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# MONUMENT<sup>53</sup>

ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

## EASTERN PHILOSOPHY

KERRY HILL IN TAIPEI

**BATHING BEAUTY**  
LIPPMANN'S BOY CHARLTON

**OUT WITH THE OLD**  
RENZO IN ROME

**COUNTRY LIFE**  
TONY FRETTON

**WHAT'S NEXT**  
VENICE BIENNALE

DECEMBER/JANUARY 02-03  
AUD\$16.45[INC GST]  
NZ\$17.50[INC GST]  
RM\$29.90  
SNG\$15.90[INC GST]  
PRINT POST APPROVED  
PP 233867 00013

ISSN 1320-1115




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9 771320 111004







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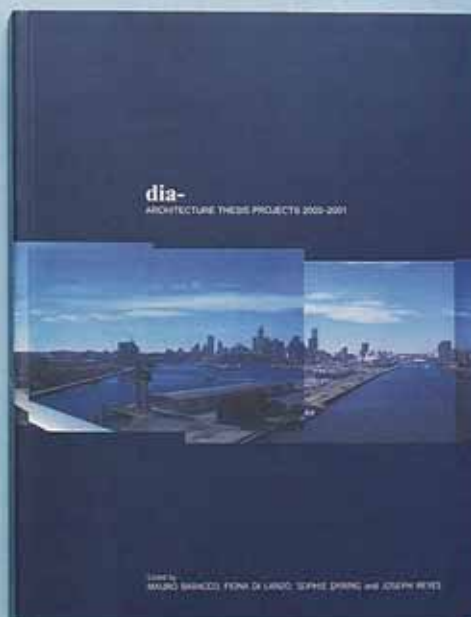
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PHOTOGRAPHY: KATIE WILSON



EDITED BY MAURO BIANCHI, FEDERICA LINDO, SOPHIE DORING AND JOSEPH REYES



## GLENN MURCUTT: A SINGULAR ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE

HAIG BECK, JACKIE COOPER

Reviewed by Gerard Reinmuth

AT FIRST GLANCE, this book appears to be a classic Beck/Cooper production, featuring the same combination of texts, architect's comments, sketches, working drawings and photographs – held together within tight graphic layout – that has made *UME* one of the world's better architectural magazines. Given this approach – conservative in some aspects but squarely placed across the complete realm of architectural practice – Murcutt would appear the ideal subject for a Beck/Cooper monograph.

However, on closer inspection, the book reveals little else than that obtained in the first pass, with the additional layers of insight and investigation that one might expect from such a volume being notably absent. In fact, the more one goes on, the whole structure of the book

begins to appear decidedly curious. Each project is preceded by a Beck/Cooper introduction, before an extended, often anecdotal text by Murcutt himself fleshes out issues that he felt important in each particular work. As a result, Beck/Cooper never give themselves the opportunity to get into any serious analysis, with their introductions resembling a *Benaud*-like commentary at the cricket, providing some respite during the pauses in play. Perhaps at least the format retains an honesty in presenting the book more as the “advertorial” that it is, rather than as a serious “scholarly work”.

Beck/Cooper's most notable contribution is the inclusion of the text written for *UME* (1996) on Murcutt's design process for the *Broken Hill Mining Museum*. Contrary to the rest of the

book, this is a rigorous and insightful analysis of his process and something that I have turned to time and time again since its publication. This text also provides a mirror upon which to critique other aspects of the book, such as the selection and arrangement of drawings. Whereas the *Broken Hill* analysis trawls through selected drawings in an investigative manner, elsewhere in this book the drawings are bundled together as an appendix, without any apparent narrative strand or interpretative structure. The drawings are also badly printed – too small, often unclear – resembling more a collection of photocopies than a portfolio of drawings from one of Australia's finest architects.

A few too many photographs published around the wrong way, a graphic style that makes the

introductory essay hard to read – overall the book just isn't quite there. Nevertheless, *Glenn Murcutt: A Singular Architectural Practice* does provide the most luscious display of Murcutt's projects since Farrelly's *Three Houses* published by Phaidon some 10 years ago. The wait for the definitive monograph on the master's work, however, is not over yet.

Published by Images  
Distributed by Bookwise International  
256 pages RRP \$99.95 hardcover