

School of Graduate Research Examiner's report form – Doctor of Philosophy

1. Please refer to descriptors on the attached sheet for criteria to be used as the basis of grading and advice on the format of the report. Reasons for making a **Recommendation 3 or 4** should stand scrutiny in an appeal process.
2. This form must be accompanied by a written report (min. 2 pages).

Section 1. Candidate details

Name of Candidate: Mr John McGlade

Thesis/Project title: THE EPIPHENOMENAL IN ARCHITECTURE. A CREATIVE SEQUENCE

Section 2. Grading and recommendation

X- R1 – PASSED

No requirement for amendments other than minor corrections of an editorial nature. The candidate is to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

R2 - PASSED SUBJECT TO SPECIFIC AMENDMENTS

The candidate must make the amendments and/or address the recommendations of the examiner/s for re-writing or re-working of any sections as appropriate, and to the satisfaction of the Senior/Joint senior supervisor/s.

R3 - REVISE AND RESUBMIT

The candidate must undertake revision and/or extra work as recommended by the examiner/s. The thesis/project is then re-examined.

Please indicate if you would be prepared to re-examine:

- I am prepared to re-examine this thesis/project if it is resubmitted within 12 months.
 I am NOT prepared to re-examine this thesis/project.

R4 - FAILED

The student record will be updated to show a fail for the research component. The candidate is not awarded the degree for which they are enrolled and is NOT permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis/project for re-examination.

RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING WORK

The candidate's work makes a significant contribution to the field beyond that normally expected for research at this level. As a guide, it is expected that the research nominated as 'outstanding' needs to be considered by an examiner as in the top 5% of that which they have examined in the last three years.

Section 3. Examiner declaration

X- I have read the *RMIT advice for examiners of doctorates* and abided by these in making my recommendation.

Unless attending a combined oral presentation/examination examiners' names will not be disclosed to the candidate. Examiners may choose to allow their name to be disclosed after the completion of the examination process.

X- I agree to allow my name to be disclosed to the candidate.

N.B. Anonymity of examiners cannot be guaranteed under the Victorian *Freedom of Information Act*.

Name of Examiner: Mr William Fox



Signature of examiner:

Date: ...10.../...Nov.../...2015..

John MGlade, *The Epiphenomenal in Architecture and a Creative Sequence*

Summary: MGlade has conducted an original and thorough creative analysis of ephemeral light-and-shadow effects in three-dimensional sculpture and architecture, linking the two art forms together in a rare and poetic synthesis. The written document, exhibition, and oral presentation work powerfully together to build a compelling argument for architects to take into account and use these phenomena when designing spaces. This reviewer's recommendation is that MGlade be awarded an R1, the only editorial amendment being the addition of a short reflection the effects that the process of doing the PhD had on the candidate's practice.

MGlade's long-term investigation into how two-and-three dimensional shapes cast shadows that reveal new visual forms and information is the only one of its kind of which I am aware. While studies have been done on the optical properties of shadows in one context or another—art or architecture, and in two or three dimensions, none have brought all of them together with long-term observations as to the effects created during differing times of the day and year. Thus his PhD is an investigation into architecture as a time-based medium.

MGlade's work is a strong initial foray into what others may eventually compile as a catalogue of effects, then codify and make available to architects globally. In turn, this would offer architects yet another tool to connect the physical presence of architecture with less effable presence, a secular architecture that is also spiritual.

MGlade proposes this on page 39 of his thesis: "I am therefore proposing that architects could explore these transient epiphenomena by influencing the position and the attitude of the observer by their static designs of interiors and exteriors. This could produce buildings that connect us more deeply with the dynamics and temporality and cycles of the natural. The architect can use this designed positioning in a particular place at particular times to also reinforce our awareness of our own transient existence within the natural scheme of things. The architects can use spatial expectation, as religious buildings have traditionally used, to create a sense that something poetic but real, may be experienced when you move into a secular space?"

It is difficult for researchers to make advances in architecture that can connect us to the less tangible qualities of the built environment, but MGlade moves systematically from painstakingly observed phenomena that occur naturally, or by accident, into constructing and "orchestrating" them. He also demonstrates how static anamorphosis (such as the interventions by Swiss artist Felice Varani) can be turned into active ones created by natural light and shadow as the observer's position, as well as time and the seasons, change. MGlade thus considers buildings as an ongoing process, active instruments within a system of knowledge—instruments

the meaning and actions of which change over time in relationship to people and their environments.

McGlade also performs well on the theoretical front, compellingly linking philosophers of phenomenology such as Edmund Husserl to neurological studies by V.S. Ramachandran and Daniel Dennett and brain plasticity via material experiments. He thus anchors his proposition that light and shadow can lift architecture toward the spiritual with current cognitive research. If what McGlade studies is ephemeral and hovering on the edge of what it is possible to express, he has nonetheless grounded our apprehension of and reaction to these epiphenomena in science as well as philosophy.

The thesis and film provide a clear and robust presentation of the observations and experiments, their implications and background theory. The exhibition and presentation then offered a deeper look into this practice, adding substantially to the document, by providing a demonstration of the physical objects used by McGlade in his pursuit of epiphenomena, but also a clear articulation of his system of inquiry. McGlade's deployment of an actor to read his presentation was an ingenious and effective method to circumvent a physical limitation—and an example of how he has managed to conduct such an intensive research project over a sustained length of time. He is a tenacious, even fierce researcher.

This PhD offers a substantial and significant contribution to the field and richly deserves the status of R1. The only amendment I can imagine is that McGlade write a short coda that describes how the PhD process may have changed him and his practice. In terms of publication, one can envision a compact, well-illustrated book offering both numerous examples of the effects studied and created by McGlade, and accompanied by his uniquely well-informed but poetic prose. The book could offer a classic epiphany to students and general public alike.

William L. Fox

School of Graduate Research
Examiner's report form – Doctor of Philosophy

1. Please refer to descriptors on the attached sheet for criteria to be used as the basis of grading and advice on the format of the report. Reasons for making a **Recommendation 3 or 4** should stand scrutiny in an appeal process.
2. This form must be accompanied by a written report (min. 2 pages).

Section 1. Candidate details

Name of Candidate: Mr John McGlade

Thesis/Project title: THE EIPHENOMENAL IN ARCHITECTURE. A CREATIVE SEQUENCE

Section 2. Grading and recommendation

R1 – PASSED

No requirement for amendments other than minor corrections of an editorial nature. The candidate is to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

R2 - PASSED SUBJECT TO SPECIFIC AMENDMENTS

The candidate must make the amendments and/or address the recommendations of the examiner/s for re-writing or re-working of any sections as appropriate, and to the satisfaction of the Senior/Joint senior supervisor/s.

R3 - REVISE AND RESUBMIT

The candidate must undertake revision and/or extra work as recommended by the examiner/s. The thesis/project is then re-examined.

Please indicate if you would be prepared to re-examine:

- I am prepared to re-examine this thesis/project if it is resubmitted within 12 months.
- I am NOT prepared to re-examine this thesis/project.

R4 - FAILED

The student record will be updated to show a fail for the research component. The candidate is not awarded the degree for which they are enrolled and is NOT permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis/project for re-examination.

RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING WORK

The candidate's work makes a significant contribution to the field beyond that normally expected for research at this level. As a guide, it is expected that the research nominated as 'outstanding' needs to be considered by an examiner as in the top 5% of that which they have examined in the last three years.

Section 3. Examiner declaration

- I have read the *RMIT advice for examiners of doctorates* and abided by these in making my recommendation.

Unless attending a combined oral presentation/examination examiners' names will not be disclosed to the candidate. Examiners may choose to allow their name to be disclosed after the completion of the examination process.

- I agree to allow my name to be disclosed to the candidate.

N.B. Anonymity of examiners cannot be guaranteed under the *Victorian Freedom of Information Act*.

Name of Examiner: Prof Richard Goodwin

Signature of examiner:

Date: 9.11.2015.

PHD EXPANDED FIELD RMIT

The Epiphenomenal in Architecture and a Creative Sequence

JOHN McGLADE

Examination Report

Professor Richard Goodwin

John McGlade is so quotable:

“I am interested in the beautiful accidents of architecture”

“The rock is a very slow event”

“Like architecture, I am interested in our experience of events in building – which enhance being”

In other words slow down and take a look. His “Epiphenomena” introduces time. Rain on the roof and ephemeral mirages, briefly distorting and changing a questionable reality amongst one’s “things”.

This is a man who purchased a small property of land to observe shadows made by Euclidean geometry, via crude steel frames, and who in so doing re-thought the window. Can these concerns create an invigorated design process, despite the subjectivity of idiosyncratic aesthetic propensities of one person, unrelated to architecture? The reader wants to believe and reads on.

He throws a chair through a room, or so it seems. Perhaps it is hanging. Duchamp is grabbed from both ends of his oeuvre in this classic move. The “ready-made” meets the painting of “Women descending a staircase”. Three-dimensional anamorphic shadows join the argument creating a potential for neo-cubism to enter the room. If only! However he always resists such showiness and prefers to revel in Bertrand Russell’s “useless knowledge” and its pleasures. Strangely McGlade doesn’t mention Schwitters and his “Merzbarn”, and instead quotes the obvious connections to James Turrell, Shigeo Fukuda, Sol Le Witt, Don Judd and Andy Goldsworthy. This lineage joins the key philosophical models, which he understands so well: Foucault’s Pendulum, The Camera Obscura, and the door and window as instruments for transient events.

Working at three scales or sites the interrogation of The Epiphenomenal in Architecture is well structured:

Site 1 The Shed (his original property), where he studies shadows made by the skylight.

Site 2 Shadows made by his prisms externally.

Site 3 His new home and a variety of chance phenomena.

Essentially he moves between immaterial three-dimensionality, and a more generalized poetic, as in the chair.

When these shadows complete the new object through anamorphosis, then the project takes flight. What works so well is the development of his instruments.

These being:

- “The Cabinet for Anamorphism” (again one is reminded of Duchamp’s boxed miniatures of large projects like the “Glass”).
- “The Camera Obscure” and
- The reflective “Rill Mirror”.

The Rill mirror, once advanced to his metal version, opens up a whole new field of observation. One can imagine the use of these prototypes in future, as machines for designing in continuum – architecture as becoming.

However we are left, perhaps appropriately, wondering that except for one fleeting provocation in the form of Birr Castle Telescope built in Ireland in 1840, what might this become?

This strange and mysterious building is an instrument for mapping the heavens, with an indecipherable external envelope except for its castle like domesticity. This leads the reader to contemplate owning such a property to live in, and overtime for the building to reveal its secrets through shadows and the movement of elements to adjust its potential. Ideally for John McGlade to live in it. Whether in McGlade’s mind or not, this is as close as we get to imagining a design method which followed and reacted to its shadows, sounds and seasons. Fundamentally McGlade is the chance photographer of his world. Sadly that world is diminishing for him due to his health. But this was never a driver and like Steven Hawking, McGlade soldiers on with, humour and arguably better work.

The photographs are of varied quality but are filled with the shimmering intensity of his conviction.

Married to Euclidean Geometry, as the central frame, these works play with the new geometries of Chaos, now open to our manipulation via the computer. However McGlade chooses to let these complex forms froth around his frames accompanied by a continuing inner belief in pure modernism. I would like to see this balance shift in the future, as his instruments lead him to a new universe.

Many of his projects record in photographs a power that you can only get from true conviction. I think of Joseph Beuy’s black and white images of his performances with simple instruments and his felt and fat and diagrams. There is a Shamanistic phenomenon here also. Without knowing it McGlade is potentially a beacon for those who find richness in the fact that architecture is a state of becoming rather than an autonomous object.

Thinking of sound as object the experimentation plays with “Sound Cube”, and laser light is used to draw. However here I am not so convinced by his arguments, and similarly the paintings serve only to illustrate rather than “be”, as all the other documentation does. Perhaps this whole project could be called “Photography and the Window”. But then I remember “the flying mirror”.

After all didn’t architecture begin with Menhirs, Stonehenge and Labyrinths? And, as he says, “Architects can only infuse mystery into their work by becoming mysteries to themselves”.

This PhD is pure research. It is all strangely familiar and seemingly unoriginal, until you stake stock and realize that no-one works like this unless they are committed artists. But McGlade protests rightly that he is an architect. I have no problem with the idea that architects are artists. In fact this is what I believe. The majority of architects, in my experience, would disagree and dismiss this work as purely speculative and romantic. This limitation, reinforced by the Bauhaus's proclamation the architecture is the mother of the arts, only serve to confuse the fact that the art spectrum is large and horizontal – ranging in practice types from the mud cup to Marcel Duchamp. I hope that many students read this PhD and give it thought.

The document is too long and the reader might stagger under the weight of John's stream of consciousness text. However I don't think it is possible any other way. The text makes the epic out of the mundane. It's not Proust, but neither does Proust show us beautiful and poetic photographs.

I accept the thesis in all its subjective glory and rejoice in its objective poetry.

We need more John McGlades and I wish him hard work and longevity despite illness.

This is only one of two PhD's I have marked which needs no work other than checking etc.

I advise John to study Miroslav Tichy's work and extend my congratulations for an excellent PhD.

As my last examination for PhD at RMIT, this was a wonderful and moving way to end my service.

Professor Richard Goodwin 2015