



Darren Mansfield & THE ARTIFICE OF URBAN GREENING

Our in-house talk series kicked off before Christmas at the CM⁺ William Street Studio. There was wine, cheese and a house jam-packed with designers eager to hear from our newly appointed Context Practice Director, accomplished landscape architect and author, Darren Mansfield. Darren used the evening to tell us of his penchant for surfing, rainforests and fire!

Through the motifs of sun, rocks, surfing and rainforests, Darren shared how family and living environment have shaped his career, sparked his passions as a designer and also informed him as a father.

As we've come to expect from our regular **external** Talk Series, the ensuing Q&A became a robust discussion, this time considering the artifice of 'greening' in urban environments. While landscape design provides green space by bringing nature into our urban settings, Darren's talk provoked the question – are we really doing an unnatural work? For landscape architects and architects alike, all creations are to a degree an artifice. Not just built work, but all things existing in an urban environment are only there because people decided to put them there. In addition, we use the most unnatural means to create what we perceive as natural.

Darren enthused on the benefit of variety in planting, once we accept the argument that whether exotic or native all plants and trees in the urban environment have been 'introduced'.

We also considered the way our predecessors managed the harsh Australian environment through controlled burning. A significant influence in Darren's own work has been his study of burning techniques used by aboriginals, pre-white settlement, to create parkland and open space, and to protect the land, as detailed in the book "The Biggest Estate on Earth" by Bill Gammage, and depicted in the colonial painting above.

Darren holds that we need to be selective in what we burn and that we need to let the rainforest return to its natural state for protection from wildfire.

Thank you Darren for revealing a fresh angle. I for one am looking forward to a new year rich with these talks, to challenge our perspectives and celebrate the rich skillset and experience of our collective.

Fiona Pearce-Burrows