

## Roger Fay – What a Life!

'What a Life!' – with or without the exclamation mark – is an ambiguous phrase. It can be deprecating almost as much as it can be commendatory. For those who know something of Roger Fay himself, that ambiguity, and the self-deprecation it suggests, will surely seem appropriate. Roger is not an unambiguous individual, nor would one expect a presentation of his life, even his professional life, to be such.

'What a life!' may also be thought ambiguous or equivocal in another way – as no mere exclamation of astonishment or deprecation, but as embodying an implicit question: what sort of life is it that is portrayed here, that appears in such a range of materials, and across such a variety of interests, activities, and accomplishments? Understood in this way 'What a life!' asks after the way in which the life at issue might be seen as a *life*, and so also as a single life – after how it might be *seen as a whole*.

The exhibition includes photographic images, drawings, plans, scholarly papers, records of university service. It encompasses four, or perhaps five, main areas: architectural practice, photography, university teaching, research, and institutional development. This is indeed a professional life – albeit with glimpses of the personal showing through – but it is not a life bound to one profession or professional focus alone.

The diversity of this life is symbolised by the diversity of the photographic subjects that take up a large section of the exhibition: entertainers, friends, places, architecture, family, weddings, even financial figures and institutions. Clearly, Roger likes to make pictures, and has been doing so, as part of his professional work, and more generally, for a very long time. In fact, the photographs themselves serve to map out a large part of the trajectory of the life that appears here through the recording of some of the varied elements that belong to that life. Roger himself, however, appears in these photographs only seldom – in fact, just twice, I think – in one case, standing on his own, looking very much the fashionable figure of the 'sixties or early 'seventies, and in another, from amongst a crowd around the Dalai Lama, staring directly into the camera with a most amazing grin.

Much of the architectural work that is included in the exhibition, and so too the academic writing, focuses around a series of issues relating to sustainability – both sustainability in a larger environmental context and, as we might also think of it, sustainability

as it might relate to the personal, especially to the sustaining of personal well-being in the face of the changes that come with age. Roger has made important academic and professional contributions in these areas, particularly in the environmental assessment of building performance and, more recently, in design responses to dementia.

The focus on sustainability in Roger's work is suggestive of a unity to his professional life that goes beyond just Roger's work in academia or in architectural practice. Sustainability is, one might say, essentially about a way of *seeing* that is always directed towards the whole – and this is so whether we look to environmental sustainability or the sustainability of a life, even of the person. Moreover, much of what must be done in developing approaches to sustainability is changing what we see and how we see – in making us see differently, and so enabling us also to act differently. Design more broadly can be understood as configured around just such a concern with 'seeing the whole'. Although not focussed towards a design response as such, a similar sort of 'seeing' is surely at issue for the photographer too – there it is a matter of seeing the photographic subject 'as a whole' even when the aim is to reveal what might otherwise be omitted from our ordinary seeing or what might otherwise go unseen.

The very title of this exhibition, in all of its ambiguity, suggests this same concern with 'seeing the whole' – a concern present in the astonishment and the question, as well as any possible deprecation, that the exclamation 'what a life' may embody. Moreover, if this exhibition allows a particular professional life to be seen 'as a whole' (which does not mean that every element of that life is visible, but rather that its overall integrity is somehow made visible), then so it allows a life to be seen in its concern with the whole, and with a mode of seeing that tries always to grasp the whole, and to communicate that grasp.

'What is a life?', and more pertinently perhaps, what is an academic/professional life? Surely it can only be a life that is given over to the attempt to 'see the whole' in the way suggested here, and so also a life that is thereby given over to a thoughtful and productive practice, a practice concerned with its own integrity as well as the integrity of that with which it is engaged. Such a life will always be diverse and varied, but it will always be committed; and if it is self-deprecating, it will be so because it is always given to self-questioning – and also, perhaps, to a certain sheer astonishment.

**Professor Jeff Malpas**



## NEW Gallery

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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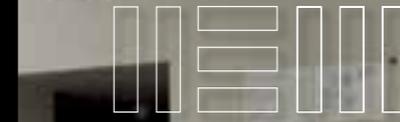
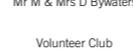
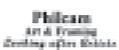
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## What a life!!!

NEW Gallery, Newnham  
Exhibition Artist: Roger Fay  
Exhibition Curator: Dr Malcom Bywaters  
Exhibition Dates: 5 July - 2 August 2013

# Professor Roger Fay

Roger Fay was a Professor at the School of Architecture & Design, University of Tasmania and is now an Honorary Associate in the School of Architecture & Design and a Research Associate at the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre. He has a BArch(Hons) (Melb), GradDipEd(Hawthorn) and a PhD from The University of Melbourne. He has taught at Deakin University and RMIT as well as practicing as an architect in Australia and the UK. Roger is a Registered Architect and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects. Professor Fay taught design and building technology, with a major research focus on sustainable design and the environmental performance of buildings through the application of design knowledge and creative problem-solving skills. More recently, he has been involved in research concerned with design for people with dementia. He continues to contribute to the university through his research and guest lectures and design studio involvement. As Professor at the School of Architecture & Design, University of Tasmania, Roger managed the realisation of the new building for the School of Architecture & Design at the Inveresk campus.

Professor Fay's exhibition is presented as part of the NEW Gallery Showcase Program that aims to profile and highlight the achievements of UTAS academics.

