

ORA NEWS

Office of Regional Architecture



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office of regional architecture



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THIS MONTH

Introduction

Director's Note

Staff Introductions

Monthly article: Sense of Place

INTRODUCTION

ORA News is a monthly newsletter in which we let you know about our practice of Architecture in the Wheatbelt and Great Southern, and issues of interest to all of us who live in, work alongside, and enjoy architecture and design. The aim of the newsletter is to keep readers updated on what we are doing in our firm, discuss informative topics about architecture, and share stories which reflect the values of ORA. We hope you enjoy this month's edition of ORA News.



Rosalie Pech Eva

Welcome to our first edition of ORA News, This issue sees a new addition to our practice staff, Alex Mackenzie Architect, who travels daily from Northam to our Brookton office and, although an experienced practitioner, has very recently become registered by the Architect's Board of WA as the 3254th Architect in Western Australia's history. Congratulations Alex, a momentous achievement!

Our article this month was written by Megan Rex, who has completed her course work for her Masters of Architecture, and is now undertaking the practical component of the course before graduating from UWA. Megan hails from Wedgecarrup near Wagin. Megan talks about the value of 'sense of place' to our experience of the built and natural environment, and about the sense of place she experiences in some places very special to her. Although an intangible quality, sense of place is critical to our enjoyment and appreciation of our local places, and can be created and fostered through sensitive architectural and landscaping design, whether on the scale of a garden, a house, a community building, or a town precinct. ORA projects focus on their contribution to sense of place right from the outset, always seeking to become special places in our Clients daily lives and local communities.

You will see from our staff profiles that our background and experiences lend themselves to creating a responsive and practical architecture, well suited to our residential, commercial, community not-for-profit and local government clients throughout the region. Should you have any comment on the current newsletters, or would like to see our response to a particular topic of relevance to you, please contact me direct on rpecheva@regionalarchitect.com.au or 0429 421 287.

INTRODUCING OUR STAFF



Rosalie Pech Eva

Director and Principal Architect

Rosalie grew up in the Great Southern region on a farming property near Gnowangerup. She graduated from the University of Western Australia with Bachelor of Architecture, with 1st Class Honours in 1991. Created the practice Rosalie Pech Eva Architect in 2010 in order to share the benefits of high quality architectural design with regional clientele. Rosalie lives on a farming property outside of Brookton, with husband Gary Eva and son Henry, enjoying all the benefits of a rural life.



Natalia Hall

Administration Officer

Natalia grew up in rural WA. After finishing her education she moved to Brookton, where she later married a local farmer. Natalia and Ian have two boys together, and they all love the rural life. Natalia started working at Rosalie Pech Eva Architect in May 2017. She enjoys watching the transformation of buildings. Natalia enjoys immersing herself in nature and spending quality time with family and friends.



Alex Mackenzie

Project Architect

Alex is a new member of our staff as well as a newly registered Architect. She graduated from Curtin University with a Master's of Architecture in 2010. She has gained a wealth of experience from working in various Architecture firms in both Melbourne and Perth during and after her studies. Alex received a graduation award travel scholarship which she used to travel around Europe researching and learning about architecture. Alex now resides in Northam where she is currently undergoing her own design and build project with her partner.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SENSE OF PLACE

By Megan Rex

Do you ever drive down your driveway and look at a tree and remember the time you climbed that tree and created a fort? Or maybe you drive past the local hall remembering a school dance you had as a teenager. Maybe just sitting at your dining table reminds you of many Christmas lunches with your family, provoking feelings of happiness. These sort of memories all contribute to the 'sense of place' you have for certain locations. Having a strong sense of place contributes to the quality of life of a community.

At Office of Regional Architecture (ORA) we put a lot of time and energy into understanding places and what makes certain places special for various individuals and groups of people. We believe that specific regional architecture is exceptionally special to locals as well as visitors because of the sense of place that it creates.

WHAT IS SENSE OF PLACE?

You've probably heard the term before or you have your own emotional sense of place attached to certain geographical locations, however you may have never put it down into words. In general, sense of place describes our relationship with places, expressed through emotions, biographies, imagination, stories and personal experiences (Basso, 1996).

HOW SENSE OF PLACE RELATES TO HERITAGE ARCHITECTURE

At ORA we undertake a significant number of projects with some heritage or conservation component involved. Sense of place is an important factor involved in determining what components of buildings should be conserved. In Australia we use a document called the ICOMOS Burra Charter as a guide to conservation and the management of places with cultural significance. The Burra Charter defines cultural significance as aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past present or future generations. Sense of Place contributes to the cultural significance of a place because it adds social value. Because of this, a strong sense of place, among other factors, being associated with a building or location means that the Burra Charter will recommend this place be looked after and conserved.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SENSE OF PLACE IN OLD AND NEW ARCHITECTURE

Fostering community is extremely important in regional areas. When people feel a strong sense of place towards their community it catalyses many things which contribute to improving quality of life within that place. It's like a sports team, if you feel a strong connection with your team, you don't want to let them down and hence you are likely to play better increasing the 'quality', skill level and success rate of the team. Having a strong sense of place associated with architecture means communities and individuals will look after these places, feel proud of these places and hence enjoy living in these places.

At ORA we don't want to just create spaces, we want to create spaces you love and feel an emotional connection to. With growing concerns for the environment, temporary building solutions are not sustainable and hence long term solutions that are adaptable become a much more desirable option both economically and environmentally. It is important to think about what sort of spaces you will or already love and want to keep in your life forever.

With all this in mind don't be afraid of change. When planning renovations, alterations and additions it is important to think about what components of each space are special. Perhaps it's not the room itself but instead the furnishings within it. Or maybe it's nothing to do with the interior that feels special but instead the external fabric of a building that gives you that strong sense of place. Some people feel the strongest sense of place from buildings they may have never been inside.

We have heard stories from our grandparents and parents about what used to happen in various buildings around regional WA and no doubt these buildings remain historically significant to each of the rural communities today. The sense of place that our older generations feel for these places can often be maintained in the external fabric of the building. Interiors can change for adaptive reuse so that it is possible to keep these types of buildings in use for future generations while maintaining the sense of place that it provides as part of the townscape or part of someone's memory.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Local Sense of Place

The only times I remember going inside the Arthur River Hall were on voting days when I was a small child. The hall is located right on the Highway as I drive home to the farm. As an Arthur River local the external fabric of the Hall gives me a strong sense of place towards my local community. It's historical, rural architectural style contributes largely to this.

Individual Sense of Place

A dead tree at the top of my driveway gives me a strong sense of place for my home farm. I don't know if it means anything to the rest of my family however for me seeing that tree out my bus window every day was a sign that I was home and still to this day remains significant to me. I see it as a kind of monument to home.

Reflecting on this article we challenge you to ask yourself what places do you feel a strong sense of place for? What specific pieces of architecture, landscapes, furnishings, materials or objects contribute to this feeling for these places?

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