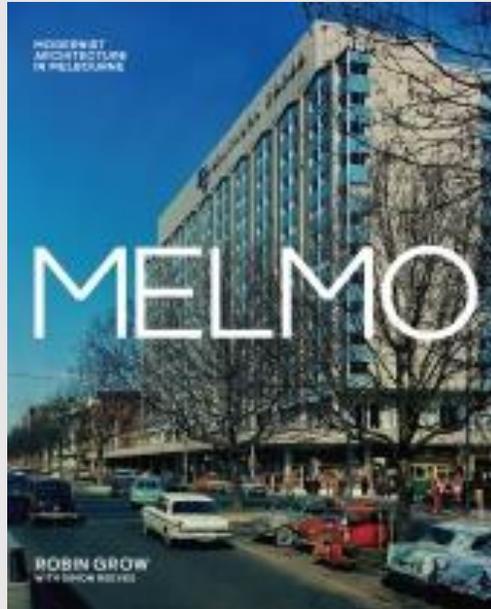


June 12, 2021

## MELMO: Modernist Architecture in Melbourne



Art Deco and Modernism Society of Australia President Robin Grow will present a virtual program on his new book about Modernist architecture in Melbourne.

Melmo: Modernist Architecture in Melbourne covers the quarter century from 1945 to 1970, a period when the city was subject to dramatic change – architecturally and socially.

What an exciting time it was. There were new attitudes to design and construction and the city expanded outwards and upwards as it looked to the USA for inspiration. A new style of city buildings gazed up to the sky, often clad in glass and steel, and climbing above previous height limits. The former ICI house in Spring Street led the way.

As the city grew to meet postwar demands, new housing styles emerged, often in new estates, and a weekend drive to an estate became a common activity. Much of the change to housing was driven by young architects determined to make their mark in suburbs like Beaumaris and Studley Park. Some, like Robin Boyd and Roy Grounds, became household names and are still revered. Formats of houses changed, and often included butterfly and flat roofs and large expanses of glass.

It also saw the major contribution to public housing by the Housing Commission of Victoria, both with housing estates and high-rise blocks, and the major change facilitated by the introduction of Own-Your-Own flats saw many stylish new blocks.

Commercial buildings, such as banks, adopted the new styles and Melbourne saw the introduction of stylish coffee lounges, supermarkets, tenpin bowling alleys and motels.

Driving much of this change was due to the take-up of the automobile. Massive new factories, particularly in the outer-Eastern suburb of Dandenong, emerged to meet the demand for cars and products in this thriving world. Highly visible and striking showrooms were introduced across the suburbs, together with carparks and garages. The drive-in theatre became a favourite leisure event and shopping habits changed with the development of car-based major shopping centres, such as Chadstone.

It saw the emergence of a range of civic buildings, such as town halls, hospitals, churches (even public toilet blocks) – all in the latest style and using the latest materials.

Major landmarks graced the city, such as the Myer Music Bowl, the National Gallery, and massive blocks emerged, such as the AMP house and BHP (opposite each other in William Street and representing corporate power) and Collins Place, occupying almost an entire block.

The needs of students were met when Melbourne University expanded with a re-built Wilson Hall, a new library and sports facilities. It was joined by Monash and Latrobe universities, and the city welcomed a new airport at Tullamarine.

As one of the sporting capitals of the world, a major point in this narrative was the 1956 Olympic Games, anchored at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and producing a classic modernist Olympic Pool. Australian football later gained a new stadium called Waverley Park, and a new racetrack emerged at Sandown. Television was introduced around the same time, and new styles of pubs, such as Hosies in Flinders Street and the Southern Cross graced the city streets

Robin Grow was a child of this era and all of this change was happening as he grew to adulthood. Robin wrote the book to provide a vision of how modernism changed all areas of post-war Melbourne.

Mid-Century Modernism is now being appreciated and acclaimed and I hope this book can make a contribution to this expanding appreciation.

**Details and Registration coming soon.**