



UNBUILT AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN WORLD EXPOSITION

In the first of our series recalling unbuilt projects Philip Goad introduces Robin Boyd's proposal for the 1972 World Exposition.

In November 1964, Robin Boyd was invited to formulate concepts for a World Exposition to be held in Melbourne in 1972. Boyd produced a diagrammatic sketch in 1965 embodying one of the Expo sub-themes, Living Together. He drew a 250-acre urban plan, with a series of concentric circles representing the rings of social organization that surround the individual, and radial lines representing man's ideas and activities. Overlaid onto this system of concentric circles was a landscape of rivers, lakes and a sports oval.

Boyd argued that the Melbourne fair needed "something so new, so bold, so unprecedented as to set it apart from all previous expositions and to put it into the "Eighth Wonder of the World class ... This means essentially, a structure of some breathtaking quality or magnitude." His idea was a "space envelope",

an enormous translucent canopy enclosing the whole exposition, possibly a giant geodesic dome of light framing and plastic as developed by Buckminster Fuller. The idea of enclosing an entire precinct in a controlled environment was Boyd's way of describing urban unity at Expo 72. It was also a recurrent theme in his built work: encapsulating an ideal world within a single structure.

Residual uses for the site after the exposition were also explored, with the retention of Boyd's model suburb, an intrinsic part of his original proposal, favoured. For Boyd, this suburb of around 50 houses would be "an idealistic projection of Australia's characteristic suburban way of life."

Philip Goad is professor of architecture at the University of Melbourne.

Nº1 Robin Boyd's sketch plan for the 1972 World Exposition, including a model suburb that would be "an idealistic projection of Australia's suburban way of life".

Grounds Romberg & Boyd Collection (Manuscript Section) Box 118/1b. State Library of Victoria.

The AA Prize for Unbuilt Work – an opportunity to recognize the unbuilt gems of today. Entry details available soon.