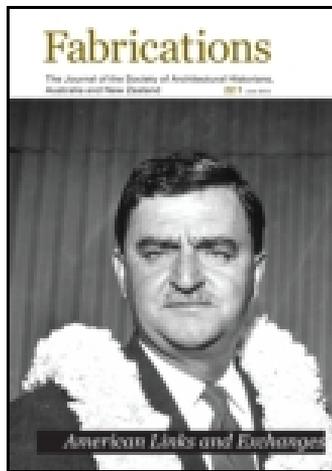


This article was downloaded by: [RMIT University]

On: 30 November 2014, At: 15:03

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfab20>

A Clinic for the Exhausted: In Search of an Antipodean Vitality: Edmond & Corrigan and an Itinerant Architecture

Cathy Smith^a

^a University of Newcastle

Published online: 12 Nov 2014.

To cite this article: Cathy Smith (2014) A Clinic for the Exhausted: In Search of an Antipodean Vitality: Edmond & Corrigan and an Itinerant Architecture, *Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, 24:2, 299-301, DOI: [10.1080/10331867.2014.961229](https://doi.org/10.1080/10331867.2014.961229)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10331867.2014.961229>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

in itself, but one which is intrinsically Sydney (rather than generic) and a project that is decidedly overdue. Perhaps this is a future study for the FBE Research Group? Another project might look specifically at propinquity from the aspect of Sydney's postwar public space and urban design.

If there is a criticism to this book, it is the reluctance to provide an overarching conclusion, a reluctance to venture into questions of taste, ugliness and kitsch or, at the very least, questions of excess. There is no dangerous argument in favour of glamour, no reckless speculation or even a contemporary problematisation of Sydney's foray into leisure. The prurient views of Boyd, Gazzard and Dunphy are not tested by any of the authors, with the exception of Freestone, who admits architectural vacuity, but explains popular success in his disquisition on the drive-in. Another criticism is the problem of broader context. Parts of the book appear written as if in a geographic vacuum. While understandably Sydney-centric by virtue of its content, a concluding placement of the content within a larger story, both nationally and internationally,

would have strengthened the value of this book's underlying thesis. There is also little sense of what has become of these buildings, in terms of heritage and their longer-term social value. Most have disappeared, demolished with each successive wave of Sydney's embrace of capital. At the same time, this ephemerality has now been expertly captured in *Leisure Space*. The great strength of this book is that it is a model for other scholars to follow. A study such as this might emerge from Perth, Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Canberra and so on. Each would be subtly different, but revealingly so. What is it, for example, about bowling alleys and émigré architects in Melbourne? Hogben, O'Callaghan and their collaborators have done Australian architectural history an enormous service. They have asked of Sydney people: what do they do in their spare time? By doing so, they nudge architectural historians to do the same, but within their own disciplinary boundaries and, in doing so, new stories are able to be told.

Philip Goad
University of Melbourne

A Clinic for the Exhausted: In Search of an Antipodean Vitality: Edmond & Corrigan and an Itinerant Architecture

Michael Spooner
Spurbuch Verlag
Baunach; 2013
240 pages

A seminal Melbourne building escaping its moorings, an inebriated architect and a letter to his architect friend; the aforementioned scenarios may seem an unlikely provocation for an architectural project, yet they led to the creation of *A Clinic for the Exhausted* – an enigmatic design project and accompanying book by Melbourne architectural theorist and practitioner Dr Michael Spooner. One evening in 1993, the Melbourne architect Howard

Raggatt experienced a recently completed Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) Building 8 as if it were a departing ocean liner (5). Raggatt's subsequent letter to his friend and architect of Building 8, Peter Corrigan, provided the initial departure point for Spooner's design project and, ultimately, the book being presently reviewed. According to Spooner, Raggatt's inebriated state allowed him to experience the building as "pure sensations" (115) in the Deleuzian sense; it also prompted Spooner to re-imagine Building 8 as a "densely scaffolded" (5) and gilded architectural vessel during his doctoral studies, also completed at RMIT. The book, *A Clinic for the Exhausted*, could be variously positioned as a work of design-based research; as the architectural discourse associated with three interrelated hypothetical design projects; and as a beguiling creative, textual work in its own right. Certainly, the book title and idea of a clinic immediately appealed to this academic-reviewer,

exhausted by the demands of a hectic university semester, yet the book offers less repose from architectural life than a unique and introspective engagement with it. Its foreword by Professor Michael J. Ostwald provides a fitting introduction to the pages that follow, through its invocations of utopia, seafaring and nautical navigation. Spooner's own speculative writings are interwoven with image-only pages of three of his own, related design projects. The first of Spooner's projects, also titled "A Clinic for The Exhausted" (the aforementioned creative response to Building 8), is followed by "The Swimming Pool Library" and "The Landscape Room". All three projects are conveyed through a series of beautiful, black-and-white digitally rendered sections, plans, exploded detail drawings and three-dimensional perspectives.

To contextualise Spooner's literary and design experimentation, we might turn to the French post-structuralist philosopher Gilles Deleuze, to whom Spooner also refers. In Chapter 3 of Spooner's book, "For What It's Worth", there is reference to Deleuze's self-positioning of his work as a "sort of buggery" (6) of other philosophical writings. Deleuze's "buggery" is affirmative, because it produces new modes of thought and practice; it encourages conceptual and discursive transgressions, such as Spooner's own re-imagining of the seminal architectural project by Melbourne firm Edmond & Corrigan. Both Spooner's design projects and the accompanying literary text challenge preconceptions of what constitutes scholarly research, design practice, architectural discourse and, most importantly, their interrelation. The design projects are alluded to in the text preceding the project imagery, but there is no straightforward explanatory text in the conventional sense. Spooner's approach encourages independent speculation and, together with the images, generates affects rather than a finite project methodology: in Spooner's words, "every chance has been taken whereby the text and the project have been unable to be fixed in their entirety to either abode that names them as such" (119). It could be argued that design-based research requires more of its researcher, because of a coexistent position as project author *and* appraiser, designer *and*

critic. Accordingly, it may be appropriate that Spooner also demands more of his readership, who must: "work beyond this text, and for the audience's delight ... to go on, further still, into the night on unsteady legs" (142). The reader who is more familiar with traditional historical treatises and architectural project descriptions may find Spooner's approach challenging, if not exhausting, due to the loose correspondences between words and images and, indeed, between different sections of the written text. Yet for Deleuze, the term and notion of exhaustion is different to a tiredness or fatigue of life: it refers instead to exhausting and subsequently overcoming the limitations of existing realities.¹ *A Clinic for the Exhausted* is invested with this productive Deleuzian sense of exhaustion and the attendant creative "potentiality of spaces yet to come" beyond conventional architectural discourse.²

This brief review of *A Clinic for the Exhausted* cannot adequately capture the text's character and depth; as such, it might be better to speak of the text's operations and processes – and how to engage with the work – rather than provide a description or critique of its content alone. Spooner's writing weaves between different philosophical notions, literary references, project and building descriptions and the imagery of the three aforementioned architectural projects. These different references are introduced without an explicit rationale and, as such, rely on either the reader's pre-existing familiarity with these various sources and/or their openness to the poetic affects induced by this writing style. In one example of this rich, discursive *mélange*, the text moves between invocations of Le Corbusier swimming in the Mediterranean sea to the Flemish Renaissance painter Pieter Bruegel, the English poet Lord Byron and Hollywood actress Marilyn Monroe – all loosely connected through the shared themes of swimming, boats and bodies (142–43). The aforementioned conceptual approach has a scholarly precedent. The philosophical text *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* by Deleuze and his collaborator, psychoanalyst Félix Guattari, also moves fluidly between various literary, philosophical and historical sources, in order to challenge habitual modes of understanding. In the words of architectural theorist Andrew Ballantyne, *A*

Thousand Plateaus prompts a creative encounter “with ideas that derail our usual habits of thought and allow us to come away energized, thinking our own thoughts that might be quite unlike any ideas that Deleuze and Guattari might have had on our behalf”.³ In a similar vein, *A Clinic for the Exhausted* requires the reader to discard conventional receptions of architectural form: “[h]ow much are you, the audience, willing to risk so that boat and building may share a life” (51). Upon accepting this challenge, readers may embark on a journey that simultaneously traverses disciplinary boundaries and discourses (architecture, art, philosophy, literature) and circumscribes an imaginative architectural world birthed during a night of architectural reverie – and one drink too many. To this

exhausted academic, it seems as productive a place to begin as any.

Cathy Smith
University of Newcastle

NOTES

1. Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (London: Verso, 1998), 152.
2. Hélène Frichot and Stephen Loo, “Introduction: The Exhaustive and the Exhausted – Deleuze AND Architecture”, in *Deleuze and Architecture*, Hélène Frichot and Stephen Loo, eds., (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).
3. Note that architectural theorist and philosopher Hélène Frichot was Spooner’s PhD thesis supervisor.
3. Andrew Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2007), 100.