

Piers Taylor: 'Imagine a future that is different'

7 March 2013

The founder of Invisible Studio on Peter Clegg, Sydney and living in a bad 'A' level essay



What got you started?

Having my first child at 22 and realising that I needed to get my act together and do something with my life other than hanging out on a cattle station in Queensland.

Who was your most inspiring tutor?

Glenn Murcutt for the lessons in architecture; Richard Lepastrier for the lessons in life. They both gave me a road map which I carry with me daily.

Which architect have you learnt the most from?

Other than Glenn and Richard? Kate Darby's intellectual tenacity and lack of ego are always edifying. (Although I have yet to learn intellectual tenacity as I'm as still as rash as hell. Or lack of ego.) Meredith Bowles' refreshing lack of existential angst and his fabulous dress sense are a continuing tonic. (I'm not sure if I've learned any of these other things either, but I'm aspiring to...)

Which living architect do you most admire?

Peter Clegg for showing us that we can never be complacent. Jeremy Till for pricking all of our self importance and reminding us that the consequences of what we do are far more important than any object we might create.

What "great" architecture leaves you cold?

Anything over controlled, anally retentive and that we're expected to receive with great reverence (most "great" architecture, then.)

What is your best project?

Room 13. It's still utterly anarchic in every way - the way it is operated, the material it uses, it's raison d'etre...

What project do you most regret losing?

Regrets? I've had a few. But then again...

What part of the design process do you most enjoy?

That loose early stage where ideas are quickly visualised and tested in a messy and immediate way.

What is your Achilles' heel?

Getting bored and reinventing my life. Again.

Which house would you most like to live in?

Today? Peter Stutchbury's Clareville Beach house - It's raw, unprecious and playfully inventive. Tomorrow?

What is your favourite city?

Sydney

What building would you most like to see demolished?

My own house, Moonshine, near Bath. It's like living in a bad 'A' level essay.

You can work in whichever city you want at any point in history - where and when would you choose?

I'd like to live and work in post earthquake Christchurch, New Zealand in 2013, working with the city on a big scale radically reimagining and redesigning the city for an entirely different, and better, future. Oh, I'm about to.

What is the most important relationship of your working life?

Sue Phillips. I can't imagine being able to work in any capacity without her.

Who is your favourite client?

Martin Self at the Architectural Association for allowing me to explore things way beyond the possibilities of a conventional project

What would be your dream commission?

Any project that allowed me to keep collaborating with any of the people named in this piece.

What one piece of legislation would you introduce?

I'd stop all new building whatsoever on undeveloped land in open countryside until every infill and brownfield site had been used up, and every city densified. We need to be radical in our protection of what open space is left.

What is your favourite architectural book?

Rural Studio, An Architecture of Decency.

What is your favourite novel?

Dave Eggers' A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.

What are you listening to?

The chilly north easterly blowing through the trees around my house.

Complete the sentence: At heart I am a frustrated...

...Architect

What have you sacrificed for your career?

Gosh, I'm not sure I have a career.

What does your family think of your work?

They don't think about it. It's part of the fabric of their lives.

Your child tells you they want to be an architect. What do you tell them?

You've got to imagine a future that's drastically different from the current status quo. You've got to aspire to be more than a parametric modeller or a space syntax theorist and go beyond any attempt to save the world with another iconic building.

Is it getting easier?

Creatively? Hell yes. Logistically? Hell no.

Postscript:

Piers Taylor is founder of Invisible Studio