SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

REGISTER ENTRY

Entry in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

NAME: Marion Cultural Centre   **PLACE NO.:** 26497

ADDRESS: Warracowie Way, Oaklands Park, SA 5046

               CT 5880/722 A3 DP 59367 Hundred Noarlunga

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Marion Cultural Centre is an outstanding example of postmodern architecture in South Australia and is a model of semiotic (relating to signs and symbols) design that is demonstrated through its built form, associated landscape and aspects of the interior design. The place also displays a high degree of creative and aesthetic accomplishment through the variety and high quality of its external cladding and internal finishes.

As intended by its architects, Ian McDougall founding director ARM in association with Phillips Pilkington, the prominent lettering MARION spelt out by the building and its landscape means the Marion Cultural Centre acts as both a sign while simultaneously attempting to reclaim the name MARION back from the adjacent shopping centre. Elements of the interior design also feature codes that can be read by those who can decipher them. The building, landscape and interiors retain a high degree of integrity, and the complex has been recognised both in South Australia and nationally as an outstanding and award-winning example of postmodern architecture.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (under section 16 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*)

> *(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics*

The Marion Cultural Centre is an outstanding example of postmodern architecture in South Australia and demonstrates a high degree of creative and aesthetic accomplishment. The Marion Cultural Centre is a model of semiotic design (relating to signs) within the postmodern architectural discourse. This design is manifested through its built form and associated landscape, including the prominent display of the word MARION and the use of braille and coding both outside and within the building.

Ian McDougall (founding director of ARM) has incorporated double coding into the design of the Marion Cultural Centre, demonstrating a knowledgeable and specific reference to the place's suburban context. As he intended, it acts both as a billboard to announce the place, while simultaneously attempting to reclaim the name for the community from the adjacent shopping mall. In doing so it speaks to and holds different meanings for both the public and others, such as architects. Elements of the interior design, including the glazing facing Warracowie Way and the ceiling in the theatre, are also associated with semiotic design and enable those who understand the codes, in this instance respectively Braille and Morse code, to literally read the interiors.

While some minor changes have taken place internally, for example a minor reconfiguration of the library, the external form of the building and the interior retains a high degree of integrity. The finish of the external cladding, including steel plating, copper sheeting, timber batons and concrete formwork, are of a very high quality.

The Marion Cultural Centre has been critically recognised by the South Australian Architectural fraternity through the 2002 presentation of a South Australian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects Award of Merit to ARM in association with Phillips Pilkington. At that time the Award of Merit was the highest accolade that could be given by the Institute.

In 2016, ARM was awarded the Australian Institute of Architects Gold Medal. This award is the highest award that an architect or architectural firm can be presented with by their peers and acknowledges a body of work that is highly distinguished and has advanced architecture in Australia. The Marion Cultural Centre was identified as an exemplar of postmodern architecture and was one of the places specifically included in ARM's body of work that led to them receiving the Gold Medal.

SITE PLAN

Marion Cultural Centre

PLACE NO: 26497

Warracowie Way, Oaklands Park 5046

Marion Cultural Centre, Warracowie Way, Oaklands Park, 5046
CT/5880/722 A3 DP 59367, Hundred of Noarlunga

Legend   N ⬆

— Land parcel boundaries
— Marion Cultural Centre

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

Physical Description

The Marion Cultural Centre is a 2001 postmodern building that spells MARION, through the design of the structure and its associated landscape. The building is a multi-purpose civic facility that includes a public library, art gallery, café, meeting rooms, public meeting space and a theatre. The building also features elements of sustainable design.

Giant letters, MAR, approximately 5.6m high dominate the eastern façade. MA splices through the building while R is extruded down half the length of the north-western façade. The I is created from a sculpture by Greg Johns, while the O is formed from large rough-hewn stones, both are sited in the adjoining garden that faces the corner of Warracowie and Diagonal Roads. The N is a large frame placed at the edge of the garden on Warracowie Road and is covered in climbing plants.

The building is clad in an assortment of materials and has been finished to a high degree of quality. The north-eastern elevation is primarily glazed, however it is shielded by a full height wall of steel fins that create a grille. The top half of the letters MA protrude from the grille, while the rest of the letters are drawn through it and into the building. The MA are clad in steel plate and it and the grille are painted bright orange. The extruded R creates a covered walkway down the side of the building (facing Warracowie Way) and is clad externally in copper, while the underside of the walkway is clad in timber batons that are painted white.

The southern and south-eastern facades are clad in cast concrete panels that exhibit high quality formwork to create two patterns. One is a rhythmic pattern that runs from the roof to the ground and across the length of the façade and is replicated in the form of the limited number of windows that puncture the façade. The other creates the impression of a repeated M similar in form to the steel-clad M facing Diagonal Road. The formwork M is rough-cast in contrast to the smooth finish of the panels. The panels are painted dark grey, while the formwork M is painted bright orange.

The majority of the building's fenestration faces Warracowie Way and is inserted inside the R that is extruded along the length of the building. A narrow band runs lengthways through the middle of the glazing and features a series of dots in two sizes that are repeated at regular intervals. The dots name the building in braille: the large dots spell 'marion', while the smaller dots read 'cultural centre'.

Elements of sustainable design include:
- a stormwater retention system that collects runoff from the roof, filters the water and then pumps it into the aquifer,
- energy efficient lighting,
- low-energy air conditioning,
- solar hot water, and
- water efficient fittings, fixtures and devices.[1]

The library occupies the north-eastern portion of the building and is a large open space into which the 'MA' splices into the space. The library is slightly elevated from the other spaces in the building and is accessible by internal cast-concrete stairs and a return ramp. It features a painted timber baffle that is suspended from the ceiling and has carpeted floors.

The café and public meeting space is located in a large foyer that is nestled between the gallery, library and theatre and faces the external courtyard. It has a polished-concrete floor and features the same timber ceiling baffle as in the library.

The gallery is at the southern end of the building and is divided into two spaces. One is a shop, while the other is the gallery. Both the gallery and its shop have polished-concrete floors, however the timber ceiling baffle ends partway into the shop and is replaced by a suspended ceiling over the gallery.

The theatre is a multi-purpose space that can be configured with a stage and auditorium seating or as a cabaret-style space and is reached by a long timber panelled passageway. The theatre ceiling features a series of stained and varnished timber panels punctured with a series of dots and dashes that denote words in Morse code. The meeting rooms are also accessed from the theatre passageway.

Extent of Listing:

The elements with heritage significance include:
- The form of the building and the materials it is clad in, including steel fin grilles, steel plate, copper sheeting, concrete formwork, timber batons. This also includes the internal structure and cladding of MA than splices through into the building and the internal structure of the R that is extruded down the side of the building.
- The associated landscape that creates ION in MARION, including the sculpture I, rockwork O and frame N that is clad in climbing plants. While the variety of plant is not of significance, the design intention was for the structure to be clad with climbing/creeping vegetation.
- Morse-coded timber ceiling panels in the theatre
- Hanging timber panel baffle to ceiling throughout the building
- Braille panel on glazing facing Warracowie Way

- Timber panelling on corridor to theatre
- Internal stairs and ramp to library space.

The elements excluded from the heritage listing include:
- Fittings and fixtures in offices, meeting rooms, library, café, kitchen and public and staff toilets
- Ceiling types other than hanging timber panel baffle and Morse-coded timber ceiling in the theatre
- Track lighting and partition walls in the gallery
- Theatre fittings, fixtures, lighting, seating (other than the Morse-coded timber ceiling panels)
- The landscaping to the rest of the building.

History of the Place

Civic Buildings in Marion

The District Council of Brighton was formed in 1853 by local individuals coming together to form a tangible expression of community. Similarly, the first council office combined with an Institute and hall were a physical expression of that local community. The need for a hall was first proposed at a community meeting in 1894 and was financed through rates, subscriptions and donated labour and materials. The District Hall as it was known was a single-storey bluestone building located on Sturt Road. It was designed by architect H Cowell and featured redbrick dressings.[2] The main hall was large enough to seat 500 and featured a stage, behind it folding doors lead into a smaller room where Council meetings took place.[3]

Council Chambers and Civic Centres

New purpose-built council chambers and offices for the Marion Council were opened in 1937 in an Art Deco-style building located next to the District Hall.[4] Within a decade it became obvious that the new council chambers would not be able to accommodate the growing needs of the council. In 1946, Marion Council began negotiations with the South Australian Housing Trust to buy land on Marion Road for a new Council building. However, the matter remained in abeyance until 1955, when the Council was approached by Windsor Theatres with a proposal to construct a new combined town hall and picture theatre at an estimated cost of £32, 000. Marion Council was unable to afford the substantial sum and extended the Sturt Rd chamber and offices instead for a quarter of the amount.[5]

While the Marion Council could not afford the 1955 proposal for new premises, it did begin to set aside money annually for the project and acquired 5 acres at Parkholme. Architects were engaged in 1961 to design a new building but a block of Councillors who felt the money could be better spent on necessities such as roads voted against the project and it was again halted. By 1964, the lack of space in the office had become acute as the number of staff had increased from seven in 1951 to thirty in 1964. This led to the reprisal of the project to build new chambers and an office at

Parkholme. Construction of the modern-style single and double-storey cream-brick premises began in 1966 and was officially opened on 27 May 1967 by Premier Walsh.[6]

Staff numbers continued to increase during the next decade and in 1977 an extension was built to accommodate planning, building and health staff. However, the additional space was only a temporary solution and in 1988 yet another new civic centre was proposed for a site on Sturt Road near the Marion Shopping Centre. Council ignored public opposition to the new civic centre and it was opened on 7 February 1990 by Mayor Hodgson.[7]

As a part of the plan to create the Marion Regional Centre, Council purchased the houses surrounding the Marion Shopping Centre, which were in a triangular-shaped parcel of land bounded by Sturt, Morphett and Diagonal Roads and known locally at that time as the 'Domain'. As part of the scheme, the Council planned to construct a cultural centre and permitted Westfield to expand its shopping centre. The project was highly controversial as local residents feared the expansion would erode the residential quality of the surrounding suburbs. Ultimately, the proposed amendments to the Council's Supplementary Development Plan were approved by the State government and the land in the 'Domain' was rezoned.[8]

The Westfield shopping centre grew to become the largest shopping mall in South Australia and the name Marion has become synonymous with the mall. However, the other anticipated services and facilities that were to be supplied by private providers as a part of the regional centre went largely unrealised. At the same time, the Marion Council continued to pursue its ambition to build the Marion Cultural Centre on the land it owned at the 'Domain'.[9]

Marion Cultural Centre & ARM
In 1999, the Marion Council commissioned prominent Melbourne architectural firm Ashton Raggatt and McDougall, known nationally and internationally as ARM, in association with Adelaide firm Phillips Pilkington, to design the Marion Cultural Centre.[10]

Ian McDougall, a founding Director of ARM, is attributed with the design of the Marion Cultural Centre. McDougall was born in 1952 in Gawler South Australia and initially studied science at the University of Adelaide before graduating in architecture from RMIT in 1979. McDougall worked in a number of architectural practices before Ashton Raggatt McDougall was founded in 1988. In 2012, Raisbeck described the Marion Cultural Centre as one of McDougall's (in association with Phillips Pilkington) 'finest works'.[11]

The Marion Cultural Centre opened in late 2001 and provides the local community with a library, theatre, art gallery and café or part of the civic functions expected of a regional centre. The high standard of architecture embodied in the Marion Culture Centre has been professionally recognised by the South Australian Chapter of the

Australian Institute of Architects through an Award of Merit presented in 2002.[12] At that time, an Award of Merit was the highest accolade that could be awarded by the South Australian architectural fraternity.

In 2016, ARM was presented with the Australian Institute of Architects Gold Medal. This is the highest award that an architect or architectural firm can be presented with by their peers and acknowledges a body of work that is highly distinguished and has advanced architecture in Australia. The Marion Cultural Centre was identified as one of the many works undertaken by ARM that led to their being the recipients of the 2016 Gold Medal.[13]

The Marion Cultural Centre sits strongly within the postmodern architectural discourse and in particular semiotic (signs and symbols) design within that discourse. The letters MARION are prominently incorporated into the design of the building and its associated landscape. The Marion Cultural Centre distinctly follows all of these ideas by spelling out the name of the place in its built form and associated landscaping, appealing to the public while showcasing architectural integrity. With its prominent roadside location adjacent to the shopping centre it is, as Ian McDougall intended it to be, a billboard advertising the shopping centre while at the same time attempting to reclaim the name Marion back for the place and its community.[14] Associate Professor Conrad Hamann described it as one of only a few buildings constructed in South Australia that embodies international postmodernism and as a national exemplar of that style.[15]

The Marion Cultural Centre has provided its community with a number of key services and facilities over the past 18 years including a library, art gallery, theatre, café, tourist information centre, multi-purpose hall, formal meeting rooms and spaces for informal gatherings. Over the past five years, between 260,000 and 280,000 people annually use the services and facilities provided in the Cultural Centre. In addition to various musical events and other performances, the building has also hosted a sustainability expo, numerous workshops, markets, citizenship ceremonies, movie screenings and awards ceremonies.[16]

Chronology

Year	Event
1838	**Village of Marion is laid out on the southern bank of the Sturt River, hundred of Noarlunga.**
1852	*District Council Act* assented by the South Australian government enabling local communities to petition to be proclaimed a District Council.
1853	**Residents living in the north-west of the hundred of Noarlunga petition the Governor to become the District Council of Brighton later renamed Marion (different to the Corporation and later City of Brighton).**

1863-1866	Adelaide Town Hall Complex is built.
1886	**District Council of Brighton changes its name to the District Council of Marion.**
1898	Edwardstown Institute formed and Hall built. The building is extended in 1928.
1894	**Combined Marion council chambers, hall and Institute building opens featuring a hall large enough to seat 500.**
1927	Warradale Institute opens but closes in 1946 in a rundown condition due to extensive use during World War Two.
1936	Hindmarsh Town Hall incorporating a theatre, library, town hall and offices opens.
1937	**Marion Council builds new council chambers on Sturt Road next to the old council chambers, Institute and hall. The building is extended in the 1950s.**
1946	Marion Council negotiates with the South Australian Housing Trust to acquire land for a new council chambers.
1953	**The population of the District Council of Marion has grown and the council is proclaimed a City Council.**
1955	Windsor Theatres approach the Marion Council with a proposal to construct a theatre and new council chambers but due to the high cost of the project it doesn't proceed.
1958	The Pioneers' Memorial Community Hall is opened by the local community.
1959	The Marion Council takes over ownership and running of the Pioneers' Memorial Community Hall after a request from the incorporated body as they cannot manage the loan repayments.
Mid-1960s	Tea Tree Gully Civic Centre built, extended mid-1970s, upgraded c 2015.
27 May 1966	**Marion Council's new council chamber and offices located at Parkholme are opened by Premier Walsh. The building is extended in 1977 to accommodate planning, building and health staff.**
1976	New Salisbury Civic Centre opened.
1970s-1980s	Development of the Noarlunga Reginal Centre.
1980s	Marion Council repurposes the Glandore Boys Home as a Community Centre and builds a new Community Centre at Trott Park.
Late 1980s	Marion Council considers creating a Regional Centre at the Domain. The land is rezoned and the shopping mall allowed to expand in size.
1990	**Marion Council opens new Civic Centre located on Sturt Road.**

1999	Marion Council commission ARM to design a cultural centre to be located at the Domain as a part of their plans to develop a Regional Centre.
1999	**Marion Council commission ARM to design a cultural centre to be located at the Domain as a part of their plans to develop a Regional Centre.**

1999	**Marion Council commission ARM to design a cultural centre to be located at the Domain as a part of their plans to develop a Regional Centre.**

2001	**Marion Cultural Centre opens providing the local community with a public library, art gallery, theatre, café and meeting spaces.**

2002	**ARM's design of the Marion Cultural Centre receives an Award of Merit from the SA Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects.**

2013	Marion Council propose to upgrade the outside plaza at the Marion Cultural Centre to create a useable outside space for patrons and to connect the Centre with the adjacent Aquatic Centre. The proposed upgrade is yet to commence.

2016	**ARM are awarded a Gold Medal by the Australian Institute of Architects for a body of highly distinguished work that has advanced architecture in Australia, with the Marion Culture Centre identified as one of the buildings that has contributed to the award.**

2018	**Marion Council offers to sell the Marion Culture Centre through an EOI for redevelopment as a hotel. Newly elected Marion Council votes to retain the Marion Cultural Centre after the local community rally to protect it.**

References

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Marion Cultural Centre   PLACE NO: 26497

Warracowie Way, Oaklands Park, SA 5046

FORMER NAME:		Marion Cultural Centre
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:		Multi-purpose postmodern building incorporating a theatre, art gallery, library, meeting rooms and café.
DATE OF COMPLETION:		2001
SA HERITAGE REGISTER STATUS:	**Description:**	Nominated
	Date:	22 August 2018
	Description:	Provisionally entered
	Date:	1 August 2019
LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS		Not listed as a local heritage place
CURRENT USE:	**Description:**	Public library, theatre, art gallery, meeting place and café.
	Dates:	2001-present
PREVIOUS USE(S):	**Description:**	NA
	Dates:	
ARCHITECT/BUILDER:	**Name:**	Ian McDougall ARM in association with Phillips Pilkington / Hansen Yuncken
	Dates:	1999-2001
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	**Description:**	City of Marion
LOCATION:	**Street Name:**	Warracowie Way
	Town/Suburb:	Oaklands Park
	Post Code:	5046
LAND DESCRIPTION:	**Title:**	CT/5880/7220 A3 DP 59367
	Hundred:	Noarlunga

PHOTOS

Marion Cultural Centre   **PLACE NO: 26497**
Warracowie Way, Oaklands Park, SA 5046

Marion Cultural Centre, showing the name of the place in built form. MAR form part of the building, while ION are landscape elements including a sculpture I, rockwork O and trellis N covered in climbing plants.

Source: Googlemaps (2018)

Marion Cultural Centre, north-eastern elevation facing Diagonal Road. MAR are created from a steel framework clad in steel plate, copper plate and timber batons. Note the grille and sculpture I in the adjoining landscape.

Source: http://armarchitecture.com.au/projects/marion-cultural-centre/

PHOTOS

Marion Cultural Centre   **PLACE NO: 26497**
Warracowie Way, Oaklands Park, SA 5046

Portion of the eastern elevation showing the concrete panels, M formwork in the panels, windows and secondary entrance into the building.

Source: DEW files 3 October 2019

North-western façade showing the extruded R form. Note the copper cladding.

Source: DEW files 3 October 2019

PHOTOS

Marion Cultural Centre   **PLACE NO: 26497**
Warracowie Way, Oaklands Park, SA 5046

North-western façade showing the courtyard facing the café.

Source: DEW files 3 October 2019
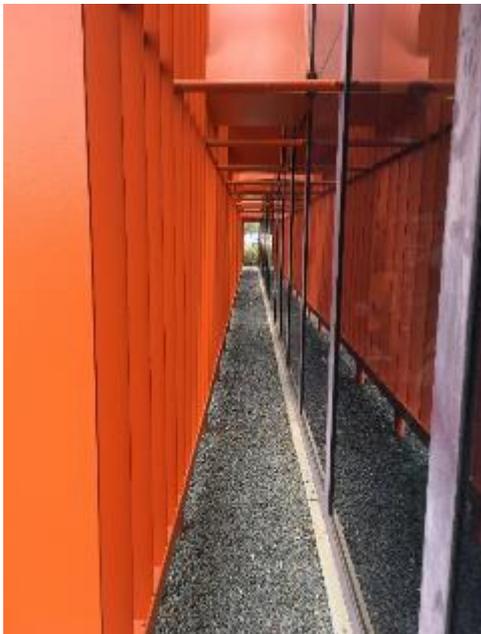
Grille north-eastern façade.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018.

Passageway created down the side of the building by the extruded R. Note the painted timber batons.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018.

PHOTOS

Foyer showing the R form extruded down the side of the building, polished concrete floors, timber baffle to ceiling and café. The gallery is at the far end.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018.

Braille panel extending along the glazing. The large dots denote 'marion', the small dots underneath denote 'cultural centre'.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018

PHOTOS

Multi-purpose theatre space.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018

Timber panel ceiling in the theatre, the dots and dashes are words depicted in Morse code.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018

Example of a meeting room that also doubles as a dressing room for the theatre.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018

Marion Cultural Centre
Warracowie Way, Oaklands Park, SA 5046

Library at the Marion Cultural Centre.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018
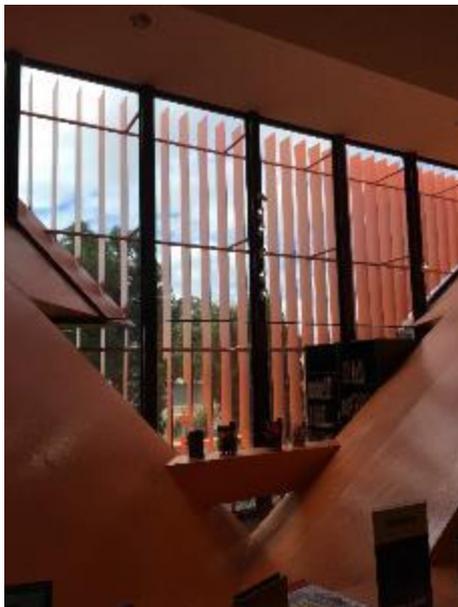
Inside the library showing the MA splicing through and into the building.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018

PHOTOS

Gallery space at the Marion Cultural Centre

Source: DEW Files 30 October 2018,

Please note the slightly fishbowl effect is due to the image being a capture from a 360 image.
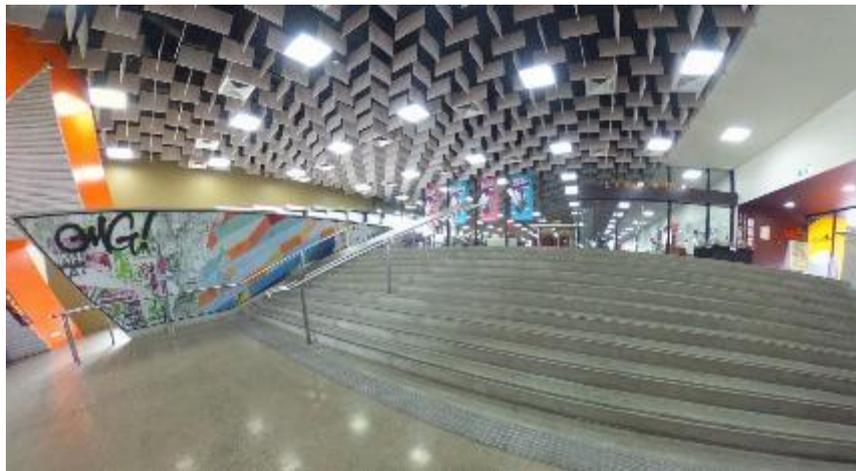
View of the stair and ramp up to the library.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018

PHOTOS

'N' structure, the intention is for it to be a support for climbing plants. At present, the climbing plants are wisteria.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018

Sculpture 'I'

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018

PHOTOS

'O' formed from roughhewn rocks, cemented in place.

Source: DEW Files 3 October 2018

[1] ARM projects http://armarchitecture.com.au/projects/marion-cultural-centre/

[2] Alison Dolling (1981), *The History of Marion on the Sturt*, (Peacock Publications: Frewville), pp.288-289. Donovan and Associates, 'City of Marion Heritage Survey', (City of Marion),np, Item No. 0/39.

[3] 'District Council of Marion Opening of a New Hall,' *Advertiser* 2 November 1895, p.6.

[4] Dolling, p.296.

[5] RJR Donley (2001), *Marion 1945-2000 A Suburban City*, (Norwood: Peacock Publications), pp.86-88.

[6] Donley, pp. 88-91.

[7] Donley, pp. 240-241.

[8] Donley, pp. 303-206.

[9] Donley, pp. 303-206.

[10] ARM (2015), *Mongrel Rapture*, (Uro Publications: Melbourne), pp.1578-1579.

[11] Peter Raisbeck (2012), 'McDougall, Ian', *Encyclopaedia of Australian Architecture*, (Cambridge University Press: Port Melbourne), p.441.

[12] http://armarchitecture.com.au/awards [accessed 8 March 2019].

[13] Philip Goad (2016), 'Master storytellers: 2016 Gold Medallists ARM Architecture', *Architecture AU*, https://architectureau.com/articles/master-storytellers-2016-gold-medallists-arm-architecture/ [accessed 26 March 2019]

[14] John Macarthur (2015), 'Letters to the People' in *Mongrel Rapture*, pp.1347-1348. Ian McDougall (2015), 'Big Words on Buildings' in *Mongrel Rapture*, (Uro Publications: Melbourne), pp.120-133. Sean Pickersgill (2002), 'Marion', *ArchitectureAU*, vol.91, No.3.

[15] See nomination.

[16] City of Marion, Annual Reports for years 2013-2018.