Fulcrum

THE AA'S WEEKLY FREE SHEET

14

ISSUE FOURTEEN: MAY 25, 2011. TOPIC: THE MYTH OF "SUSTAINABILITY".

Sydney

means not end.

p.graham

Sustainability offers an ideology & a value proposition, & when you talk about sustainability in the context of architecture you need to think about it in terms of sustaining *what*, for *whom*, for *how long*.

In that you have a range of ethical, moral & technical issues that need solving. And I think that broad social context is what's often missing from architectural discourse. In fact, those concepts are core to mainstream architecture, yet the idea of sustainability has largely become thought to be some sort of aspect of engineering consultancy.

Its interesting to think of you at the AA, and those at other schools of architecture around the world, who for many years have been exploring leading ideas around ecological design, & sustainable design & all these sorts of things, before sustainability was even a concept. As a result there's a wealth of ideas that are really useful. But you look at all that rich history and you look at where governments are in actually implementing those ideas as minimum standards in buildings, and they're worlds apart. Its almost as if architects and all their inventiveness & experimentation over the years has not been able to inspire or convince the policy makers that there are viable alternatives to the systems and regulations we have in place today.

There is a certain problem with architectural education, which is quite often self-referential, and any building that attempts to implement sustainable design thinking is branded as 'eco-friendly' or some such term, almost as a gimmick.

The understanding is still very much architecture as the end, and sustainable as the means. But actually, in terms of where the discourse on sustainability is coming from, it's the other way around.

Architecture is the means, not the ends. So the form that a building takes, its composition, materials, indeed any of the design considerations need to address the social context, the issues of the day, site, location & so on. Architectural education has always promoted these things, but the difficulty comes when architecture is only for architecture, rather than being for society, or having a civic responsibility. There are many examples of buildings that are deemed to be sustainable and they get published in books and magazines, but they may not be actually environmentally sustainable, or economically sustainable at all. They may be out of fashion even before they're finished.

The way around this is for architecture schools to change the emphasis, so that we are not simply educating for the profession, but instead educating professionals.

That might mean we need to change the curriculum to be more critical, it might mean there needs to be studios that acknowledge that there's never been an ecologically sustainable building ever built (plenty designed very probably, but never built). We as educators don't know how to actually *deliver* real-world solutions for the built environment. It is up to the creative force of the student body, with their new minds and new perspectives, to make the theory real.

Peter Graham is Coordinator of the United Nations Environment Programme's Sustainable Building & Construction Initiative.

London

unnatural history.

l.young

"We have never seen Nature, but only our notions of Nature. 'Nature' is over; there is no sanctity left to defend; all that breathes is breathing unnatural air." Bruce Sterling.

Specimen 01: Amazon Garden
The coverted trophy of the eco movement, the Amazon is actually formed from a collection of ancient garden cities 35 times larger than LA's sprawl.

Specimen 02: Galapagos Zoo
The untouched wilderness of the Galapagos Islands is in reality a vast, managed landscape as flying ecologists in helicopter gunships cull feral goats.

Specimen 03: Wild GM Crops
In areas of America 80% of wild canola have modified genes. The term wild is no longer relevant.

Specimen 04: Super Pigeon
Since their domestication 5000 years ago, pigeon fanciers have engineered exotic bird breeds through selective mating.

Specimen 05: Urban Birds
The urban-dwelling Australian Silvereye has evolved a higher pitch call than its country counterparts to be heard over traffic.

Specimen 06: Mosquitos
Transgenic mosquitos engineered to fight Malaria are soon to be widely released into the wild. Swamp landscapes are becoming our prosthetic immune systems.

Specimen 07: Panda-dog
'Dog Modders' in China parade their latest creation the Panda-dog.

Specimen 08: Bipolar Mouse
Scientists have engineered a breed of schizophrenic mice to be used in lab experiments. Emotions are augmented and redisgned.

Specimen 09: Fake Eggs
In China, forgers have developed counterfeit eggs from gelatin & benzoic acid that cost half as much as chicken laid eggs.

Specimen 10: M. Jackson
Our own bodies have long been engineered specimens, sculpted balls of flesh evolving through technology from legend to freak & back.

Specimen 11: Blank Banannas
Seedless bananas are completely infertile, & can only reproduce by manual artificial grafting.

Specimen 12: GM Salmon
When FDA approved, the Aquaadvantage™ will be labelled only as 'Atlantic Salmon'.

Specimen 13: Designer Cat
Scientists have engineered a hypo-allergenic cat, free from irritants.

Specimen 14: Plastic Geology
The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is twice the size of Texas, a floating geology of daily detritus.

Specimen 15: Minesweepers
Dolphins have been developed by the US military as next-gen sonar detectors.

Specimen 16: Hybrid Orchids
Glorious ornate constructions of eco engineering, 125,000 hybrid species were in the last 13 years.

Specimen 17: Mobile Palm
On the LA skyline palm trees are augmented with mobile phone broadcast antennas to boost signals & maintain celebrity chic.

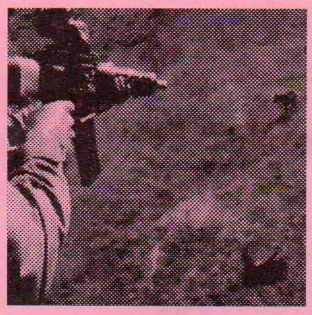
Specimen 18: Cane Toad
Originally introduced as a form of pest control, the species is reshaping Australian ecosystems.

Specimen 19: Crossing Crows
This group of crows have become so dependent on their urban habitats they can only survive by using pedestrian crossings to crack nuts for feeding.

20 Glow in the Dark Monkey
Because we can...

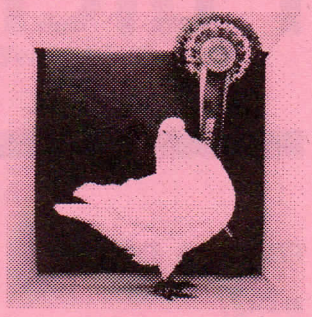
Liam Young is a tutor of Dip 6.

Specimen 01

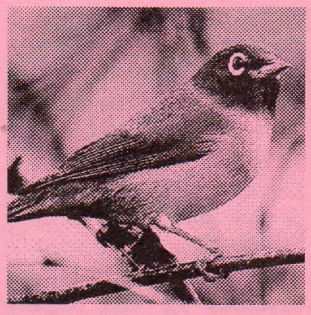


Specimen 02

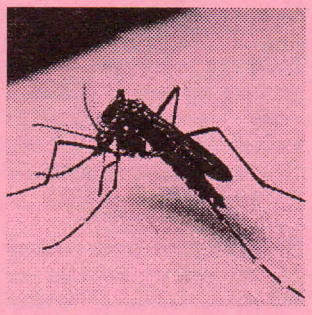
Specimen 03



Specimen 04



Specimen 05



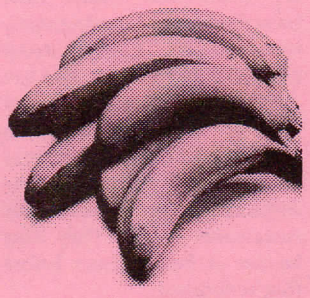
Specimen 06

Specimen 07

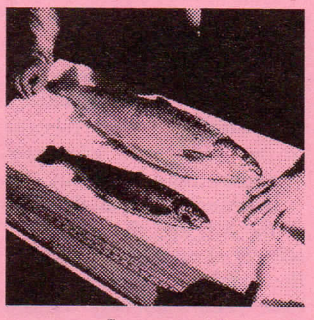
Specimen 08

Specimen 09

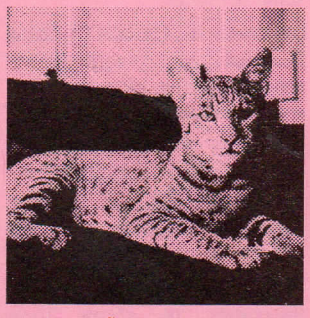
Specimen 10



Specimen 11

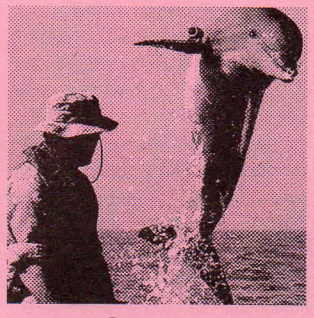


Specimen 12



Specimen 13

Specimen 14

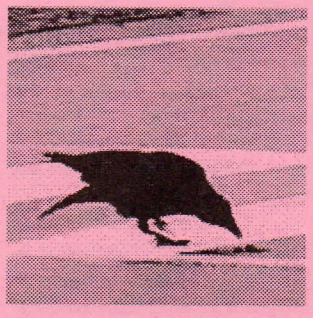


Specimen 15

Specimen 16

Specimen 17

Specimen 18



Specimen 19

Specimen 20