Intensive Design Studio

The Design Studio will explore the issue of designing a substantial addition of unquestioned good contemporary architectural character to an historic building of recognized quality, a thing good and great architects have done for centuries. The studio will attempt to develop an understanding the innate and essential qualities of old buildings as springboards for the design of contemporary additions and/or alterations which enrich and extend the value both.

There will be a number of guest speakers and lectures which will consider approaches that have been made over many centuries of integrating the new with the old, the good the bad, sublime – and the truly (bloody) awful. Celebrated architects such as Asplund, Aulenti, Foster, Pei, to name a few, have done it superbly. A number of case studies will be examined and each student will be asked to make a critical assessment of their successes and failures. It is planned that the studio group will make one or two visits to local significant examples where the architect will present his/her approach to adding new to old and studio members will have the opportunity to engage in a discourse with its designer.

The focus of the Design Studio will be Walter Liberty Vernon’s sandstone Attendant’s Lodge in City Road, opposite Merewether Building. The building originally built for the University in 1895 is now used to house postgraduate students from St Paul’s College. You will be asked to design a significant addition to house 15 postgraduate students with the necessary attendant facilities such as bathrooms, kitchens, common rooms, dining room, library, service areas, etc. Great freedom of design will be encouraged along with the development of an understanding of appropriate response(s) to good old buildings.

Trevor Howells teaches Architectural History in Years 1-3 and is Coordinator of the Faculty’s Master of Heritage Conservation Program. He is currently writing the official architectural to all of the campuses of the University of Sydney to published by The Watermark Press in 2006 and about to begin a newly commissioned book entitled Great Architectural Disasters.