idea of a critique of ideology as a project just as prepared to take on the ideological scaffolding of the left as that of the right (Tafuri 1969; Tronti 1966: 152–59). De Bosis offers us a powerful image when he advises readers that 'Besides my letters, I am going to throw out several copies of a

magnificent book by Bolton King: *Fascism in Italy* [1931]. As one throws bread on a starving village,' he wrote, 'one must throw history books on Rome' (2004: 118).

If we can ask Venice to stand for the serenity of history's resolved images, Rome, in contrast, represents the inherent conflicts of its substance: the past embodied in all its messiness, an accumulation of moments not to be taken for granted but to work at and unravel — and, moreover, a field that obliges the present to accept its complexities and contradictions.

The Gold Coast

So here we are on the Gold Coast (**Fig. 4**): a city having a moment; an example of a *kind of* city having a moment; and a city we can treat *as a* moment around which to bend issues of greater import.[2] What happened here? How does understanding what happened here help us to understand what has happened in similar situations elsewhere? And what structural issues does the Gold Coast and situations like it present to architecture as a field of knowledge and practice? I risk confusing physics and metaphysics with this mixed sense of the moment. The point, however, remains that while there is evidently work to be done in documenting and setting in order the events and episodes that have together shaped the Gold Coast of the present, we should also feel obliged to keep an eye on those instances in which we need, as it were, to throw history books at the city. By this I do not simply mean the City of Gold Coast, although my colleagues and I are getting ready to do that, too (Leach, Rickard and Jones 2014; Bosman, Dederkorkut-Howes and Leach 2015). The city is

also a metaphor for the bastions of ideas and abstractions maintained out of habit, and in this sense the Gold Coast presents a powerful foil against which to view the assumptions we are inclined to make about architecture when we think of it at all.

There is much to commend the pioneering responsibilities and anthropological analogies that are bound up in my being, I think, the first architectural historian ever to open up shop there. In his 1971 study *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, British historian Reyner Banham observed that 'like earlier generations of English intellectuals who taught themselves Italian in order to read Dante in the original, [he] learned to drive in order to read Los Angeles in the original' (2009: 5). I have not (yet) taken his advice, or my daughter's example, and learned to surf, but I have been working to get my head around the situation that the Gold Coast encapsulates, and has described, as a moment in the architectural history of Australia and the region; and as a moment, more broadly, in contemporary architecture. The challenge is to engage the subject meaningfully and on its own terms, and to be able to distinguish between, as Skinner had it, 'what is necessary and what is the product merely of our own contingent arrangements.'

As it happens, this is not the first moment in which the Gold Coast has been called to account — although the best examples of the kind of penetrating analysis I think the city can sustain now date to more than half a century ago, when there was a great deal less material to work through, but when the main lines of the Gold Coast's development already appeared to have been committed to the page. Two documents in particular address the *problem* of the Gold Coast, appearing within months of one another at the end of the 1950s, when it was still what Melbourne architect and critic Robin Boyd called 'a sort of cream, or thick skin, skimmed off the top of Australia's mid-century boom' (1960: 69). The first was a special issue of the official journal of the (then Royal) Australian Institute of Architects, *Architecture in Australia*, published in 1959 to coincide both with the Gold Coast receiving its charter and with the Queensland centenary. The second was published in 1960 and concerned Australian culture, cities and architecture more generally, this being Boyd's classic townscape-era reflection on *The Australian Ugliness*.

Many of the elements that would come to be of decisive importance to the city's image had already figured into its building and planning programme by the end of that decade: Bruce Small (who would in 1967 become mayor) had led a delegation to Florida in the mid-1950s and returned home with dreams of extensive canal estates that had been planned out and implemented under the expertise of Viennese émigré Karl Langer; the Brisbane firm Lund Hutton Newell had realised the first 'high-rise' apartment block, Kinkabool; and Melbourne entrepreneur Stanley Korman had built the first integrated hotel and gas station complex (the Chevron), securing the city's second ever liquor licence (after Jim Cavill's Surfers Paradise Hotel) (see Rickard 2013). The Tiki aesthetic had found a toehold there, as had that of what Boyd termed 'Austerica' — neon signs and a 'rainbow of plastic paint' mere extensions of a cultural surface that captured, too, deep suntans and what one writer called a 'climate dictated exposure' (Boyd 1960: 68; see also Kirsten 2007).

There was much to recommend the Gold Coast, wrote several of the critics who contributed to the special issue of *Architecture in Australia*. 'For a holiday the respectable family from the south is happy to leave drab and cold orderliness behind; for a holiday the visiting businessman is eager to explore the tight alleys and dim restaurants, where nobody can be noticed but everyone can be seen.' The list goes on: mothers, children, 'business girls at their prettiest and young men at their keenest,' all exploring the 'ceaseless offerings and lures of every kind [of] synonym to their own desire for the satisfaction denied them in their distant, orderly and boring suburban surroundings.' Still the refrain: 'For a holiday. But nobody would want to live with it. Unconsciously every individual is aware that the precious aspects of life require more than a wild jungle of indecorum' (Editors 1959: 51–52).

In writing of the Australian 'ugliness' Boyd famously begins with a clarification that becomes operative in defining his subject. 'The ugliness I mean is skin deep,' he writes; 'skin is as important as its admirers like to make of it', but 'Australians make much of it', to the extent that one's regard for the surface and its status 'is bound up with the collective character of the Australian people'. When Boyd concludes by observing that the 'Australian ugliness begins with fear of reality', he points to the anxieties bound up in the absorption of the American streetscape into the Australian suburb and the false materiality of their respective buildings: what he describes from the very first pages as 'the surfeit of colour, the love of advertisements, the dreadful language, the ladylike euphemisms outside lavatory doors' — those tendencies that coalesce around Austericanism and the featurism to which the Australian city had become problematically susceptible (Boyd 1960: 1–2, 225).

These documents pull the Gold Coast apart in the mode of an autopsy. The Gold Coast is what happens when Australian architecture takes its eye off the ball. 'It may be too late on the Gold Coast though not elsewhere,' they actually said (Editors 1959: 52).

Architects without Architecture

When Sydneysider Neville Gruzman met with criticism the first exhibition of entries to the Gold Coast Architecture Awards in 1984, he played into a trope that had already been well established. His suggestion, as reported in the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, was that the architects of Sydney would be doing Australia a favour by heading north in bulldozers and pushing the city into the surf. On the other side of the fence Melbourne architect Ian Douglas observed the following year that 'this is a fun place and it produces fun architecture, not necessarily good architecture' (1985). Although Douglas was more reserved in his judgment than Gruzman, the two concurred with the various writers who had paid attention to the Gold Coast in the decades since it became a city and consolidated its claim as Australia's playground. One looked at the Gold
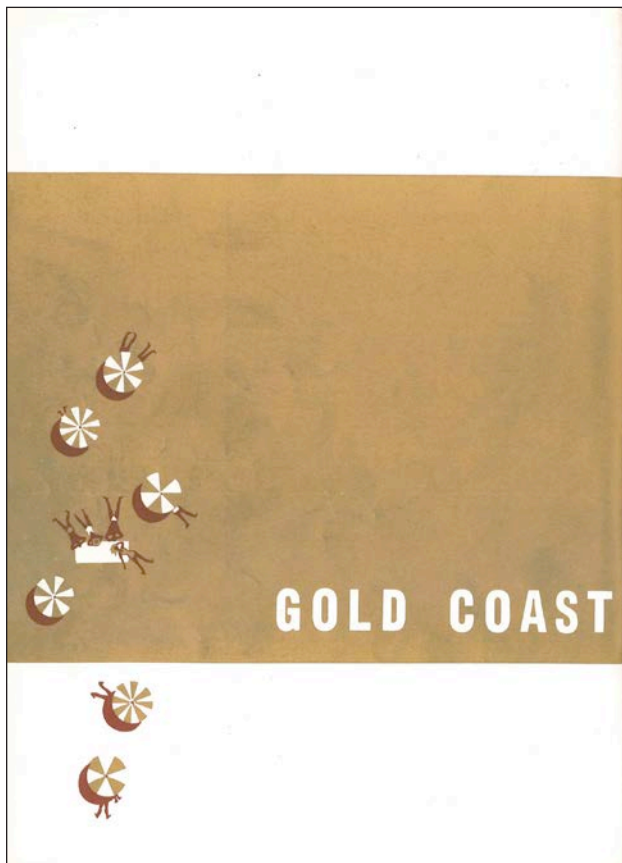
Figure 5: Gold Coast, by Milo Dunphy. Reprinted from *Architecture in Australia* (January-March 1959).

Coast with an eye trained to the dangers to Australian architecture that it represented.

Whatever was happening there was at odds with the values habitually seen elsewhere in Australia as a practice variously informed by a meaningful landscape, a larrikin intellectualism and the craft of building. The Gold Coast was a postmodern city haunted by the image of postmodernism (more Jameson 1991 than Jencks 1977).

By the time the Gold Coast Division of the RAIA was established in 1974 there were still only a dozen or so architects in residence here, many of them running local offices for firms based in Brisbane, Melbourne or Sydney in order to supervise the construction of towers or resorts. By the end of that decade the population was a sixth of its current size and the number of architects had doubled. When Bill Heather spoke about the nature of architectural practice on the Coast to the Queensland Chapter of the Institute in Brisbane in 1978, it was also as the inverse of an air of inertia and complacency that he felt had set in throughout the State, and especially in what he called 'the branch office capital of Australia.' He asserted: 'Impatience and ambition should be the order of the day, a restructuring of our activities should attempt to tap the vitality of the small cell rather than let the inertia of the large organism choke the system.'

Heather's address is a typical document of the optimism with which architects on the Gold Coast held their experience in professional practice. The problem of the architecture that made the Gold Coast infamous, though, is much less (1964) than of architects without architecture.

We have all the tools we need to study the architects and their work, the builders and their buildings, the developers and their visions, realised or otherwise. We can head to the archives to better assess the agents of growth and development and the circumstances that allowed things to happen at the speeds that they did — and to study those later documents that regard this defining moment of construction and destruction with nostalgia. We can visit buildings, study drawings and talk to designers and inhabitants. We can pore over real estate patterns, brochures, newspaper articles and promotional films to assess architecture's complicity in the Gold Coast subject.

But we are left with the question of what architecture *is* in this setting, and what, consequently, it *does* here. The postmodern moment has already done away with the distinctions we once made between high and low, origins and imitations, that would help us on our way, and there are a suite of studies from the 1970s onwards that offer some clues as to how to proceed. The Gold Coast is not Las Vegas, nor is it Los Angeles, Manhattan, or Dubai — but it does pose a conceptual problem that they all share. What, here, is the proper subject of the architectural historian's attentions?

We should remain wary of finding models in the treatment of more famous cases, but perhaps a new book by French sociologist Henri Lefebvre will push things along in an interesting direction. Discovered by Łukasz Stanek as an unpublished manuscript while working through the Lefebvre papers, the book that has now appeared as *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment* (2014) is the French scholar's only volume to take the philosophy of architecture as its subject. His topic, though, is an architecture that is problematised by the irreconcilability of those practices involved in the production of space as modern architecture's 'privileged medium' with either 'the prestigious art of erecting monuments' or the 'professional's contribution to the indispensable activity of construction' (Stanek 2014: 3). The book was prompted by a reading of the Spanish resort town of Benidorm in Costa Blanca, with which he begins, and which sprang up seemingly in the 1950s and '60s from no-where, slinking into varying states of borrowed glamour and disrepute in the decades that followed.

Benidorm provides a 'critique of asceticism', argues Stanek (2014: viii), and cities like it present an impediment to what we might think of as architecture's strongest values, which are quickly traded for an infrastructure based on pleasure and relaxation and their paradoxical offer of an urbanised experience of 'getting away from' the city. The high-rises of these cities are hotels and apartment blocks rather than corporate headquarters, their permanent populations oriented towards the various service industries that keep afloat an economy built on permanent transience. We could indeed read the Gold Coast against these themes, adding it to an international suite of cities measured against the questionable success of Miami Beach, Honolulu and Acapulco: cities and territories famous for their brash development logic and poor grasp of architectural quality that nonetheless proffer settings in which to set aside the rigours of the working

year. These cities together describe a threat to architecture with a capital 'A' by means of their patent subordination of architectural ideas to the logic of pleasure (and of development and real estate speculation as peculiar manifestations of the same).[3] And a threat, too, to the maturity for which a city of substance might yearn. Again, Lefevre: 'Unfortunately, beaches can support no constructions other than those that are forgotten. Anything more and the structure would obliterate the space of enjoyment, in the process destroying its most characteristic feature: fluidity, transition' (Lefebvre 2014: 49).

The response to such criticisms as those tabled by Gruzman and Douglas is that outsiders simply don't *get* the Gold Coast — a singular city, distinctive, replete with exceptional experiences. One forgives its ambivalent relationship with those measures to which other, older cities are beholden, by-products as they are of what architect Eddie Hayes had already described in 1958 as an enthusiastic and indiscriminate development, an era of naïve innocence and surgical cynicism to which nostalgia now accrues. It remains to history, though, to test the substance of this past, and to hold the present accountable for the values it finds therein.

Begging the Questions

We could trade the image of the young boy on Benedetto's tympanum with which we began for that of Milo Dunphy's frontispiece for the Gold Coast issue of *Architecture in Australia* (**Fig. 5**). There is a danger, of sorts, in taking comfort in a respite from reality — or indeed in the security of the Gold Coast's singularity. Matthew Condon recently recalled the reflections of novelist Frank Moorhouse: 'Maybe I saw the Gold Coast as a sort of urban nervous collapse, because as a city of holidaymakers it was a city of people exhausted from a year's work, on the edge, worn out, recovering' (Condon 2014: 12). It has, as Boyd had already observed in *The Australian Ugliness*, long served to embody Australia's collective anxieties, played out on surfaces rendered substantial. Moorhouse extends this idea to the city entire. The Gold Coast 'resembled a city that had been designed as an architect's model of a highrise city' (2011) — discarded and washed up on the beach. Here, in the end, is our subject: the negotiation of ideas and reality, of intentions and their consequences.

In a preface to the second edition of (1980) NB preface unpaginated. It would be problematic to directly invoke Tafuri's premises for architectural history as to catechise the Gold Coast in relation to its participation in the 'development of capitalist society' — although I would not rule it out as a theme. Tafuri's clarification, however, does identify a stance that those researching and writing about architectural history might well take; one that allows this work to serve the historian's vocation in a very precise way — to act as a critic and conscience to architectural culture and society; to set aside nonchalance in favour of consciousness; and to accord the moment its proper dignity. 'First in the anticipation of ideologies and in begging the questions': What is architecture, as an *institution*, here on the Gold Coast? What kind of critical distance do we need

to bridge the representational distance between what actually happened and what we think happened here? And what is its substance? Is it a shield that prevents us from gaining clarity over the effects of past decisions and actions over the present? Or a lens that comforts us with images of the simpler life?

The Gold Coast is indeed having a moment, but to the detriment of the city's long-term prospects and to the detriment of architecture's capacity to act upon the city as a force for good, it is a moment that is too open to trading image for substance. And so the job remains to write the volumes that might yet be thrown down on Surfers. It will give the beach goers something to read and it might wake from their reverie those for whom the image of the city and the image of criticality are enough.

Author's Note

Notes

[1] Porter takes a stance in this article on the name of Benedetto (147–148), which I have followed here. He also directs his reader to an early definitive reading of the tympanum by Adolphe Duchalais (1855).

[2] For a description of this city, see Leach 2014.

[3] Stanek rightly points to the stake of Tafuri's ideas in this problem, especially as explored in *Progetto e utopia* (1973). See Stanek (2014), xxxiv.

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