

THE AUSTRALIAN

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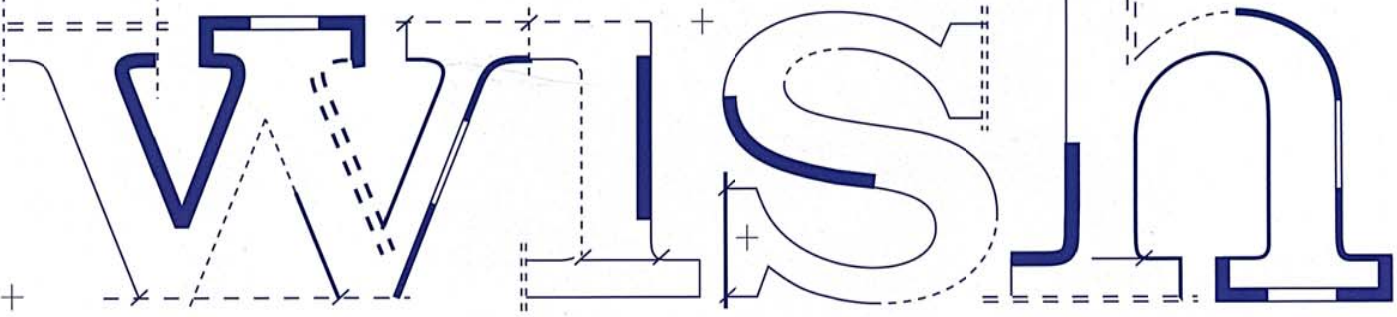
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THE BEST OF EVERYTHING

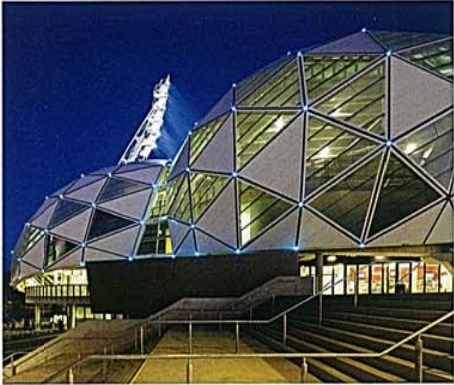
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2011 NATIONAL AWARDS OF THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS



In a year where the big names of Australian architecture dominated, there was a hint of romance in the air as old buildings became new again, commercial projects glittered and glowed and diverse approaches to house design exuded charm as well as sophistication

Story **Robert Bevan**



Clockwise, from above: Cox Architecture's dramatic AAMI Park "confirms Australia's penchant for the architectural one-liner"; winner of the Small Projects category, Domenic Alvaro's Small House in Sydney; Candalepas Associates' Waterloo Street apartments, also in Sydney, won The Frederick Romberg Award for Residential Architecture – Multiple Housing; Muir Mendes' Law Street House, Melbourne, was Commended in the Small Projects category; as was Room 11's Little Big House in Tasmania.



crystalline forms, a regular feature of architecture internationally, are still something of a Melbourne speciality within Australia, even if ARM's 1995 chameleon skin at Storey Hall in RMIT, arguably, prefigured this global trend.

The Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Architecture Australian War Memorial Eastern Precinct Johnson Pilton Walker

JPW's Australian War Memorial Eastern Precinct in Canberra took the Sir Zelman Cowen Award once more (JPW won in 2009 for the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra), confirming the practice as architects of choice if you want elegance of national significance. On a sensitive site, the Eastern Precinct project creates a National Service memorial courtyard and new visitor amenities and parking. A restrained Miesian concrete frame holding a glass box is part of a strategy to manage coachloads of visitors while maintaining a mood of quiet contemplation.

Exactly the opposite atmosphere is the aim of the jolly AAMI Park stadium in Melbourne, which won an

Small, but perfectly formed

The small projects category is all houses, with the winner being the **Small House** in Sydney's Surry Hills by **Domenic Alvaro**. Like an apartment sliced and stacked vertically, it shows what is possible on a tiny two-car-size site and how high-density living can be achieved. Commendations were also given to: **Room 11's Little Big House**, Tasmania – a piece of geometry hovering in the woods on the slopes of Mt Wellington – and to **Muir Mendes' stealthy Law Street House** in Melbourne where a dark, blank facade hides an idiosyncratic white interior whose angles are romantic in a hidden-gem way.

The **Frederick Romberg Award for Residential Architecture – Multiple Housing** holds fewer surprises. The winner is **Candalepas Associates' Waterloo Street** apartments – again in Surry Hills – which uses the practice's favoured palette of raw concrete and timber screens to good effect. **Hayball's John Street** building at Box Hill, Victoria, won an Architecture Award for a block of student housing; it has a similar materiality to the Candalepas project but does it on a budget. It is another much-needed model for what affordable or social housing might look like. **Elenberg Fraser's playful A'Beckett Tower** in Melbourne shows that high-rise living doesn't have to be regimented. A wildly colourful and modelled facade is matched inside by hidden touches such as drawers lined in candy red. The whole thing is an exploration of Goethe's colour theory about hues that exist at the edge of light and dark.

Finally, the **2011 Enduring Architecture Award** recognises the late Nick Murcutt's father, **Glenn Murcutt**, whose 1984 **Magney House at Bingie Bingie** is one of his more industrial offerings. Glenn Murcutt's inventiveness is evident throughout. Gull-wing profile roofs and ceilings are not an unusual architectural device any more but here it is taken further through details such as the ceiling sweeps down over arched doorways to form something lively and organic. It is one of 16 residences included on the International Architects Union world register of significant 20th-century architecture and won Murcutt sr his own Robin Boyd Award in 1985.