

DESIGNERS IN PROFILE

What is it about the way architecture is done that you'd love to see change?



CLARE KENNEDY

Architect, Five Mile Radius
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Works across Australia and abroad

What kind of house did you grow up in?

I grew up in a typical Queensland worker's cottage, all timber, painted a deep maroon red, on the top of a hill with view over Brisbane. So many of my earliest memories are of working with my dad on modifications to the house and garden.

What was the first design project you were really proud of?

Our studio's first completed house was a real highlight. It was a guest house in central India for sculptors, using the local clay and stone. We spent months in the region really understanding the local resources and skills before designing the house. Our aim was to promote the continuation of these local techniques though their use in contemporary design. We are looking to emulate this process back here in Australia.

What is your favourite sustainable building, and why?

We just love simple Australian homes. We take so much inspiration from architects like Richard Leplastrier, Glenn Murcutt, Paul Pholeros, and the team at Troppo. For these people sustainability is simple: it's about a design response to climate coupled with a deep understanding of the origins and lifespan of materials. These are the first principles of architecture that so often get overlooked.

What's on your drawing board right now?

We're working with SWOP clothing exchange on a series of retail fitouts using waste from the plywood industry, a series of community buildings using recycled hardwood for an inner city organic farm, and our first furniture series, 'Waste Terrazzo', that turns concrete and construction waste into functional objects.

What is it about the way architecture is done that you would love to see change?

We'd love to see less use of composites, plastics, blends, hybrids, toxic finishes and PVC. The building industry has become saturated with cheap building materials designed to last only a few years. We wish for a return to simple, healthier materials that last.

What is the future of Five Mile Radius?

We are growing Australia's first research-focused architectural studio dedicated to the use of local materials. Expect to see us taking on a range of experimental projects across Australia built using local materials and involving local communities, students, industry and councils along the way.



ANDREW KERR

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Works in Tasmania

What kind of house did you grow up in?

My dad built our family house. He was a self-taught builder and our house was the first that he built. It was surrounded by bush, and this close connection to nature still informs my designs today. Dad lined the house with a variety of timber species and fitted it out with creations from his workshop, which is where I gained my appreciation for timber and natural materials. I may not have become an architect, or at least the one I am today, had I not grown up in such a memorable house.

What was the first design project you were really proud of?

My first professional project as AKA was the Woodbridge Community Sports Facility. The new building replaced a dilapidated clubhouse made from four apple pickers' huts joined together. Passive solar design creates a range of comfortable spaces for players and spectators, both indoors and out, all year round. I was able to use my skills to benefit the club I had first played for in the community I had grown up in. The building has been embraced by all who use it and provides a lasting legacy to the community who helped create it.

What is your favourite sustainable building, and why?

One of my favourite buildings in the world is the Design Centre in Launceston. I first visited the building soon after it opened, and was astounded that such a high quality building existed in Tasmania. Designed by David Travalia and Richard Leplastrier, the building is well considered and beautifully detailed.

What's on your drawing board right now?

A modest two-bedroom home for a young family with a bush block on the east coast of Tasmania. The clients wanted to build something affordable but thermally efficient. It's a family home driven by efficiency and purpose, focusing on needs, not wants.

What is it about the way architecture is done that you would love to see change?

I think sustainability should not be an afterthought, but at the forefront of any design. I would also like to see a more collaborative approach between architects and those we engage with: a better understanding between architects, builders and trades could reduce material wastage and inefficiencies. I want to help steer away from the popular thought of architecture as a luxury affordable only to the wealthy.