ARTWORK ASSESSMENT REPORT

BUNGAREE KINDERGARDEN AND INFANT HEALTH CENTRE,
CITY OF ROCKINGHAM
CENTAURUS ST, ROCKINGHAM

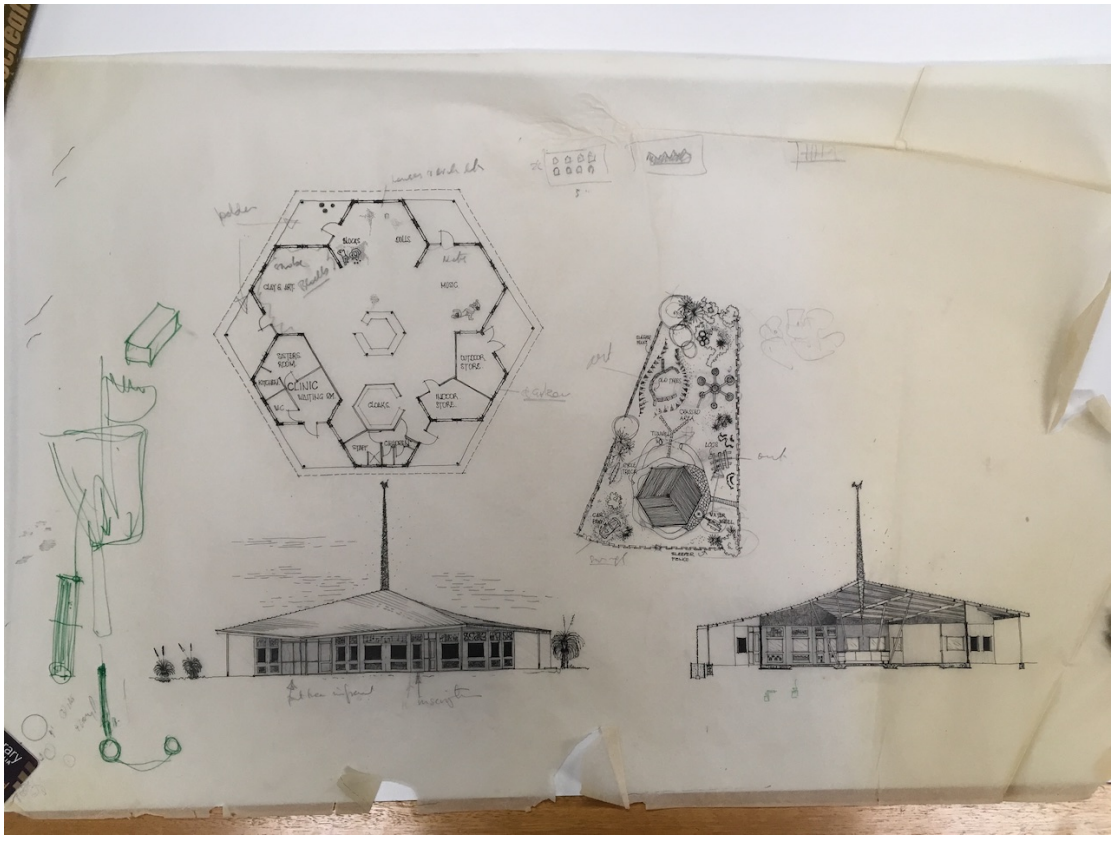
5/2/19
Jude van der Merwe

Drawing of original design, Rockingham Kindergarten and Infant Health Centre. Building designed by Paul Ritter

INVENTORY, CONDITION AND SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSEMENT REPORT
PUBLIC ART
BUNGAREE KINDERGARDEN AND INFANT HEALTH CENTRE, CITY OF ROCKINGHAM
CENTAURUS ST, ROCKINGHAM
JANUARY 2019

BACKGROUND
The City of Rockingham has recently taken responsibility for the de-commissioned Bungaree Kindergarten and Infant Health Centre.
The building includes numerous integrated artworks on exterior and interior spaces.
The City wishes to conduct an inventory of the artworks together with a condition report and significance assessment report to better understand the artworks and to assist in planning for the future.

NOTE: It is impossible to separate the architecture of the building from the artwork. The artwork is completely integrated into the design and fabric of the building



Original plan with pencil notes by Paul Ritter

THE BUILDING DESIGNER

The building was designed by Paul Ritter FRIB (1925 – 2010).
Ritter was variously Chief Planner for the City of Perth, a Ward Councillor for the City, architect, ministerial adviser and prolific writer and record keeper.
Ritter was fascinated by early learning and in addition to Rockingham, also designed the Margaret Kindergarten in Leederville (1966) and a geodesic dome kindergarten in Kelmscott (1969)
His personal library is held by the Battye Library and includes numerous writings, articles, diaries and plans including the original plans and drawings for the Rockingham Kindergarten built between 1969 and 1970.[1]
Ritter held strong views about the importance of education linked to creative pursuits.
He coined the term:

> **Educreation.** 'Education for creation growth and change'
> An approach which unifies learing and teaching, thinking and doing, with a therapeutic attitude, (emoplay) fitting to a world that is emerging from emotil symptoms

He also believed strongly in the importance of something he called **eco-architecture** architecture designed to merge creatively with an ecological pattern.

Ritter was an idealist and was deeply concerned with the direction civil society and architecture was moving in. A further term he used regularly was **Participation sculpture –** the creation of sculpture with public, artistic participation, for public buildings, or sculpture designed to allow participation of the public by inviting play, aggression outlets, xploration etc

Among his many interests was a life-long fascination with the properties and use of concrete through history and he invested in and developed material processes using material known as ***Sculptcrete.***

Ritter wrote a book developing his ideas about concrete in which the Rockingham Kindergarten features and several pertinent pages can be found at **Addendum A:**

Concrete Fit for People: a Practical Introduction to a Bio-functional Eco-Architecture for the Third Millenium A.D.[2]
Paul Ritter FRIBA
First Publisher: Down to Earth Bookshops Press, Perth
Distributor: Pergamon Press
Later re-published by Elseverier on Oct 22, 2013
ISBN 9781 483147185

[1] Battye Library, State Library of WA; Paul Ritter library archives, Rockingham Kindergarten drawings
[2] https://books.google.com.au/books?id=T7wgBQAAQBAJ&pg=PA63&lpg=PA63&dq=paul+ritter+and+mark+white&source=bl&ots=G_ccj6d5KV&sig=ACfU3U0kIp5KRUAyOOAhBkJcGhovlNwiXg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiKrtbP4ZbgAhWDfX0KHTDYC5EQ6AEwB3oECAcQAQ#v=onepage&q=paul%20ritter%20and%20mark%20white&f=false

PAUL RITTER AND ROCKINGHAM

In addition to the Kindergarten, Ritter with sculptor Mark White designed and created a number of underpasses in Rockingham again using pre cast concrete. It appears the original intention was to create six underpasses, and it understood that perhaps three were made. Of those, only one still exists. It celebrates underwater themes similar to those found in the kindergarten. The underpass is on Cygnus Street and Centaurus Street close to the kindergarten. Public Art Register Accession Nos. PA080a and PA080b

THE BUILDING AND ARTWORK

The building was largely created off-site and comprises 18 precast concrete 'V' shaped units with a window space included in mould.

Rather than being applied following construction, the artworks are the building.
In other words, each pre cast concrete panel forming the wall construction was cast to include the external and internal relief friezes.

METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION

Each cast section was joined by timber panels. The kindergarten was built in seven (7) weeks from on site delivery of panels. There is no description in the book as to how long the panels took to create and cast off-site.

The works follow a theme of happy children's faces from an idea by Paul Ritter and made by sculptor Mark White. The building panels/artworks were jointly created by Mark White, Ralph Hibble and Paul Ritter.

Erica Walker, daughter of Paul Ritter describes the process of construction:

> *Ralph Hibble built the steel formwork including a fitting to enable polystyrene panels to be inserted into the form. Sheets of polystyrene were then worked to become the artwork mould. Carving, cutting and burning tools were used to work the material. The polystyrene was dissolved off the cast concrete panels using Toluol*

DESCRIPTION OF ARTWORKS – EXTERNAL

Every single pre past panel includes a frieze of children's faces on the upper level. They become a series that wraps the entire building. The series is painted in a cream acrylic. The works have a rough finish in accordance with the designer's theory of how children like to experience surfaces. This is somewhat curious, given that none of the panels are within fingertip reach of small children, so perhaps was more guided by practical and aesthetic decisions.

Each panel either has two windows below the frieze, or a door set in to one side. Between the windows, a corrugated vertical pattern continues extending from the upper frieze to level with the bottom of each window frame.

CONDITION

As would be expected from a building almost fifty years old, the exterior has undergone some changes including retrofitting upgraded power and air-conditioning.

The panels themselves vary in quality with loss to surfaces, chipping, cracking and dis-colouration. This is most obvious on the upper and joining edges and on the panels on the northern side of the building.

SAMPLE IMAGES EXTERIOR

DESCRIPTION OF ARTWORKS – INTERNAL

It becomes clear when examining the internal artworks that these were integral to the wall construction. The interior and exterior frieze designs were cast off-site as a single entity. When the internal partitioning walls were built, they to some extent obscured the overall artwork designs. This is particularly clear for example in the shower recess.

The panels are all approximately the same dimensions, although these vary slightly throughout the building with each panel being from 660-670cms high x 1530-1660 wide and have been painted using acrylic paints.

The artwork designs are to be seen on every internal panel of the building and follow a number of themes:

1. Fish, dolphins and underwater imagery – to left and right hand sides of main entry and into the toilets and bathroom – 5 panels
2. Food – fruit, plates, cups – in the kitchen area – 2 panels
3. A bush scene – balgo, trees and flowers – 1 panel
4. Spiral /snake series – 6 panels
5. Village and city scenes – 7 panels plus relief cut-out sections on 6 lower panels
6. Musical notes series – 6 panels plus relief cut-out and painted sections on 3 lower panels

The Infant Health Centre also has 1 bush scene panel

The majority of the relief panels form part of the external walls.
Two of the music panels and two of the village scene panels are on interior partitioning walls.
Decoration/cut outs on the lower edges of the panels are regarded as interactive play opportunities for children and are not regarded as artworks. However it should be noted again that these forms are integral to the building structure.

CONDITION
As would be expected from a building almost fifty years old, the interior has undergone some changes including retrofitting upgraded power, lighting and air-conditioning.

The panels themselves vary in quality with loss to surfaces, chipping, cracking and dis-colouration. All of the panels are dirty with dust adhering to the rough surfaces.

The panels on which the colours and surfaces are in the best condition are the village scenes and the kitchen food/fruit/plates designs.
The musical notes section appears to have deteriorated the most with considerable loss to the paint surfaces, and sections of the base material have been lost.
The bush scene in the infant health centre includes a female kangaroo and it appears that there has been loss to the stomach section – possibly a pouch?

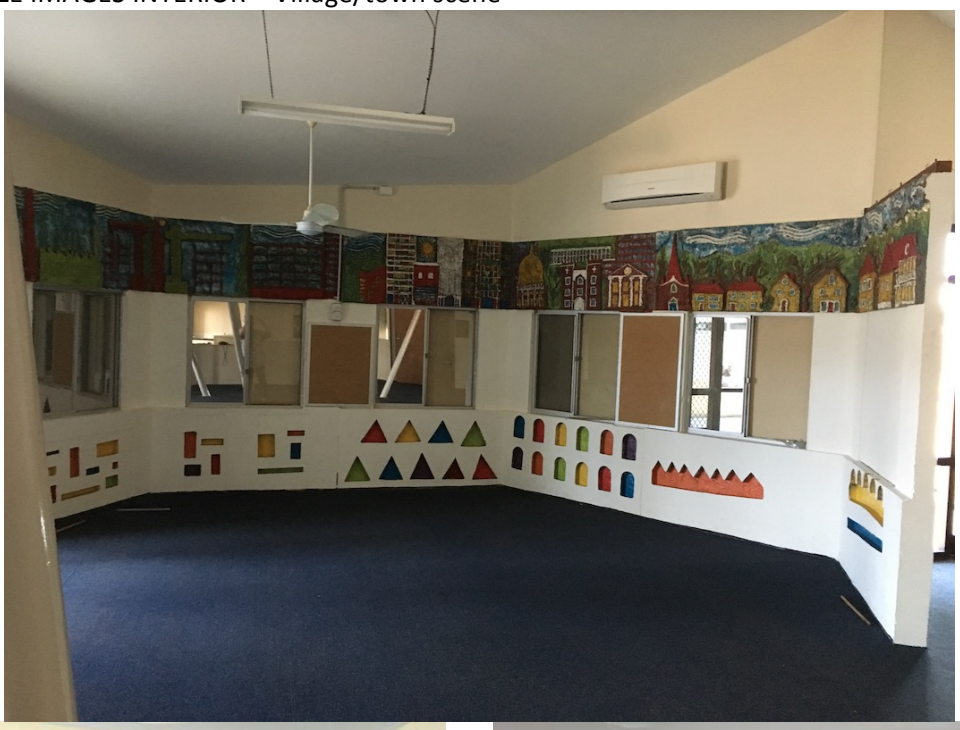
SAMPLE IMAGES INTERIORS – Fish series – toilets, bathroom



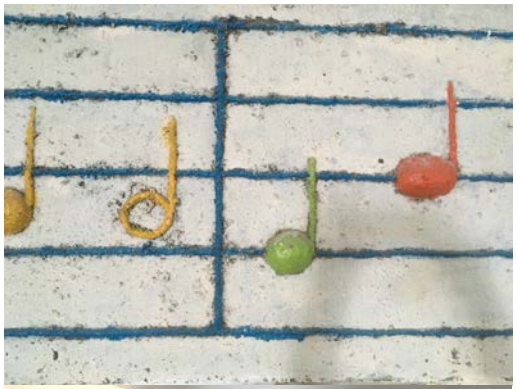

SAMPLE IMAGES INTERIORS – Food Series - kitchen


SAMPLE IMAGES INTERIOR – SPIRALS AND SNAKES

SAMPLE IMAGES INTERIOR – Village/town scene

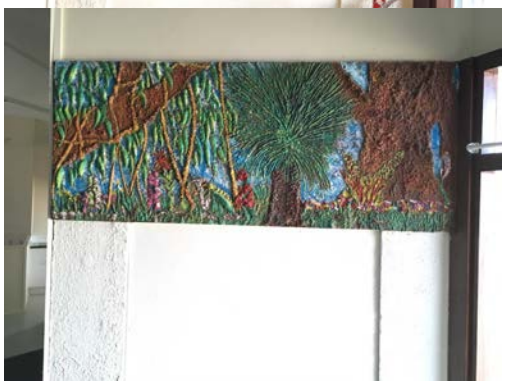


SAMPLE IMAGES INTERIOR - music



SAMPLE IMAGES INTERIOR – bush scenes. Unlike the other works, which are created in series, there are two discrete bush scenes throughout the building. 2 in the main kindergarten and 1 in the Infant Health Foyer

Panel in foyer of Infant Health space



Panel near main entry to kindy

SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

A significance assessment of the works – both interior and exterior follows.
Because of the nature of the construction, it is impossible to divorce the artworks from the building.

PROVENANCE
The provenance of the building/artworks are unquestioned. The building plans reside in the Battye Library and the book by Paul Ritter *Concrete Fit for People* includes descriptions of the process and images of the making of the panels specifically for Rockingham Kindergarten. *See Addendum A*

RARITY
This consultant is unaware of any similar approaches to construction/art in Western Australia. While pre-fabricated, or what we now refer to as tilt-up concrete panels are commonplace, the use of individualised relief pattern and picture-making particularly on two sides of a single panel is unknown to this consultant.

CONDITION OR COMPLETENESS
The building/artworks are effectively unchanged since they were made and installed in 1969/70.
The original design drawings specify the internal fit-out and that has not been altered over the past fifty years.
While there are considerable areas where the panels have been worn, have chipping to the surface, cracks to the panel joins, wear and loss to top and bottom edges and have had some drilling to attach later fittings, these are superficial and the original intent of the artwork is maintained.

INTERPRETIVE CAPACITY
The artworks were specifically designed and intended to aid early learning, exploration and creativity in children aged up to six years old. The imagery is necessarily simple, colourful and idealized. There has been little attempt to attain a 'realistic' result – except perhaps in the two bush scenes.

HISTORIC VALUE
As an example of a new approach to building both in the form of construction, form of the building itself designed within a hexagonal footprint, and in the intention to provide small children with an unusual learning environment, the building is unmatched in Western Australia.

In today's world, early learning centres and schools tend to be constructed in box forms and any artworks are generally applied to a finished object, rather than integrated to the whole.

ARTISTIC OR AESTHETIC QUALITIES
The artworks for the building are specifically child-like in intention and largely coloured in primary or high chroma colours. The works could not be described as unique, or having been created using high level skills except in the unique material and concrete forming.

The works are all created to have a rough, active surface, and this is part of the overall aesthetic

SOCIAL OR SPIRITUAL VALUE
Without knowing more of the history of the use of the space, it is difficult to establish how the children who attended that kindergarten remember it or whether they associate the building and its artworks as part of a unique learning environment.

It is also unknown how practical the spaces were for teaching purposes. It is however unlikely that the building/artwork would hold a high level of spiritual value.

CONCLUSIONS

- It is clear that it is simply not possible to separate the artworks from the building and therefore to assign value categories for individual panels or themes is not useful.
- It is seen that the building/artwork have considerable significance.
- It is unknown whether the building is on the municipal register.
- The building form and internal layouts are resistant to much change, given the integrated nature of the overall design and the artwork.

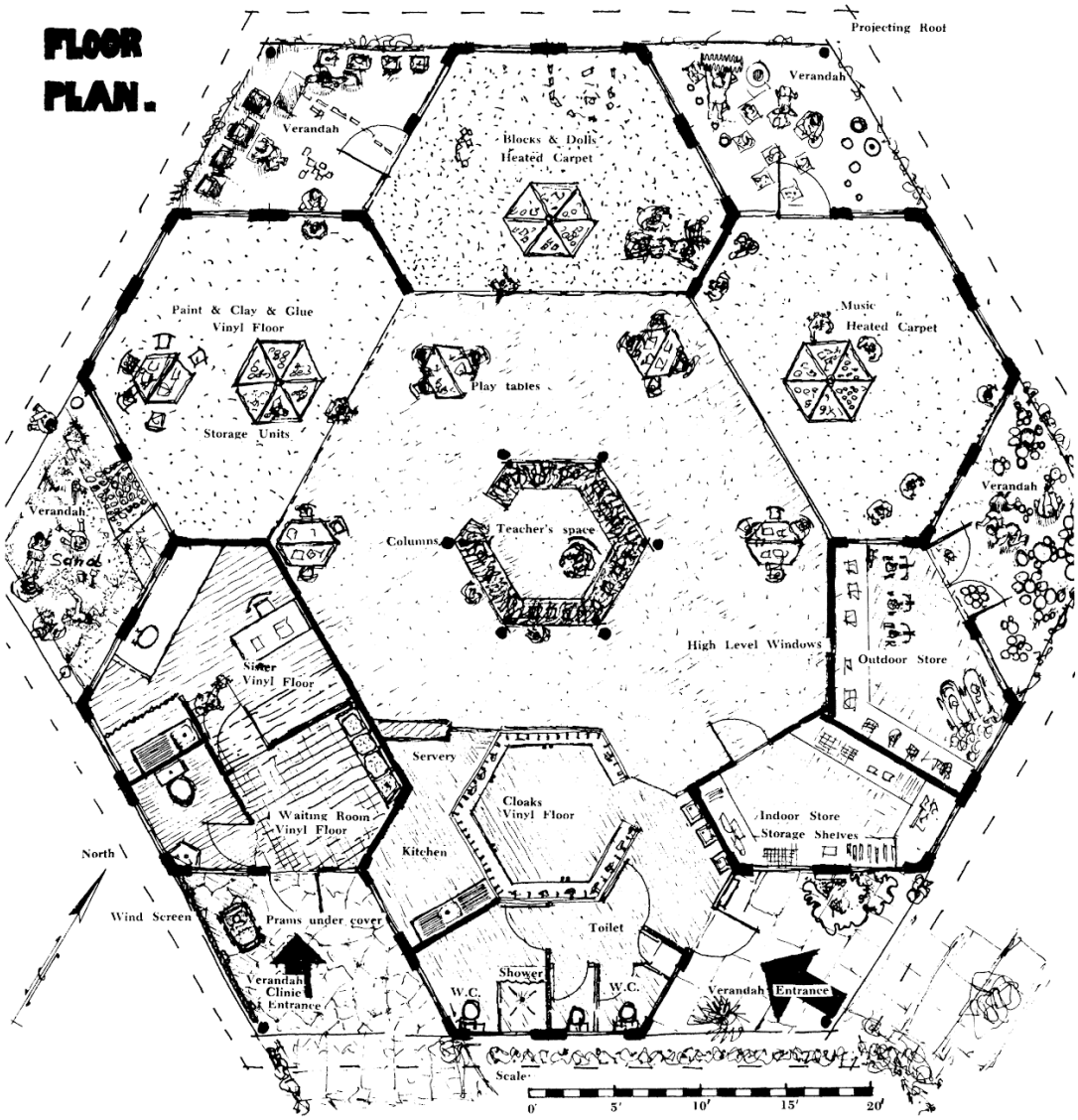
<u>Future planning</u>

- It is unknown how the City intends to use the building going forward.
- The building/artwork does not lend itself to the practice of visual art given that there is a lot of colour, pattern and visual noise already within the space, so as a working space it would likely be challenging.
- The building in its present form could perhaps be useful for music, young bands to practice, small performances etc.
- Regardless of any future plans, it would be helpful for all the artworks to be vacuumed and then gently washed down to get rid of all the dust and dirt accreting to the rough surfaces.

ADDENDUM A

Excerpt pages from publication by Paul Ritter

Concrete Fit for People: a Practical Introduction to a Bio-functional Eco-Architecture for the Third Millenium A.D.



Kitchen entrance and cloaks. Sink and servery, are in a little area off the main space, with the bass-relief of a giant bowl of fruit and a multitude of kitchen utensils.

In all these 'water' spaces marine life is the theme for the bass-relief sculpture.

Structure. On a R.C. slab, thickened strategically, 18 precast concrete 'V' shaped units, weighing 1½ tons each, 17.7 m² x 12.8 m (11 ft x 8 ft) form the entire wall structure. A window opening is cast into each face. The units are joined by timber frame panels 8.8 m x 12.8 m (5 ft 6 in x 8 ft) which include the doors.

Three crucial bolts protrude from the top of each facet of the concrete units. These serve several functions:

1. To fix reinforcement for casting.
2. To hold lifting tackle.
3. To fix for transport.
4. To hold continuous wall plates 100 mm x 76 mm (4 in x 3 in).

Construction. The kindergarten was built in seven weeks from the delivery on site of the 18 concrete units. The foundation slab had been cast previously. About one-third of the actual construction of the project, by cost, was carried out directly by the

Early, crude Sculp-crete techniques operated by Ralph Hibble (top), Erica Ritter and Paul Ritter, on the V-shaped units in the casting yard. The various types of friezes can be identified.

use the opportunities allowed for and encouraged by the design.

The sense of belonging of the parents, in the first instance, was to some considerable extent due to the individual child-orientated nature of the building. A good effect for the whole neighbourhood.

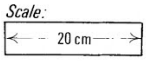
Participation. Studying the many uses of any room both aesthetic and functional in the more normal sense, there are countless features that can be incorporated in the concrete casting by forethought in formliner treatment. Our Rockingham Park Kindergarten is a good example of this. This also ties up with the study I made of the bio-energetic implications of Summerson's aedicule theory, the simple fact that recesses in walls have always been attractive **per se,** not only because they are useful, for this or that display or storage. We used this approach with good effect and excellent economy at Rockingham.

VI.5.3. Childrens' Protection Centre.

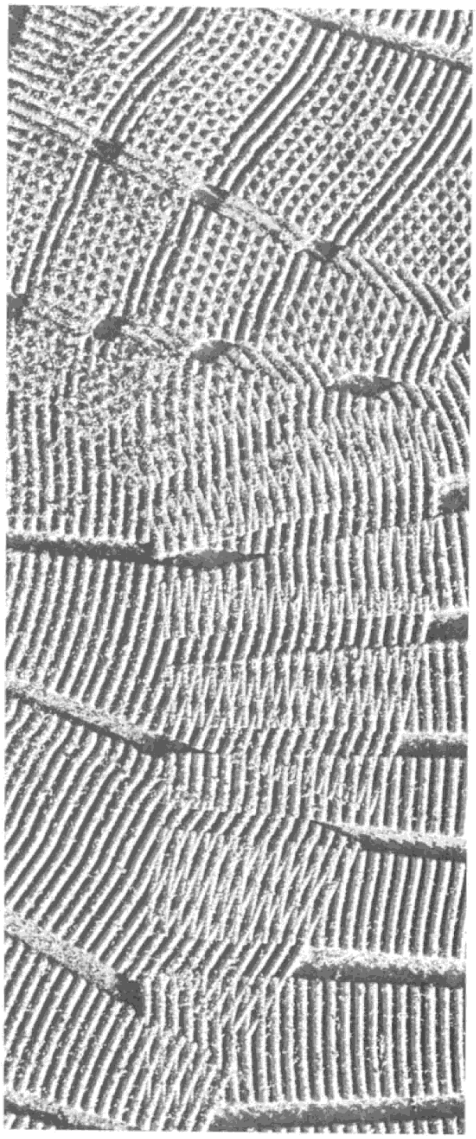
Four panels (overleaf) for an existing facade of a Kindergarten in Perth. It was found too stern by its management which required that it be made attractive and alive for children and passers-by. Carried out by Paul Ritter, Ralph Hibble, consultant in technology and Simon Miller, consultant sculptor.

'We love you' frieze of happy children's faces right around the Kindergarten at Rockingham, W.A. Sculpted by Mark White after an idea by Paul Ritter. The three illustrations show the effect of different light on what is a green glazed surface and the crude colour of the formwork lining prior to casting of a snake. Theme mould held by Jean Ritter, Director P.E.E.R.

Scale:



Excerpts from *Concrete Fit for People*: a Practical Introduction to a Bio-functional Eco-Architecture for the Third Millenium A.D. referencing the underpasses made for Rockingham



Immense, free hand basrelief designs by architects for multi storey surfaces are now economically feasible. With tools up to one meter wide they imprint to the varying depths required with the sweep of the arm of the artist, directly onto the mould, laid on the ground. For bridges etc the stress lines could be given external expression. Pre-casting or on site casting is possible.

VI.5. Examples designed to perform visual, tactile, atmospheric, life-supporting, and social use functions.

I know that humanity will for a long time suffer from 'emotil', and that one symptom of this is aggression, that needs to come out, particularly in children. Thus, when I was asked to design seven underpasses so that they were a positive addition to the environment as part of a footpath system in a pioneering Radburn housing scheme, carried out by my friend George Clarke in Perth, I realized that aggression was a crucial point. Unless one had in mind that kids needed to let off aggression it was perverse to create beauty in the underpasses. Even if desirable, which it is not, it is impossible to stop kids from letting off aggression in such places as underpasses and towards such things as walls and their protuberances, patterns, etc. Thus the design incorporates the idea of the violent attacks on it. They are anticipated and planned for, positively.

The result and the feedback, seven years later show that this can be done and has wide implications. A sculpture can live through phases of life — like any other living thing. The Venus we adore has lost her arm, Socrates is minus penis, the saints in British cathedrals were robbed of their heads by Cromwell's men, and the Acropolis is visited by thousands of admiring architects, though it is blown to bits. Who will tell me that it is not possible to plan for this kind of thing in design, particularly in a minor way? Seriously, a dry mount imperfectionist aesthete is appropriate to nature and to a dynamic eco-architecture.

VI.5.1. First educreational application — underpasses.

At Rockingham Park, Perth, W.A. 70 m² (672 sq. ft.) of base relief sculpture, made for seven pedestrian underpasses.

The concrete was cast by Rocla Pipes Co. at Perth. 'Sculp-crete' work and play sculpture ideas by Paul Ritter.

A 90 cm (3 ft) high sculpture panel is cast, integrally with each precast structural section, giving a continuous base relief, 10 m (32 ft) long, in each underpass.

Continuous lighting is incorporated on the opposite side and seats are placed on this side also.

From dull tunnels the underpasses are transformed into shady, dry, light, and attractive playspaces or 'clubrooms' for the children in a climate that needs shade in summer and shelter from heavy rain in winter.

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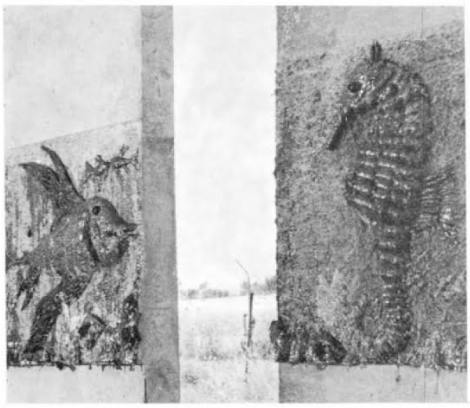
Brief for underpass sculptures.

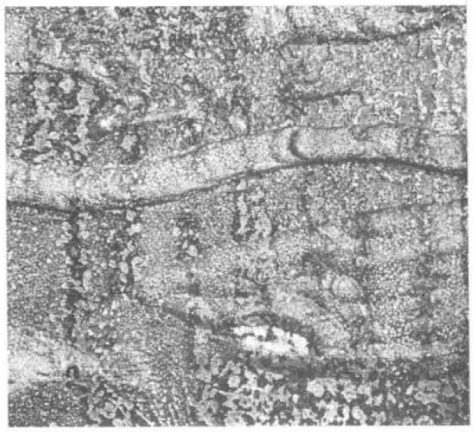
1. To invite children's interest.
2. To be vandal-proof.
3. To be attractive to adults.
4. To be economical.

Solution: 'Instant participation sculpture'

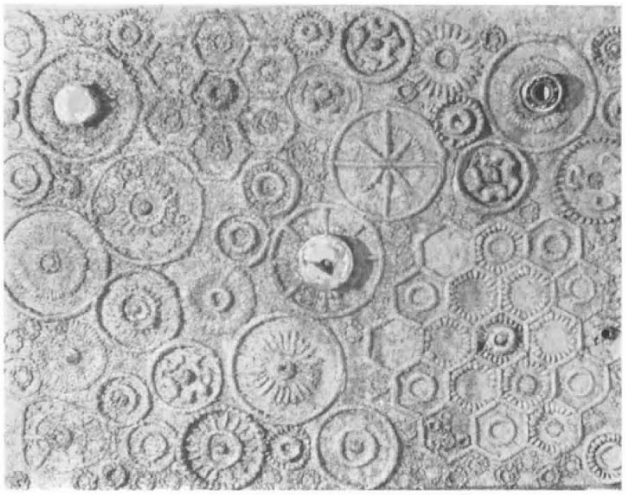
The criteria, according to developers, builders, artists, and child-psychologists have been met:

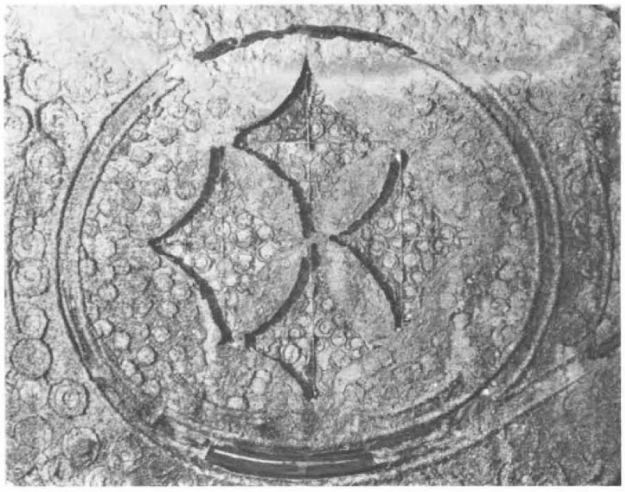
1. Rough textures invite the children to 'pick' and 'dig' as they like to do. This is intended. There are some 'treasures' hidden (marbles, etc.) under very thin layers. All this does not spoil the design but helps to give it the intended changing character.
2. The hard nature of finish and concrete make the works as vandal-proof as is possible. To be able to do many energetic things with the sculpture lessens the desires for misuse.
3. The designs have a basic artistic intent. The quality of the design texture and finishes give beauty at various levels of appreciation.
4. The incorporation of the design and finishes in the structural precast formwork reduces expenditure dramatically.

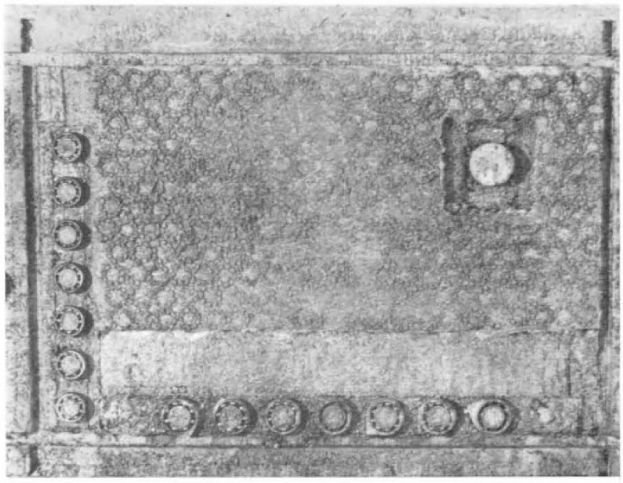




UNDERPASS 1
Underwater scene: Children imagine themselves heroes in dangerous situations. The shark, looking ferocious and with its teeth representing danger, tempts the child, I remember from myself to dare to put a finger in the shark's mouth, quickly, to see 'if anything happens.' Result: feeling of heroism and reassurance that it's all right. The chase of the small fish by big ones, the squids, and sea serpents give food for the imagination.







UNDERPASS 2
Tech fun: Ball bearings in runs or coils of pipe are imprisoned in the concrete panels with various distinctive and decorative patterns. They can be reached with pencils or 6m nails, and pushed and set off with great velocity. This allows letting off aggression quite harmlessly as the balls crash and clash with ferocity. Then the child can settle down to any of a number of games of skill, not only competitive, but games of co-operation, with couples acting in concert. Just for fun of the smaller children, balls can be rolled in and out, up and down.