

PLACE PROFILE: ARCHITECTURE

presented by  Australian Institute of ArchitectsHEIKE RAHMANN
DESIGNER PROFILE**What is your area of specialty or difference?**

I have a background in landscape architecture with experience in Germany, Japan and Australia. Working in Germany in the broad spectrum of landscape architecture, ranging from environmental design to developing design concepts for industrial cultural heritage conservation, I specialised in Japan on design theory in the urban context. Currently, I lecture in the landscape architecture program at the University of Adelaide at both undergraduate and

graduate level.

Which is the Adelaide project you've been involved with that best illustrates that?

Providing the only landscape architecture program in South Australia the School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design seeks to offer a wide range of projects. In my studio, students focus on the interpretation of urban and periphery to develop design solutions for temporary installations on the fringe of Adelaide's CBD.

This semester I also work collaboratively with the Adelaide Botanic Gardens on a planting design subject that integrates the environmental science with the art of design.

Is it different designing for Adelaide than for other locations?

Generally speaking I believe that every location has its own design culture and implementation procedures.

Coming to Adelaide via Tokyo, perceived difference could of course not be more obvious. The tremendous dynamic in the design and construction industry is just striking in Tokyo, which is said to rejuvenise itself every 10 to 20 years. It is an extremely exciting and inspiring place to work in and the impression often is that everything is feasible.

Yet there is also a downside to this dynamic. In recent years the focus moved to large-scale redevelopment project, covering entire districts, ever more traditional neighbourhoods vanish from the urban fabric. Heritage conservation is certainly not as big a topic at it is here in Adelaide. So it might be said that designing for Adelaide is more challenging, as the contextual situation is rather important.

What are the special characteristics - if any - you need to take into account?

From my perspective, Adelaide appears to be rather conservative and the preservation of buildings, parklands and the rigorously urban structure seems to dominate most discussions. In this environment, decision-making processes are complicated and need a long time.

Although I appreciate the involvement with local identity and heritage, this situation unfortunately also prevents the developments in highly valuable locations. It just is a tragic to see the potential e.g. of the le Cornu side in North Adelaide not being used, even temporarily. I believe we cannot afford to waste our urban resources anymore.

What is the hottest theme in landscape architecture right now?

Sustainability is certainly a burning issue at the moment not only for landscape architecture but also for architecture and urban design, although it is often not fancy. The necessary part now is to look beyond bland conventional approaches, beyond ticking the boxes, and to find a holistic approach that includes discussion about aesthetics and qualitative space as well.

An exciting task for landscape architecture is that it also implies to re-evaluate our perception of landscape in general. Limited to the notion of the picturesque in the past, the extended field of the discipline now includes themes such as urban agriculture and cultural sustainability.

The AIA's theme for its local awards is "Is Adelaide Architecture Boring."

Prestigious contemporary buildings are certainly scarce in Adelaide. Excellency is important, however, what I interests me more than single iconic buildings is the overall quality of the urban fabric and the quality of urban space. To create excitement in a city complexity and diversity is needed, both in terms of aesthetical and functional aspect.

ANOTHER RESPONSE TO THIS YEAR'S AIA THEME.

ADELAIDE ARCHITECTURE BORING? DOESN'T HAVE TO BE...

BY LACHLAN COLQUHOUN

At its worst Adelaide architecture can be dreadful. Rows of McMansions in the outer suburbs, leafy eastern suburbs despoiled by fake Georgian facades, drab public buildings like the execrable Napier at the Uni of Adelaide. At its best, we have some fabulous old Victorian and Federation Houses, elegant North Terrace and some brave modern buildings like Santos, SA Water and the wonderful copper cone of the Magistrates Court. But despite so many excellent practitioners out there and all the goodwill in the world, we still seem collectively scared to believe that our architecture

can be world class. We want to be brave but something is holding us back. Some of it, sad to say, comes from our leadership. Premier Rann is a master of spin and has an admirable Thinkers in Residence program, much of it focussed on improving Adelaide as a city in terms of its planning, architecture and design. It was only weeks ago that he was showering praise on our new Thinker, Professor Laura Lee from Carnegie Mellon, a highly regarded architect.

About the same time, however, he was warning people that the Government's share of the \$42 billion stimulus package needed to

be spent fast, with no reference to style, taste or innovation. "Anyone who thinks they can muck around trying to get some architecture award, they'll just miss out," Rann said. The danger is that we'll end up with another generation of Stalinist-style blockhouses to blight the architectural landscape for years to come. And if that happens then yes, Adelaide architecture will be truly boring. But it doesn't have to be that way. Because of South Australia's unique location we have a sustainability challenge many cities do not have. The pages of *Place* attest to the fact that our architects view sustainability as the hot

topic in architecture right now. Fortunately we have outstanding architecture education and training here with a long 50 year tradition, so we have the intellectual and creative firepower to cope with this challenge. The result could be, should be and hopefully will be an inspiring new generation of buildings which use the theme of sustainability in a truly creative way. Because we are at the cutting edge of the climate challenge we should be able to produce an architecture that meets and overcomes that challenge, not just in terms of functionality but also aesthetics. Now that wouldn't be boring at all.

