



ST.KILDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Newsletter No. 171
January 2005

TO:

If undeliverable please return to: The Secretary, St Kilda Historical Society, P.O. Box 177 Balaclava 3183

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL OR APPLICATION
1 JULY 2004 – 30 JUNE 2005

Fill out and forward the form below to **The Secretary, P.O. Box 177 Balaclava 3183** or bring to next meeting.
(Please disregard if you have recently renewed your membership)

\$18.00 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE

\$300 LIFE MEMBERSHIP \$DONATION

NAME (MR., MRS, MISS, MS).....

GROUP/ ASSOCIATION (IF APPL.)

ADDRESS:

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I would like to receive my newsletter by email: Yes / No

SPECIAL INTEREST AREAS OR SKILLS:

Signed.....



St Kilda Historical Society

No. 171

JANUARY 2005

ABN: 25 188 646 275

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings!

Don't forget to turn up for the launch of our new book at the St Kilda Writers' Festival at the Town Hall at 11.00 am on Saturday 05 February. It is an 'E book' superbly laid out by John Hulskamp but there will be a limited number of hard copies available.

The book, over 250 pages long, by heritage architect and lecturer Richard Peterson, vividly describes his love affair with St Kilda history and architecture as he details the creators and inhabitants, past and present, of 48 of Australia's greatest buildings. Some of his choices may seem unlikely (see the extract in this newsletter) but they are fervently and brilliantly argued. This book is a lifetime memento of this iconic suburb.

We met recently at the library to review this year's service agreement. The outcomes:-

SKHS will receive \$4000 this year to purchase an *In Magic* software system to catalogue our collection and put it on the web. Great news!

SKHS will undertake two exhibitions: 'Granny' and 'The Triangle Site'. Any volunteers for *Exhibitions Coordinator* for the Society? We need you!

A number of other decisions were undertaken to streamline administration and communication with the library and council staff. We plan to roster SKHS volunteers this year to open our room to the public once per week.

Penny Morrison has replaced Ruth McLean as our key heritage liaison for 12 months. Warmest congratulations from all of us to Ruth on the recent birth of her child.

Meyer

Royal Historic Society of Victoria

Upcoming Evening Lectures: 5.45pm

Members free: (a cost for non-members)

08 Feb: Judith Buckrich, *Collins Street Culture*

08 Mar: Dure Dara, *Traditions in Multicultural Food*

ST KILDA WALKS 2005

Bookings Krys Galas 9209 6229.

Mark these dates in your diary NOW!

St Kilda as the Great Novel

Sunday 06 February at 4 pm

Explore the St Kilda settings of literary epics from 19th century thrillers such as *The Mystery of the Hansom Cab* to later epics such as *My Brother Jack*, *A Fine and Private Place* and many others.

Hotels of St Kilda

Sunday 15 May 4.00 pm

Take an historic pub crawl of St Kilda's hotels from settlement until today which played host to morgues, public meetings, inns, bushrangers, music bands, film sets, stables, gangland feuds and other events.

The Dark Side of St Kilda

Tuesday 19 July at 7pm

Carnival St Kilda was also known for its 'colourful' sleaze from bushrangers to bohemians, murderers to mob wars, banned substances to brothels, GIs to G-strings, drugs to deviants, variety venues to the vice squad. Explore the dark side of St Kilda in the dark of a winter night!

Explore Elwood Village

Sunday 14 August 10 am

Explore the Elwood village, meet traders and residents and discover the past and present history of buildings, places and significant people.

The Fall of Sebastopol

Sunday 11 September 10am

The fall of Fort Sebastopol 150 years ago on 09 September 1855 marked the end of Crimean War hostilities. Relive the Crimean war in our part-two walk by exploring streets such as Sebastopol, Jervois, Cardigan, Raglan, Malakoff, Alma, Inkerman and others.

The Grand Boulevard of St Kilda Road

Sunday 20 November 10am

Bring your tram fare to explore the history of Melbourne's greatest boulevard along which early Melbourne travelled south from the city to St Kilda and beyond braving potholes, cattle and bushrangers.

SAM NEWMAN HOUSE, 270 CANTERBURY ROAD, ST KILDA WEST



Bob Hart broke the news in the *Herald - Sun* on 7 June 2000, that 'Footy Funster' Sam Newman was building a house with a facade entirely of a '9m by 8m' mural of patterned glass designed by architect Cassandra Fahey, which may, or may not, feature an image of *Baywatch* siren Pamela Anderson. 'The Pamela Anderson thing has been blown out of all proportion', Newman said. 'For which I blame her plastic surgeon, but never mind'.

The black plastic sheets were removed 17 days later. Builder, Wes Alfreson said, '(the)... sneak preview was a mistake... It shouldn't have been uncovered'. Mr Newman also made the mistake of building opposite former Royal Australian Planning Institute chair, Bernadette George. Port Phillip Council were alerted that the planning permit was incorrect. Journalist, Alan Attwood quipped: 'Mother Teresa would have struggled to get a planning permit. To imagine otherwise shows more front than Ms. Anderson'.

However, Newman duly complied with the Council's request and lodged a corrected permit application. But a next door neighbour appealed against its issue to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Meanwhile the press revelled in a deluge of *double* and even triple Sam/Pam entendres. The *Herald Sun* noted that Anderson's lips appear to part to allow a car to enter the garage.

Dr Gerald Vaughan, director of the National Gallery of Victoria was reminded of the design of Italian Renaissance and Baroque palaces; Juliana Engberg, curator of the Melbourne Festival's Visual Arts Program felt it fitted within Australia's fixation on 'the gigantic', as in big pineapple, big banana and now, big Pammy. Norman Day (refer: Ulimaroa, 630 St Kilda Road), Adjunct Professor of Architecture at RMIT University, saw it as pop art (and doubtless reminiscent of his own design for Geelong footballer Doug Wade's Parkville house in the early eighties, which caused an even greater controversy and about which a book: *The Wade House Case*, was written); Professor of Urban Design at RMIT, Dimity Reed felt it was public art in exactly the same way as at Republic Tower (refer: St Leonard's Apartments, St Leonards Avenue); Visible Art Foundation manager, Bruce Filley who manages the giant art installations on the face of Republic Tower agreed and so did over 50% of the *Herald-Sun's* readers, via its voteline on 8 July 2000.

By 15 July 2002, Newman had sold the house. "When Sammy left Pammy" was *The Age's* headline. The new owners are said to not be proposing any changes.

In fact there is a tradition of faces as ironic yet strong design elements on the facades of buildings: such as in the Sacro Bosco garden of the Orsini family at

Bomarzo, Italy (1552), and the Palazzo that Federico Zuccari built for himself in Via Gregoriana, Rome (1593). But surely Cassandra Fahey's design for the Newman house refers to Luna Park, an even more famous facade face? (q.v. Lower Esplanade). It is in the spirit of what Robert Venturi calls 'the decorated shed' in his influential book *Learning from Las Vegas*.

The narrow strip of land between Canterbury Road and the former railway, formerly leased by the Victorian Railways for various industrial uses, was subdivided and sold as housing allotments in 1993-94. The City of St Kilda set guidelines and the development has been in both urban design and real estate terms, most successful. If developers complied with the guidelines, then no further planning permit was necessary. The first section to be developed was 229 A Canterbury Road, lots 1-53, from St Kilda Station to Cowderoy Street, in March 1994.

Statutory and Design Guidelines were prepared for the City of St Kilda by SJB Planning. The area was both an urban conservation area and a development control area with development to comply with *VicCode 2*. Planning objectives were:- compatibility with existing character, amenity; to minimise the visual impact of carparking; height control (7-10 metres); noise isolation; building rhythm; massing and proportions; to prevent reflectant surfaces; setback, shared driveways and landscaping.

Residents have included Andrew Parr, director of interior design at SJB Architects who have designed building complexes in Acland Street and Fitzroy Street and Ian Hewitson of Tolarno (q.v. 42 Fitzroy Street), as well as Newman.

Cassandra Fahey of Cassandra Complex Pty.Ltd. is a young recent Architecture and Interior Design graduate from RMIT University who has won over ten awards. She interviewed and produced a documentary on architects the Lord Foster of Thames Bank, Jean Nouvel, and Peter Eisenman, and designed and produced with Mark Chapman, 'art disguised as furniture'. This year, she has designed an international museum and a five-storied commercial building for Magnet, on a site at Southbank, again with graphically rich facades.

The Newman house is actually a most subtle and sophisticated design for a first work in which Post-modernism co-habits seamlessly with Minimalism. Cassandra uses Robert Venturi's term 'billboard facade', for her art-work actually named 'White Noise'. She experimented with over 20 patterns to obtain such subtlety, printing full-sized versions of the pixelations. The facade is manufactured from laminated glass, digital film and an aluminium flat plate grid frame. Varying light, reflections,

shadows, direction and distance, all contribute to the depth and density of the image, sometimes disappearing into non-figurative patterns. She began by looking at the work of Australian artist Geoffrey Smart, known for his highly coloured images of figures placed on bleak urban roadways.

The tiny site measures just 20 x 9 metres, half now occupied by the house, on a difficult south-west, north-east orientation: the south-west faces busy Canterbury Road and north-east fronting Albert Park across the railway line: noise and danger intrude on both fronts. Cassandra was given an entirely open brief: a rare luxury, particularly for a first commission. Only a sense of the exotic, light and privacy were mentioned as requirements.

Her client was such a popular figure, she determined to cast her design net over popular culture. She values action in the public space, by speaking in popular language, superimposing a flat image over the architecture, a gesture at once beautiful, subversive and confrontational. It became a design objective to get (her) architecture on the front page of the *Herald Sun*, and that she did, twice. That does not commonly happen these days. Architecture no longer determines the parameters of public life. It is commonly too cerebral for that.

Of the three levels of the Newman house, the ground level seems to be taken up by parking and utility, expressed as a solid plinth. The two upper levels float above, set well back from boundaries in a fresh interpretation of the typically sensible Melbourne suburban siting, to let cross-ventilation allow the building to breathe. The entire north-western elevation opens, as vast glass screens glide away. An open-plan dining/living space opens onto an entertainment platform and lap pool. Yet there is a reassuring feeling of safety from the intrusive world beyond.

The corrugated, studded, fibreglass walls on the park facade are lined with pink bats, which in the morning sun, glow with a pink fleshy tone (suggested to the press as reminiscent of Anderson's blouse). The stair glows through orange perspex. It is formed with continuously folded perforated steel, leading to the mezzanine bedroom above. Box forms encase both the ensuite and robe within opaque walls, and also kitchen storage.

The colours are almost edible, reminiscent of jelly beans. Pinks, aquas, oranges, purples and yellows appeal to Cassandra. 'We're drawn to things we enjoyed as children, the plastic and glossy things that we put in our mouths'. In the Newman house, these contrast with hard, modernist materials like concrete, corrugated steel cladding, steel frames and louvres.

Such refinement of detail, considered spatial resolution, manipulation of light and ventilation, with such strong image-making is remarkable in a young designer.

REFERENCES:

- Fleur Watson, 'Face Value', *Monument Residential Specia*, Issue 02, 2001, Pp 40-44.
Stephen Crafti, 'In Your Face', *The Age*. Domain 12, 13 March 2002.
Bob Hart, 'A glass eye for Pamela', *Herald-Sun*, 7 June 2000.
Terry Brown, 'Sam's Folly uncovered', *Herald-Sun*, 23 June 2000.
Sasha Baskett, 'Sam waits on Council', *Herald-Sun*, 8 July 2000.
Jo-Anne Roberts, 'The Sammy and Pammy No-Show', *The Age*, 12 July 2000.
Allan Attwood, 'I think I am over you, Mr Newman', *The Age*, 13 July 2000.
'When Sammy Left Pammy', *The Age*, 13 July 2002.
Cassandra Fahey, Web site.
City of St Kilda, *Residential Design Guidelines, 195 A Canterbury Road, St Kilda*, 23 June 1994.
City of St Kilda, *Residential Design Guidelines, 229 A Canterbury Road, St Kilda*, March 1994.
Warwick Forge, *The Wade House Case*. McCulloch Waterloo Press. Waterloo, NSW 1985.
Cassandra Fahey, Lecture at the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Melbourne, 21 October 2002.



St Kilda Historical Society Free Public Events 2005

General Meetings

at 2.30 pm.

Speakers start at

3pm approximately

FEBRUARY 05, 2005

Saturday @ 11.00 a.m.

at St Kilda Town Hall

FEBRUARY 20, 2005

Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.

St Kilda Library community room

MARCH 20 2005

Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.

St Kilda Library community room (No meeting 13th due to public holiday)

APRIL 10, 2005

Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.

St Kilda Library community room

MAY 08, 2005

Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.

St Kilda Library community room

Meetings held at St Kilda Library community room

150 Carlisle Street, St Kilda, 3183, unless otherwise stated. Public welcome. No cost.

Publications available for sale at meeting. Collection item of the month displayed.

Afternoon tea (free) at (approx) 4.00 p.m.

LAUNCH OF NEW SKHS BOOK ON BUILDINGS OF ST KILDA AND THEIR PEOPLE

Come to the St Kilda Writers' Festival at the 'cultural hub' at **St Kilda Town Hall** for the launch of our next book by author, Richard Peterson. Be there!

CELEBRATING OUR SCOTTISH CONNECTIONS

Ronald McCoy of the Melbourne Scots-Gaelic Language Society will entertain us with the music, history and culture of Scotland and of our sister island group in the Outer Hebrides.

TRAMS OF PORT PHILLIP

With the proposal for a new tram, its time for an overview. Ever wondered about those mysterious central dividers in streets such as Broadway, Kerferd, Beach and others? Take a tram ride into history with Max Nicholson and discover original streetscapes and pathways from the 19th C till today.

WRITE YOUR OWN STORY

Learn about the 'Write Your Own Story' program' from Julie Meadows, a gifted facilitator who has assisted over fifty people to write and produce their own high quality books on their family and personal histories in conjunction with the *Makor Library*

SHUTE —THE MESSENGER

Carmel Shute is a force of nature: St Kilda resident, raconteur, activist, history graduate, convenor of *Sisters of Crime* and City of Port Phillip media officer. Join Carmel as she shares with us the huge range of heritage events and stories she has promoted in our fair city