

RMIT DESIGN ARCHIVES JOURNAL

VOL 3 Nº 2 2013



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BRITISH NYLON

INTERNATIONAL

Cover Image and this page (detail)

George Kral, British Nylon Spinners
exhibit, Royal Melbourne Show, 1959

Photographer:
Wolfgang Sievers

In September 2013 the RMIT Design Archives in collaboration with the University of Brighton Design Archives hosted a one-day symposium at the RMIT Centre, Barcelona.

Opened by Professor Colin Fudge, President of RMIT Europe and Vice-President RMIT University, the Symposium titled *Design Exchange: building curatorial collaborations across continents* brought together speakers from RMIT, University of Brighton and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Its aim was to begin building an international alliance of design archive professionals to foster co-operation in the form of research projects, exhibitions, knowledge transfer, continuing professional development and doctoral research.

Chief amongst the ideas which emerged from the papers and the plenary session of Design Exchange was that of the 'active archive' and how this notion might reconceptualise the business of the contemporary archive and its role in public culture. The design archive was understood as a living thing, an active agent for creative interventions and translations. The Symposium raised questions such as: How do we understand a history of design that is not based on objects and names but people and the practices of historians, archivists, students, designers, curators, scholars and facilities? How can archives of past practices and design forms be used as a means to make sense of the future? What are the collection and curatorial challenges for archives in relation to new design domains such as service, social, interaction, activism and so forth? What are the critical considerations of the networked archive and the relationship between the analogue and the digital?

In many ways the practices discussed in this issue involve earlier incarnations of design exchanges whether it be George Kral's Gallery A Design Group, the Fast Forward project team or the HALFTIME Club.

Harriet Edquist, DIRECTOR

ADDITION TO THE
COLLECTION

CHANCELLOR
AND PATRICK:
MCCRAITH HOUSE

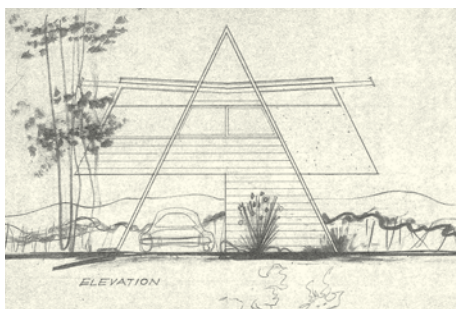
Documentation

GIFT OF THE DIXON-WARD FAMILY:
LOIS DIXON-WARD, BIN DIXON-WARD
AND KERRY DIXON-WARD

This gift comprises correspondence, drawings, photographs, specifications and film relating to the design and construction of the McCraith House, Atunga Terrace, Dromana, 1955. In addition it contains plans by Chancellor and Patrick for a subdivision in Atunga Terrace also commissioned by Gerald McCraith.



Chancellor and Patrick: McCraith House, Dromana, 1955



High up on the corner of Atunga Terrace and McCulloch Street, with an unimpeded view to Port Phillip Bay, sits Larrakeyah, or the Butterfly House as it is popularly known, a landmark of Melbourne's experimental post-war modern architecture.

Commissioned by Gerald and Ellen 'Nell' McCraith as a beachside holiday house, it was designed by Chancellor and Patrick in 1955 and was emblematic of the forward-looking optimism of those years. David Chancellor and Rex Patrick had established their practice in Frankston the previous year and this early project with its exuberant structural innovation and bright colours was a provocation for the future.

In June 2013 the Dixon-Ward family donated Larrakeyah, at a signing event at the house attended by the donors, McCraiths' daughter Lois Dixon-Ward, and grand-daughters Bin Dixon-Ward and Kerryn Dixon-Ward, as well as the original architects of the house, and RMIT Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Margaret Gardner AO. Larrakeyah has changed little since the time it was built. The gift also includes an endowment to support ongoing maintenance. To mark this gift RMIT has established an annual award, the McCraith House Fellowship, as part of its Writers in Residence program.

Opposite Page
Chancellor and Patrick, McCraith House

This Page
Top three images
Chancellor and Patrick, McCraith House

Photographer:
Gerald McCraith

Bottom
Chancellor and Patrick, McCraith House, elevation drawing (detail)

ADDITION TO THE
COLLECTION

INDEPENDENT
MELBOURNE
PUBLISHING

GIFT OF VARIOUS
DONORS

This gift comprises design publications produced in Melbourne over the last three decades including *Post*, *Subaud*, *Condiment*, *Freerange*, *Blackmail* and *Process Journal*. They were donated at the close of the *Public Offer: Ways to Share Design* exhibition.



Public Offer: Ways to Share Design. Pin. Like. Print. Post.

Exhibition at the RMIT Design Hub Project Rooms 1 & 2

1 February to 27 March 2013

***Public Offer* was a program of activities, an exhibition, a library and a partner to the touring exhibition Archizines, curated by Elias Redstone, while in Melbourne at RMIT Design Hub.**

It is the sharing and broadcasting of value that goes to the crux of *Public Offer*, a survey of design publishing in Melbourne over the last 60-odd years. In this exhibition, this declaration of worth is made by designers as a social projection, a proposition that says 'We have something to say: Is anyone listening?' It is the generous, sometimes arrogant or angry, but always enthusiastic and usually polemical publishing of viewpoints or a call made to convene.

The exhibition collates serial, even if irregular or thwarted publishing efforts (where in some cases only one issue was ever produced). The net effect is to see, hear and feel how publishing, and the people who publish, have shaped the broader conversation about this city, its design culture and issues beyond over the last 60 plus years. In part, *Public Offer* is an exhibition of knowledge objects and knowledge experiences. Through this presentation (of fashion, architecture, industrial design, landscape architecture, graphic design and the linked circles of music, literature and the arts) the show prompts the questions: What have designers had to say over this time? What have designers offered by going public with their ideas, writing, projects and criticism?

Melbourne has been chosen as a specific parameter, as has the rhythm of the periodical, so that our look into publishing is necessarily selective. We are intrigued by this desire to make a public offer, and to share design, in a committed and regular way, even if in fits and starts, that stretches over time and builds a readership community. Sometimes the publications in the exhibition folded because of a lack of time and energy or friction between their makers, but more often than not a lack of money is the cause – rather than real social dysfunction.

The social, indeed local, aspect of publishing – between publishers, editors, writers, distributors and readers is the design glue making the whole system function. All the publications, or their makers, lived or now live in Melbourne.

Extract from the *Public Offer* catalogue

Kate Rhodes is Curator at RMIT Design Hub

Timothy Moore is a Director of design collective SIBLING, which makes everything from books to building.

Opposite Page Top Left

Post magazine.
(Memory edition).
Issue 3, Volume 1,
2011, Editorial team:
Jacqui Alexander,
Ben Sheridan,
Tom Morgan,
Matt Nowicki,
Dan Salmon

Top Right

Subaud magazine,
Issue 6, Editors:
Christos Kastaniotis,
Mark Raggatt

Bottom Left

Freerange magazine
(The Trickster
edition), Volume 3,
Freerange Press,
2011, Editors: Chief
Egg B W Bennett,
Gina C Moss

Bottom Right

Slave magazine
(Fashion edition),
Issue One, c2003,
Editors: Clem Bastow,
Rob McKenzie

ADDITION TO THE
COLLECTION

INDEPENDENT
MELBOURNE
PUBLISHING

GIFT OF MICHAEL
TRUDGEON AND
JANE JOYCE

This gift comprises *Fast Forward* Cassette magazines, and, *Crowd* and *Index* magazines.



Fast Forward Cassette Magazine (1978–1982)

Michael Trudgeon



Fast Forward was an audio-cassette based music magazine conceived and edited by Bruce Milne and Andrew Maine. Both had music programs on radio station 3RRR and Bruce ran the successful independent record label Au Go Go Records.

Fast Forward was essentially a tape-recorded radio show. Michael Trudgeon joined them as the designer for the magazine, to create a seductive package that would let the cassette magazine stand out visually and conceptually against a sea of graphically intense and sophisticated LP record covers that sat on the retail shelves of music shops. [There were no CDs in 1979]. Independent music was flowering in the late 1970s and early 80s in Australia but as local bands could not easily get recording contracts, no one could hear it unless you saw it live, in the city of origin. *Fast Forward's* innovation was to not only write about this music but to also deliver it to you to listen to at your leisure. [In 1979 there was no Internet].

Fast Forward was the world's first audio-cassette music magazine. The cassettes interspersed interviews with music and were packaged with printed artwork and sold in record shops around Australia and abroad. Thirteen issues were produced between November 1980 and October 1982. Regular contributors included Jeff Holland, who created elaborate sound collages which were combined with elaborate illustrations in the booklet that accompanied the audio cassette. Many ground breaking Australian bands were first published on *Fast Forward* tapes including Hunters and Collectors. An international audience was first exposed to music from Australian bands including Laughing Clowns, the Go-Betweens, Rowland Howard's 'Shivers' as performed by The Young Charlatans, The Scientists, the M Squared label, Dead Can Dance and Pel Mel's 'No Word from China' recorded as a 'demo'.

As the magazine's presence and reputation grew, international acts began to submit material for publication including The Cure. Interview subjects included Nick Cave, The Cure's, Robert Smith, Mark E Smith of The Fall, and the manager of The Clash. Delivering the packaging concept proved to be a production challenge. In the beginning no commercial printer would screen-print the vinyl package art as they did not believe it was technically possible. So, with a team of art students I did it myself until I could convince a commercial printer that it was possible to do predictably.

PROJECT CREDITS

Magazine editors: Bruce Milne, Andrew Maine

Magazine design: Michael Trudgeon

Package screen-printing: Michael Trudgeon, Dominic Lowe, Gwenda Wiseman

Booklet printing: Impact Press

Materials: fabricated vinyl sleeve, folded paper insert, plastic and metalised tape audio cassette, solvent based vinyl ink.

Michael Trudgeon is the Design Director of Crowd Productions and Deputy Director of the Victorian Eco Innovation Lab

Opposite Page

Fast Forward
cassette magazines

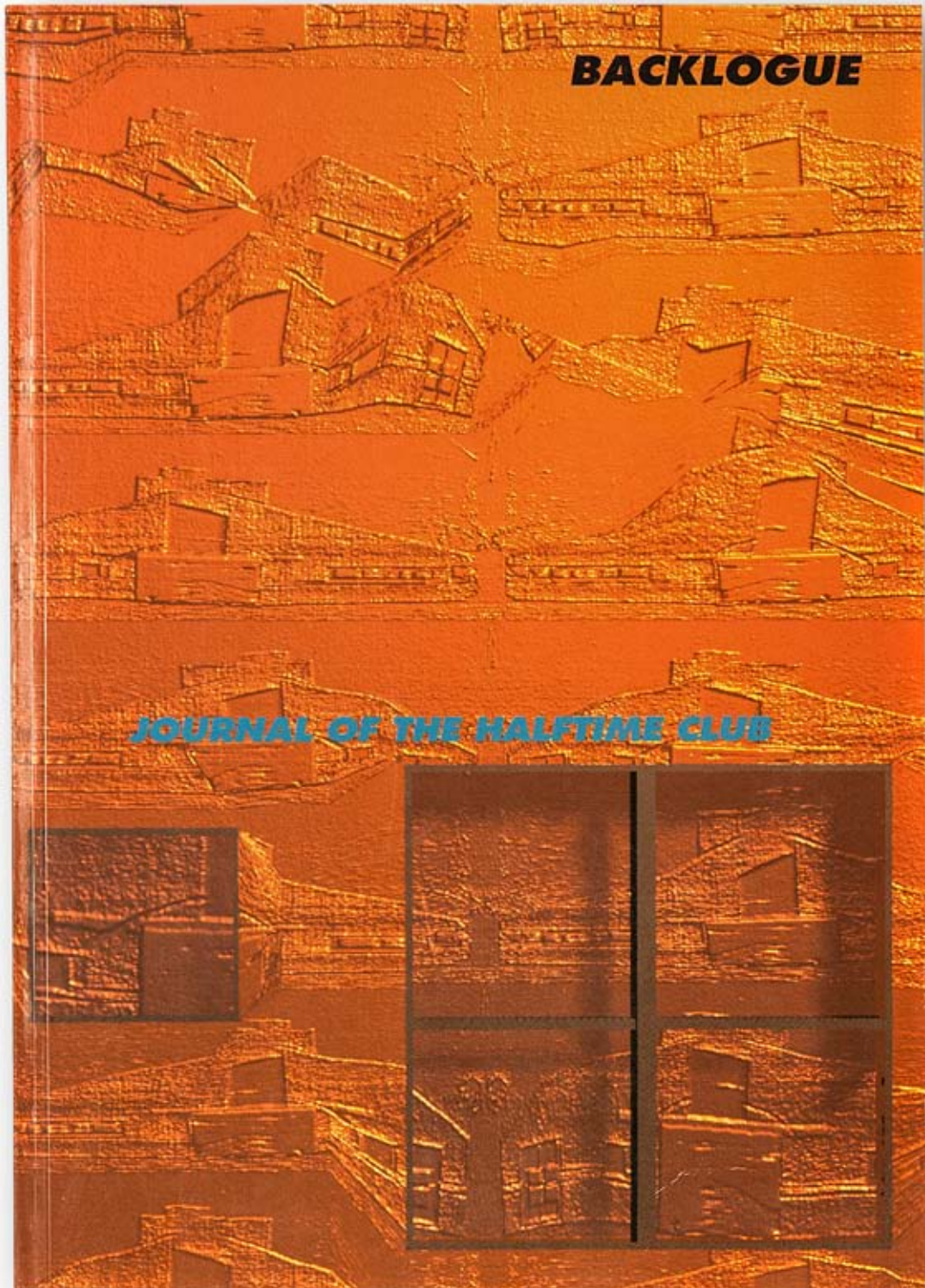
Photographer:
Margund Sallowsky

ADDITION TO THE
COLLECTION

HALFTIME CLUB

GIFT OF VARIOUS
DONORS

This gift comprises documentation of the HALFTIME Club meetings and related material from 1978 to 2005.



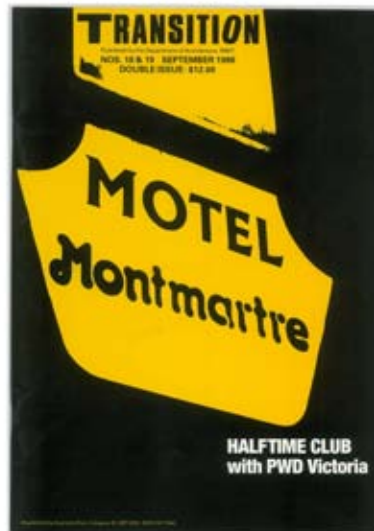
HALFTIME Club Collection (1978 to 2005)

Peter Brew

In my imagination I would like to think that the HALFTIME Club Collection would be found in a three-drawer Brownbuilt filing cabinet, in a storeroom beyond a room that had a pie warmer and sink, next to a water heater – the natural habitat for abandoned projects. In no particular order: videos, tapes, agendas, notes, minutes and the like, a collection that by and large records meetings, discussions and events in Melbourne convened under its banner from 1978 to 2005.

Aspects of the Collection (Club minutes 1979–1988) previously entered the public realm through publication in the Club’s Journal *Backlogue* Vol 3 1999 (copies of which are in the Collection), though there is something in seeing material in its original format. The added information of minutes, video tapes and tape recordings give some testament to the spirit and decorum of the meetings. These range from lively well attended forums like the 21st birthday celebration series (organised by Nikolas Koulouras and Simon Drysdale) to slow sometimes bureaucratic meetings arguing over a slight or inference, where context, meaning or even the right to use a word or phrase might be drawn out; questions that were longer than answers, meetings which on a hot night abruptly ended when the audience just left as the bar was too accessible.

Until *Backlogue* published Grant Marani’s inaugural minutes I shamefully must admit that I had never read them, despite having been the President for the best part of a decade. Whilst the minutes mention charter and principles they also offered a few thoughts: some paths that could be taken, which were taken; alliances that might be made, which were made; different formats that might be adopted, which were adopted.



But, most importantly Grant foresaw that the Club was primarily to be a forum where nascent thoughts, works, speculations could be aired, works in progress presented to an audience, to colleagues (who themselves were also works in progress), to a peer group without professional sanction or recrimination – an atmosphere of trust and respect that only exists if there are no rules. HALFTIME, as Anne Butler explained to me as I surreptitiously copied the minutes as a student in Andrew Reed’s office, was when the game was not yet decided. I think Peter Corrigan elaborated – you had not yet lost.

The conversation mattered. Ideas held sway over patronage, professional development recognition or status. For nearly three decades presenters and audience struggled with the material, to present it, to represent it, to critique it. Slick, articulate, well-rehearsed and irrefutable were not always on the bill, but one could never say they wouldn’t ever be. Old stagers who had mastered the format would turn up with multiple carousels and dual screens to give didactic and persuasive penetrations alternated with the presentations of dedicated and heartfelt toil.

If it was so good why did it end? Well, I’m probably not the one to comment here. We might have hung on too long. It ran its course, the world changed. HALFTIME started in the era of the lending library, of clubs and societies, Kodachrome slides, letters with postage stamps, mail-outs, Super 8 film, Walkmans. It was live, unplugged – people had names and appeared in person to say their piece.

Peter Brew is an Associate Lecturer in the Architecture program at RMIT and former President of the HALFTIME Club.

Opposite Page
Backlogue,
vol 1 March 1992,
Editors: Peter Brew,
Felicity Scott, Paul Minifie,
Dean Boothroyd

This Page
Transition, Issue 18/19,
September 1986,
Editors: Paul Morgan,
Karen Burns, Department
of Architecture, RMIT

ADDITION TO THE
COLLECTION

GEORGE KRAL

GIFT OF SHIRLEY KRAL,
INGE KRAL AND
ADAM KRAL

The Kral Family Archive includes brochures, drawings, photographs, scrapbook, transparencies and artwork relating to the career of George Kral, graphic designer and interior designer. This donation has been augmented by two drawings, an exterior and an interior view of Kral's Tullamarine Bottle Shop, drawn by Michael Jan in 1971, gifted by Michael Jan.



George Kral (1928–1978): graphic designer and interior designer

Harriet Edquist

From Prague to Melbourne

George Kral was born Jiri Petr Kral on 9 September 1928 in Prague, the only child of Vaclav Kral, a minor public servant and Anna Kralova (formerly Smidova).¹ They lived above a pub in the suburbs of Prague where George received his early education, completing high school as the war ended. For the following two years he attended a vocational school, possibly studying forestry and from 1947 to 1948 was an advertising draftsman in Prague. During this time he may have worked briefly with famous puppeteer and film-maker Jiri Trnka who in the 1940s was working in animation. Like many of his countrymen, Kral left what was then Czechoslovakia when it came under Communist rule and he moved to Paris via Germany where he lived with his first wife Frantiska Kralova. In 1951 they were accepted as refugees into Australia and on arrival spent some time in Bonegilla Migrant camp.² For George, two or three years of compulsory work followed including a stint at the IXL factory in Prahran, Melbourne, 'making contacts which nurtured him for the rest of his life'.³ In Melbourne George and Frantiska lived in South Yarra and at some point Frantiska, a dressmaker, obtained employment with Magg, the exclusive fashion boutique established by Zara Holt and Betty Grounds in Toorak Village.⁴

The first documented work of Kral seems to be a commission from Yvonne Raphael for the window display at her Collins Street premises of John Browning opticians although it is possible Kral had worked for Myer prior to this.⁵ Raphael recalls that Kral was recommended to her by their mutual friend, industrial designer, Gerhard Herbst.⁶ Interestingly, the display featured a puppet-like figure made by Kral, which might support the theory that he spent some time with Trnka.⁷ Certainly by 1956 Kral was ensconced in Melbourne's design scene for when Shirley Wrigley met Kral he was among a group of industrial designers at a meeting in Sydney. Wrigley had attended art school in Oldham, Lancashire, and emigrated in 1953 to join her brother, Derek Wrigley, in Sydney. She moved to



Melbourne to be with George and they married on 26 January 1957. Their wedding reception, held in their small flat in Frederick Romberg's Newburn apartment block in Queens Road, was a gathering of Melbourne's design talent and included Bernard and Robyn Joyce, Reinhard and Jutte Neubauer, Howard and Judy Johnson, Max Forbes and Margaret, Clement Meadmore, Max Hutchinson, Peter and Judy Hunt, and Wolfgang and Brita Sievers.

During their six years together George and Shirley Kral were immersed in Melbourne's relatively small but very lively design community. Kral was an active member of the Society of Designers for Industry attending its meetings and, with Shirley, its functions on occasion.⁸ Her diary entries from 1956 to 1962 record the flow of friends who came to dinner or stayed overnight in their small flat: Meadmore, Hutchinson, Herbst and wife Irma, Robyn and Bernard Joyce their closest friends in the late 1950s, Wolfgang and Brita Sievers, photographer John Janssen and from Sydney, Gordon Andrews and Raoul Baudish, and from Canberra, Vladimir and Heather Paral, and Derek Wrigley.

They returned the visits, indulged Meadmore's passion for jazz, and in 1957 bought his sculpture 'The Trumpeter' and one of his lamps from Peter Bray in Collins Street; they also bought a Lenton Parr head, cast in bronze.⁹ They went to Grant Featherston's showing of films, Robin Boyd's talk about his travels and Herschfeld Mack's discussion on the Bauhaus. They accompanied Joyce to the eclarte studio of Catherine Hardess and Mollie 'Edith' Grove, visited Schulim Krimper's studio with clients to select furniture and John and Sunday Reed's gallery, and exhibitions of their friends and colleagues.

Opposite Page

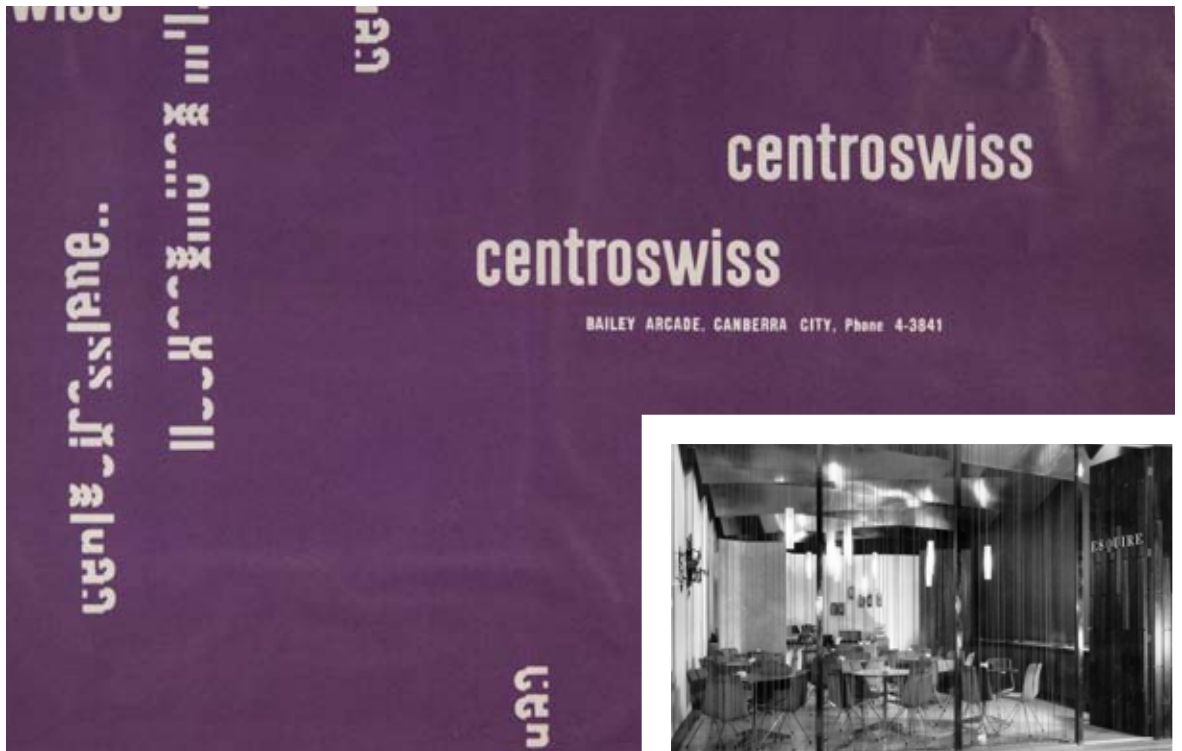
George Kral (standing) and Clement Meadmore

This Page Top Left

George and Shirley Kral's wedding reception at their flat in Newburn, 26 January 1957. Photograph reproduced courtesy of Shirley Kral

Top Right

George Kral, window display commissioned by Yvonne Raphael for John Browning



Above
George Kral,
wrapping paper for
Centroswiss Jewellery
store, Canberra, 1956

Photographer:
Margund Sallowsky

Above Inset
George Kral and
Adroit, Esquire
Coffee Lounge,
Canberra, 1957

Photographer:
Wolfgang Sievers

Exhibitions and interiors

At this time Kral entered into the first of a number of creative partnerships that were to characterise his working life. He joined forces with Cy Cater who had migrated from India in 1946 and established an advertising agency which had the account of PB Shoes, whose office space in Bourke Street Cater shared.¹⁰ Kral and Cater worked together on the Volkswagen exhibit at the Melbourne Showgrounds.¹¹ In addition, Kral began a long-term collaboration with architect, Bernard Joyce, which included the design of the Australian exhibit for the 1957 Tokyo Trade Fair. Joyce had migrated to Melbourne in 1949 from London, completed his architectural studies at the University of Melbourne in 1955 and entered several competitions with some success.¹² Joyce, Hutchinson, Meadmore, and Derek Hooper, a recent graduate from RMIT's industrial design course, all worked with Kral on exhibitions, many at the Royal Exhibition Building; Hutchinson's firm Adroit as often as not manufacturing the stands. Early in 1957 Kral and Meadmore collaborated on a stand at the Exhibition Building and in May had found 'a good, cheap office in Prahran' which they shared for a year.¹³ While some of these exhibition designs have been attributed to Meadmore, it is more likely that they were collaborations between Kral and one or more of the group in which they rework the vocabulary of the Miesian cube and grid.

Kral's practice as an interior designer developed in tandem with the exhibitions. Some of his early commissions came from members of the tight-knit Czech community such as Slava Jezek and Tony

Urban. They were partners in the Centroswiss jewellery shop in Melbourne and when Jezek opened a new shop in Bailey Arcade, Canberra, in 1956, Kral designed the interior, the first of three in that city. In minimalist black and white the Centroswiss interiors were open to view from the street, a departure from traditional jewellery shops where display windows had solid backing.¹⁴ The first shop was, according to Heather Paral: 'a little jewel of a design [it] set a standard'.¹⁵ The following year Slava Jezek and his wife Elfie launched the Esquire coffee lounge in Garema Place, Canberra. It was elegant and light with a 'fluted ceiling, long triangles all at angles, covered in gilt paper'.¹⁶ The café was a 'total work of art' writ small - Kral designed everything from the menu and branding to the furniture and fittings. The dining chairs, which, with the fittings, were manufactured by Adroit, were probably inspired by the furniture of Meadmore and Andrews, while the Tasmanian blackwood front door was made up of small panels resembling an abstract sculpture adorned with a heavy brass handle.¹⁷ The combination of minimalist spatial design with rich textured surfaces, in this case, the timber door and gilt-papered ceiling, would become a hallmark of Kral's design aesthetic. The Jezeks bought a Meadmore sculpture for the wall and Sievers took the photographs.

Kral became acquainted with other Czechs in Canberra including Vladimir Paral, a scientific photographer with the John Curtin School, who Kral assisted on a small skiing exhibition. Paral's wife, Heather, had established Studio 12 in Manuka in 1952 for which Kral and Derek Wrigley made



Top left
George Kral, interior
of café, 1950s

Bottom Left
George Kral and
Adroit, La Caprice
Café, Collins Street,
Melbourne, 1957

Photographer:
Wolfgang Sievers

Bottom Right
George Kral,
prototype for
dining chair

Photographer:
Shirley Kral

the furniture and shop fittings; it stocked Martin Boyd pottery, fabrics by Ailsa Graham Art Fabrics, and Grant Featherston furniture.¹⁸ Wrigley went on to design the Paral House in Narrabundah, ACT, and joined Fred Ward at the Design Unit at the Australian National University; they were founding members of the Industrial Design Institute of Australia. In Sydney, Czech-born Raoul Baudish became a close friend; his company Incorporated Agencies imported the best of European design, including cutlery, glassware, cast iron and dinner services. Over a number of years Baudish commissioned Kral to design his advertising, brochures, exhibitions and Sydney and Melbourne showrooms, although Ken Woolley was engaged to design the Baudish House in Middle Cove in 1964.

By the beginning of 1957 George Kral had teamed up with Hutchinson to design La Caprice Café for Tom Rossman which opened in April in a former apartment at the top end of Collins Street, Melbourne. Shirley, who assisted George on numerous projects, collaborated on the design of the pendant lamps over the benches. Built by Adroit and photographed by Sievers, the Caprice shared with the Esquire coffee lounge Kral's strong minimalist aesthetic, with a timber floor, plain white bench surfaces and skeletal chairs, possibly by Hutchinson, or Kral. *Architecture and Arts* was impressed: 'the Caprice relies purely on the downright elegance of brass, pure white plaster and bricks'.¹⁹ At another restaurant when space must have been at a premium, Kral cantilevered the tables off the walls, without legs. The accompanying chairs had a solid timber back and seat and were set on a pedestal typical of Gallery A

furniture at this time. Kral developed a version of this chair with four legs as a prototype for Heather Paral, probably for sale in her shop, but it was never put into production.²⁰

Kral's retail interiors were particularly admired. For the display of luxury products he pared back the setting and focussed on the objects. The Frederica knitwear shop for the Sylvans in 1958 presented the merchandise in individually lit display cases set into a dark wall, maximising the feeling of exclusivity. A similar approach was used a decade later for Stewart's Jewellery shop in the Manchester Unity Building in Swanston street where Kral used 'simple glass boxes which sat on table-height platforms, the walls behind and the platforms all lined with deep purple felt. George said that he wanted it to feel like a dark cave filled with jewels'.²¹ The deep purple felt of the original scheme was however changed to grey in the final design. Kral's use of lighting was well in advance of its time and these interiors were, according to Leslie Jones, 'just miles ahead'.²²

Gallery A Design Group

As the 1950s drew to a close, Kral was involved in the establishment of one of the seminal and iconic spaces of Melbourne modernism, Gallery A.²³ The idea for Gallery A came from a suggestion of Clement Meadmore to Max Hutchinson, but its origins lay further back. Adroit Displays made exhibition stands by Kral, Meadmore, Forbes and others at a time when stands at the Exhibition Building, Melbourne Showgrounds and elsewhere were an important part of commercial advertising and good business for designers. Hutchinson



Top

George Kral,
Gallery A Design
Group logo, c1962

Middle

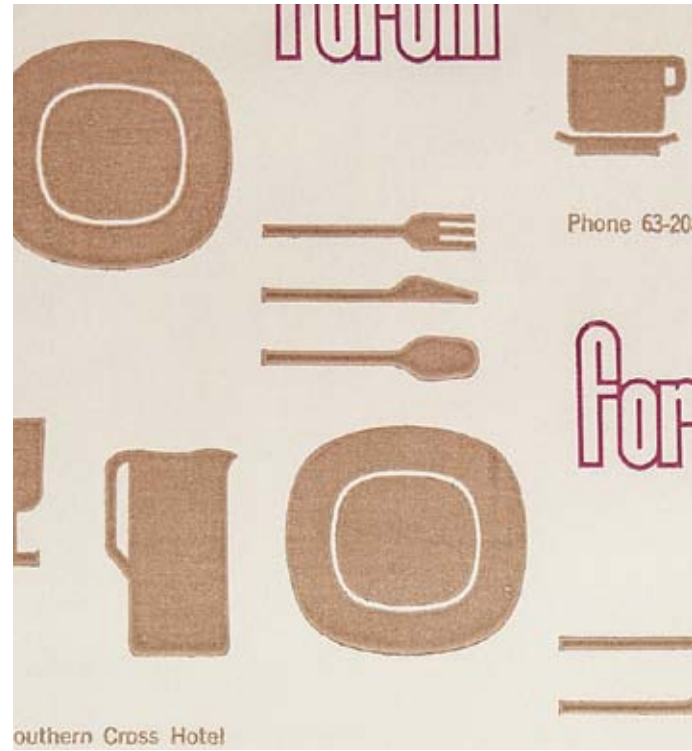
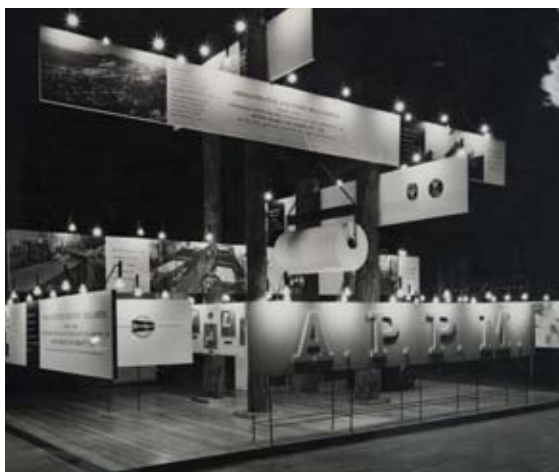
George Kral et al,
British Nylon
Spinners exhibit,
Royal Melbourne
Show, 1959

Photographer:
Wolfgang Sievers

Bottom

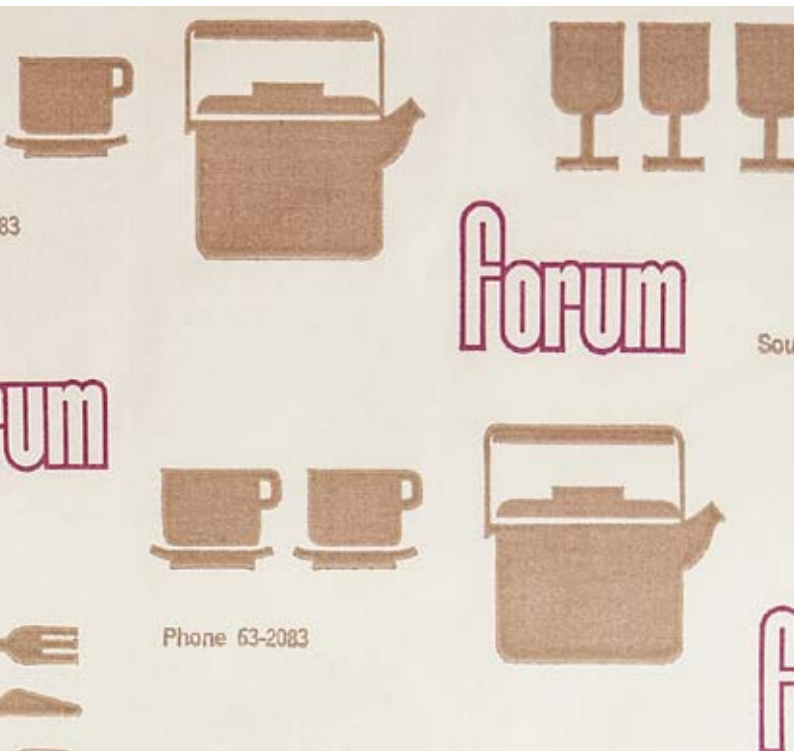
George Kral,
AAPM exhibit,
1958

Photographer:
Wolfgang Sievers



warmed to the designers who used Adroit and soon branched out into furniture manufacturing for Meadmore and Forbes. Deciding to open a showroom to display their work, he was persuaded by Meadmore to combine the showroom with an art gallery and thus in 1959, on the third floor of a Flinders Lane warehouse, Gallery A was born.²⁴ At the same time publicity manager Shirley Venn (later Shirley Shackleton) returned from England, where she had worked for the Australian High Commissioner at Australia House, and took up a position at John and Esta Handfield's public relations firm. Meadmore was impressed with her work, organised that she take on the account of Gallery A and after a few months invited her onto the Gallery staff. Recalling the early days of Gallery A, Shackleton noted that many of the best ideas for the Gallery originated with Meadmore but he needed the collaboration of his colleagues to bring them to life.²⁵

Gallery A promoted abstract art and the new exhibition techniques which developed from the exhibition displays Meadmore, Hutchinson, Joyce and Kral had collaborated on for a number of years. Many of the characteristics that Michael Boddy has attributed to Meadmore such as the 'total aesthetic package operating across art and design' and a modular design approach based on grids that related objects to space were, in fact shared by Kral and Joyce, and were evident in their built work; indeed some of the exhibition work that has been attributed to Meadmore, such as the AAPM stand, was designed by Kral.²⁶ Joyce translated some of these ideas into architecture in a series of systems houses for which he is renowned, one of the most



significant outcomes in Melbourne of this period of spatial experimentation. What Shirley Venn saw at Gallery A was an incredible relationship between Meadmore, Hutchinson, Kral and Joyce from whose collaboration emerged many of the inspired ideas for the exhibitions.²⁷

Kral designed the interiors and logo of Gallery A and when the Gallery moved to the large premises Venn discovered on Toorak Road, South Yarra, in 1962, he ran his own design group within the gallery/workshop complex, co-ordinating interior designers, graphic designers, furniture designers and architects.²⁸ Amongst those working for him at this time were Alex Njoo, Elizabeth Pilven, Winston Thomas and Val Austin, the last of whom had also worked briefly in Joyce's office and took over Meadmore's desk when she joined Gallery A and Meadmore had left for Sydney.²⁹ Austin recalls: 'the atmosphere of the big warehouse building was electric, absolutely everyone came through the doors with huge seminal exhibitions such as Wolfgang Sievers, the furniture factory out the back and George Kral's team holed up beavering away 24/7. A humungous kero heater would be roaring and constant Lady Day [Billie Holliday] and jazz would be playing'.³⁰

For the four years Shirley Venn was at Gallery A her entrepreneurial drive saw to it that a number of Melbourne's new buildings, like the Southern Cross Hotel, were fitted out with Gallery A furniture, fabricated at the Gallery, most of it by Meadmore but some by Kral.³¹ Tony Urban's Forum shop on the ground floor of the Hotel was a Gallery A commission, identified by Kral's

distinctive logo and wrapping paper; he also created a simply assembled vertical and horizontal glass shelving system with tension cables and grips on which objects appeared to float against the wall.³² Urban had spent time in Sydney at Baudish's Incorporated Agencies and this experience underwrote the Forum initiative.³³ Austin joined the office at the tail end of this project and drew up the Sportsgirl fashion store in South Yarra, a commission that came through Cy Cater who at the time held the accounts of Sportsgirl and Sportskraft. All the timber in the shop was painted bright yellow, an indication of Kral's developing use of interior colour.³⁴ Austin was also involved in the refurbishment of La Trobe Studios probably in 1962 or 1963. An A-frame ski hut at Falls Creek for fashion designer Norma Tullo for which the drawings survive in the RDA Collection, was another Gallery A Design Group commission, possibly the 'four-bedroom, Tyrolean-style, stone' building described in a *Women's Weekly* interview in 1966.³⁵ Other projects of the mid-1960s included the interior fit-out for Auski in Hardware Lane, work for Richard Pratt's Visyboard and also the family house for which Jeanne Pratt was client.

Bogle & Banfield

In August 1959 Kral and Derek Hooper formed an industrial design group within the recently-established office of architects Bogle & Banfield. Bernard Joyce had introduced Kral to Gordon Banfield in 1957 and the following year Joyce was appointed design director of the office. By mid-1959, however, Joyce was contemplating leaving to form the Total Design Group with Kral and Hooper and in an effort to foil this move Banfield

Centre

George Kral, wrapping paper for Forum shop, c1962

Right

George Kral, logo for Forum shop, c1962

Photographer: Margund Sallowsky

proposed that Kral and Hooper form an industrial design group within their practice. It may be that they were inspired by Fred Ward and Derek Wrigley's Design Unit at the Australian National University; certainly it was unusual at the time. Thus both Kral and Joyce (in January 1960 Hooper had left to start on his own) were associated with Gallery A and Bogle & Banfield concurrently. The nature and extent of Kral's work in this office is not known, but as he visited Sandown Racecourse with Joyce it is probable that he was on the team for Bogle & Banfield's new and well-published grandstand at the racecourse. The photograph in the Joyce Collection in the RDA of Bogle & Banfield's 1959 Church of St James, Glen Iris (designed by Joyce), suggests that Kral had some part in the interior fit-out, possibly the lighting and furniture. He would certainly have designed the office's Christmas card.

Kral continued to work with Joyce on exhibitions for the Department of Trade, commissions that might have come their way through Peter Hunt and they included the exhibits for its first trade ship, *Delos*, in 1959. It was probably through his early collaboration with Joyce that Kral learnt how to detail buildings, something about which he was obsessively particular. For two years from 1960 they worked on the Australian Pavilion for the JETRO (Japan External Trade Organisation) Fair in Tokyo. JETRO had been established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad and the pavilions commissioned by the Australian Department of Trade reflected the growing commercial ties between the two countries. A group of drawings from the Bogle & Banfield office, some signed off by Kral and dated January 1960 to January 1961, are in the Kral Collection while amongst the Joyce material in the William Nankivell Collection at the Design Archives is a photograph of the exterior of the building and an elevation drawing. Together, they provide an account of this hitherto unrecorded work. Shirley Kral notes in her diary that by January 1962 the exhibition was finished.³⁷ Joyce travelled to Japan, presumably to finalise the design and installation but also to study Japanese architecture.

The JETRO Pavilion was built on a square plan, a white-walled pavilion almost hidden beneath a heavy, cantilevered timber-clad superstructure which rested on white masonry blade walls extending into the site to form exterior courtyards. The deliberately reticent exterior gave no hint of what was inside. A tall sculpture which took the form of three linked boomerang-like elements marked the entrance replacing the original supergraphic, probably by Kral, featuring arrows pointing in opposite directions. The interior was

white, offset by timber floor and ceiling from which large photographic panels were suspended, a feature Kral often used in his exhibition design as a way of controlling the space at his disposal. Full-height timber blades, some clad in foil, were used as space dividers and supports for large black-framed square light boxes, another display feature Kral was probably responsible for introducing into Melbourne. The blades were intersected by shorter black walls which were covered in overscaled images and photographs blown up to a huge scale, probably produced by La Trobe Studios which did all the printing for Kral's exhibitions.³⁸

The stylish modernism of the JETRO Pavilion was attuned to the image of Australia that the Department of Trade wished to project. A significant precursor to the 1967 Montreal Pavilion, its displays presented, like the later pavilion, a 'complex picture of [Australia's] character, culture and productivity' and its architecture similarly demonstrated the 'alignment of Australia's self-representation with modernisation processes'.³⁹ While the displays representing the 'Australian way of life': primary resources, bloodstock and wool, were typical of the content of trade exhibitions since the nineteenth century, there were also sections on fashion and the automotive industry which emphasised Australia's growing secondary industrial capacity.

The Joyce material in the Design Archives contains two photographs of shoe shops in Toorak Road (including Geiger whose advertising was carried out by Cater) which share many of the features of the Tokyo Pavilion and were probably the work of Kral and Joyce at this time. They may be among the shops that Leslie Jones remembered when he noted: 'you could walk down Toorak Road in South Yarra and every time your head turned to look at a particular shop you knew it was designed by George'.⁴⁰ By January 1962 Kral had left Bogle & Banfield when the Gallery A Design Group was being established in South Yarra. He took up a teaching position briefly in the Interior Design course at the Melbourne Tech (RMIT University) joining Joyce who had also left Bogle & Banfield and had been appointed a lecturer in architecture and interior design the same year.⁴¹ They continued to associate socially. When young architect Peter Burns and his wife Mary hosted their Friday night parties in East Melbourne, Kral and Joyce, Robin Boyd and even Stirling Moss turned up because he was a friend of Bernard Joyce.⁴² Peter Crone recalls that when he was working in Joyce's office between 1967 and 1970, Kral often used to drop by and join Joyce's weekly all-afternoon lunches

Opposite Page Top

Bernard Joyce and George Kral, Australian pavilion at JETRO, Tokyo, 1962, interior

Middle Left

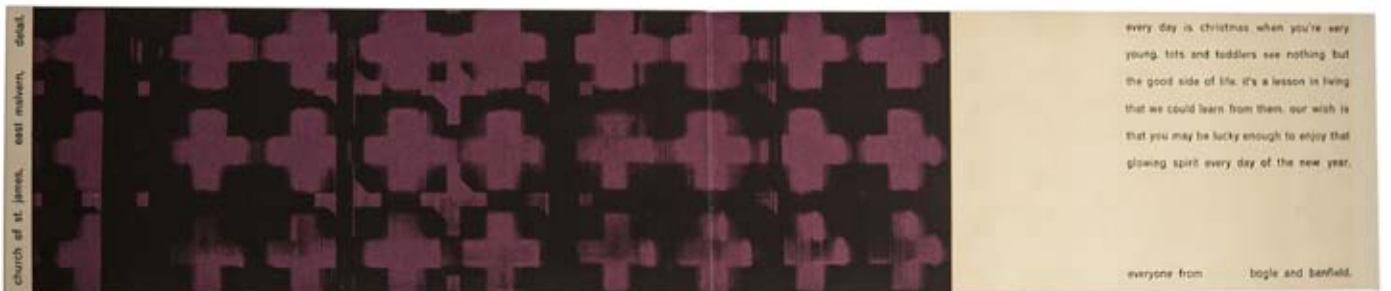
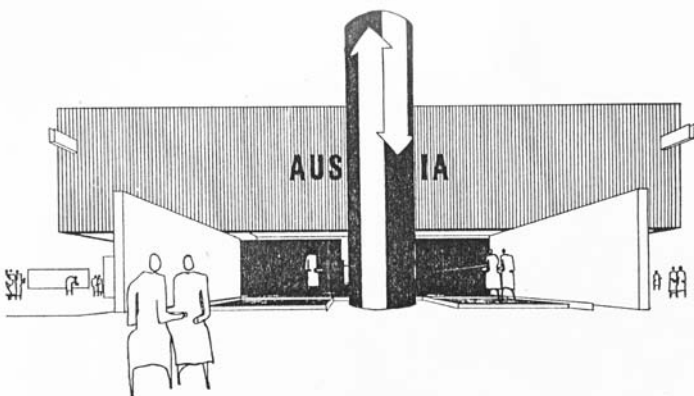
Bernard Joyce and George Kral, Australian pavilion at JETRO, exterior perspective

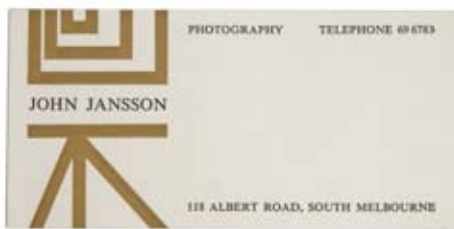
Middle Right

Bernard Joyce and George Kral, Australian pavilion at JETRO, exterior

Bottom

George Kral, Bogle and Banfield Christmas card, 1959





Left
George Kral,
John Jansson
business card

Right
George Kral,
Allans World of
Music store, 1971

at either Vlado's or Café Eduard where Bruce Weatherhead, Alex Stitt, Fred Schepisi and Kurt Veld might also be found.⁴³

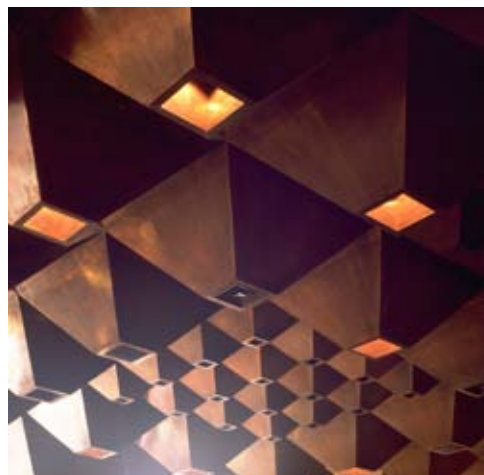
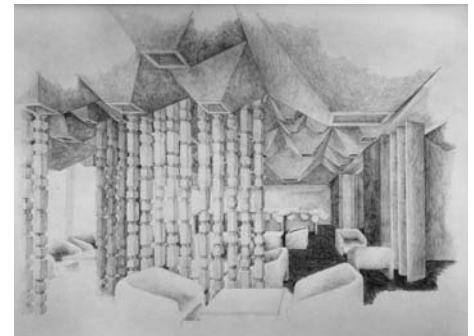
Later work

Shirley and George Kral separated in 1962 and Shirley moved to Canberra with their two children Inge and Adam in July; in 1963 they divorced. In the absence of Shirley Kral's diary, the account of Kral's practice in his later years is more difficult to assemble. The recollections of Leslie Jones, who had come to Melbourne about 1964 to work with Kral on the recommendation of Meadmore, go some way to filling in the gaps.⁴⁴ So too do the recollections of some young designers who worked for him: Michael Jan, Elizabeth Pilven and Helen Christie (formerly Clark). When Gallery A closed in Melbourne, Kral was living and working in Kew with his third wife, June, and was somewhat on the periphery of things but important commissions still came his way.

One, unfortunately unrealised commission, was for Donald Crone's Centrepont Tower in Sydney for which Kral produced concept sketches of the interior.⁴⁵ Another was the corporate identity and interior of Allans World of Music, elements of which still remain in this iconic Melbourne retail store's logo. This was completed in 1971 when Kral was sharing Cy Cater's advertising studio in Bogle and Banfield's Total Car Park building in Russell Street. According to Michael Jan who worked with Kral for a year during his architectural studies at RMIT: 'the meeting room and foyer were high GK design: walls and doors were wrapped in white vinyl. All doors had soss

hinges, an expensive detail even by today's standards. I remember interviewing a supplier in the meeting room and he was so in awe that the poor guy was shaking!⁴⁶ Prior to this Kral had designed Cater's Bourke Street office in black. Later Kral moved to 350 Victoria Street, North Melbourne, just up from Victoria Market and Jan, Pilven and Clark all worked in the office. Irvin Rockman's company Northrock Aerojet Caterers, had commissioned the wine and spirits store at the Exposition Centre, Tullamarine, and in September the Cocktail Bar, Lounge, VIP rooms and foyer for Tullamarine Airport, which opened in July 1970.

The bottle shop, drawn up by Jan, was the only part of the overall Tullamarine project completed as designed. It had the kind of earthiness typical of the period, with slate floors, bush-hammered concrete walls and finishes and a suspended ceiling, constructed from 14,000 wine bottles, lit from above.⁴⁷ The VIP lounge at Tullamarine by contrast was dark and luxurious with carved timber screens, purple sand-blasted timber lining boards, and an extraordinary sculptural ceiling composed of copper-lined inverted cones, with square apertures providing for concealed lighting and supply and return air conditioning. The original scheme was to have potted trees, their foliage growing up and between the cones, producing a grotto-like effect. The carpet was a purple/green/blue geometric pattern based on the ceiling layout but on a smaller scale. The lounge chairs designed by Kral were to have been upholstered in various deep colours but were replaced by leather and timber tub chairs.⁴⁸ For the ballroom, which was twice the size of the lounge and had tiered seating, dance floor and



Top Left
George Kral,
Bottle shop at
Tullamarine,
1971 exterior view
drawn by Michael Jan

Top Right
George Kral,
VIP Lounge at
Tullamarine,
interior view

Bottom Left
George Kral,
dinner setting
for Dame Zara Holt

Bottom Right
George Kral,
VIP Lounge at
Tullamarine,
ceiling detail

stage, hundreds of square clear Perspex tubes of various lengths were to be suspended from the ceiling at different heights. These too were to conceal the lighting and air conditioning. However, this scheme did not go ahead.⁴⁹ The bar featured half-circle seats on pedestals which Kral had originally produced in bright orange fabric for a dinner table setting conceived in association with Dame Zara Holt for a charity function. By this stage colour was an increasingly important component of Kral's design aesthetic. From his earliest work at the Esquire coffee lounge in 1957 Kral had shaped his interiors in large part through treating the ceiling as an active agent in the design, as a way of controlling the total environment but also creating an immersive, tactile experience. Now intense colour entered the scene, ramping up that experience.

In about 1972 Kral went into partnership with London-trained Tony Wolfenden who had arrived in Australia in 1962 after some time in North America. What work was produced during this short association is unclear but may have included

packaging for products Wolfenden designed. By 1973 Kral was living and working in Owen Street, Carlton, and had his first diagnosis of cancer. He died in 1978 at the age of 50. For those who knew him, George Kral was a significant presence in Melbourne for twenty years. The high quality and finesse of his work together with his ability to integrate different disciplines within a project were major contributions to the developing sophistication of design here. But his body of work was never well documented in the media or the design journals and was swiftly forgotten after his death. Max Robinson made the recommendation for an AGDA Hall of Fame Award in 1998 and wrote the citation. This recognised Kral's graphic design but interiors like the collaborations with Bernard Joyce, the Gallery A Design Group, the work for Allans and the suite of rooms at Tullamarine, to name a few, deserve to be remembered and integrated into our larger histories of Australian design.



Endnotes

- 1 Information on the early life of George Kral has been compiled from a chronology assembled by Inge Kral, October 2013, a typescript of an interview between Shirley Kral, Inge Kral and Leslie Jones, and several email communications with Shirley Kral, September and October, 2013.
- 2 Max Robinson's AGDA Hall of Fame citation refers to the Bonegilla camp: <http://members.agda.com.au/salute/view/pg/3/profile/george-kral>; Leslie Jones also recalls Kral mentioning Bonegilla on a fly-fishing trip to Falls Creek one summer, personal communication, 17 November 2013.
- 3 Elizabeth Pilven remembers Kral talking about working at the Jam Factory in Prahran, personal communication, 17 October 2013.
- 4 Shirley Kral interview with Leslie Jones, typescript, RDA Collection, 9.
- 5 Inge Kral chronology of George Kral.
- 6 Yvonne Raphael Oeser, personal communication, 3 September 2013.
- 7 Kral had been working on another John Browning spectacle shop in Collins Street for Yvonne Raphael who at the last minute gave the job to Bernard Joyce at Bogle and Banfield but the design approach was similar.
- 8 11 December 1957 'Max Forbes and G go to the AGM of the Society of Designers for Industry and I join them for the party afterwards. I feel in retrospect that Max Forbes was quite a mentor for G, he was quite a bit older' Shirley Kral diary entry, RDA Collection.
- 9 Shirley Kral, typescript, RDA Collection, 15.
- 10 Kral and Cater met through architect Donald Bailey, information of Yvonne Cater, personal communication, 8 November 2013.
- 11 Information of Yvonne Cater, personal communication, 8 November 2013.
- 12 For Joyce see Harriet Edquist, 'William Nankivell (1928–2002) architect', *RMIT Design Archives Journal* 1:2 2011, 8-13.
- 13 Shirley Kral diary entry, 9 May 1957, RDA Collection.
- 14 Information of Slava Jezek, personal communication, 8 November 2013.
- 15 Heather Paral to Inge Kral, personal communication, 2 November 2013.
- 16 Shirley Kral interview with Leslie Jones, typescript, RDA Collection, 13.
- 17 Shirley Kral diary entry, 12 November 1957: 'to Max's factory to inspect the fibreglass chair he is making for the Canberra coffee lounge. Spent all morning adjusting the legs'. On 18 March 1958: 'Slava down from Canberra with defective chairs from Esquire coffee lounge'.
- 18 'Heather Paral' <http://www.daa.org.au/bio/heather-paral/biography/>; information of Inge Kral, personal communication, 13 November 2013.
- 19 'Three Coffee lounges', *Architecture and Arts*, December 1957, 43.
- 20 Leslie Jones interview, typescript, RDA Collection, 11.
- 21 Michael Jan, personal communication, 12 November 2013.
- 22 Leslie Jones interview, typescript, RDA Collection, 2.
- 23 For an account of Gallery A see Ann Stephen, Philip Goad, Andrew McNamara, *Modern Times. The untold story of modernism in Australia*, Parkville Vic: Miegunyah Press and Powerhouse Publishing, 2008, 8-12.



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- 24 Shirley Shackleton, personal communication, 24 August 2013.
- 25 Shirley Shackleton, personal communication, 24 August, 2013.
- 26 Michael Boddy quoted in Andrew McNamara, 'The Bauhaus in Australia. Interdisciplinary confluences in modernist practices', Stephen, Goad, McNamara, *Modern Times*, 9. Leslie Jones confirmed the APPM stand was designed by Kral, personal communication, 17 November 2013.
- 27 Shirley Shackleton, personal communication, 24 August 2013.
- 28 Leslie Jones interview, typescript RDA Collection, 2.
- 29 Information of Elizabeth Pilven and Val Austin, personal communications, October 2013.
- 30 Val Austin, personal communication, 10 November 2013.
- 31 Shirley Shackleton personal communication, 24 August 2013.
- 32 Drawings dated May-July 1962 and a jewellery display May 1963; for the shelving unit Val Austin personal communication 24 October 2013.
- 33 Information of Inge Kral, personal communication, 13 November 2013.
- 34 Val Austin, personal communication, 24 October 2013.
- 35 Claudia Wright, 'Making a million doesn't interest Norma Tullo' *Women's Weekly*, 10 August 1966, 22.
- 36 Shirley Kral diary entry, 30 July 1959 RDA Collection.
- 37 Shirley Kral diary entry, 29 January 1962, RDA Collection.
- 38 Val Austin, personal communication, 24 October 2013.
- 39 Carolyn Barnes and Simon Jackson, 'A significant mirror of progress', in Kate Darian-Smith, Richard Gillespie, Caroline Jordan and Elizabeth Willis (eds), *Seize the Day. Exhibitions, Australia and the World*, Clayton: Monash University ePress, 2008.
- 40 Leslie Jones interview, typescript, RDA Collection, 4.
- 41 Helen Christie recalls Kral on the staff of the Interior Design course at RMIT when she was a student, personal communication.
- 42 Leslie Jones interview, typescript, RDA Collection.
- 43 Peter Crone, personal communication, 22 October 2013; the friendship between Kral and Joyce ended over Joyce Nankivell's commission for the Australian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur in 1974 the submission for which Kral did some preliminary concept design, information of Leslie Jones, personal communication 17 November 2013.
- 44 Leslie Jones interview, typescript RDA Collection, 1.
- 45 Information of Leslie Jones, personal communication, 18 November 2013.
- 46 Michael Jan, personal communication, 6 November 2013.
- 47 Peter Franzen was the builder who resolved Kral's construction issues such as this ceiling, Michael Jan, personal communication.
- 48 Melbourne Airport. Inside the Airport Terminal. *Concept*, Vol1, No1 December 1970. Reference courtesy of Arun Chandu
- 49 Michael Jan has provided much of the detail of the original interiors of Tullamarine, personal communication, 11 November 2013.

Centre

George Kral,
Lightworks logo,
c1972



Left
Design Exchange
Symposium,
RMIT Centre
at Barcelona

Photographer:
Katarina Frank

Right
icam Australasia
AGM, RMIT Design
Archives.

Photographer:
Kaye Ashton

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Design Exchange was supported by RMIT University, the University of Brighton Design Archives and the RMIT School of Architecture & Design through SRC Funds.

icam australasia 2013

[International Confederation of Architectural Museums Australasia]
Meeting and AGM

RMIT Design Archives again joined the State Library of Victoria and the University of Melbourne Archives to host the annual general meeting of icam Australasia, the regional chapter of icam.

Held on 3 and 4 October it was attended by delegates from the University of Auckland NZ, WA Branch of ICOMOS, University of South Australia, Public Records Office of Victoria, Robin Boyd Foundation and local and interstate private practices. The program included a workshop by Emeritus Professor Miles Lewis on understanding and interpreting architectural drawings, a tour of the University of Melbourne Archives and a tour of the RMIT Design Archives where the AGM was held.

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