



LISMORE  
REGIONAL  
GALLERY

# STUDENT WORKSHEET

## SECONDARY

### **NOT QUITE SQUARE:**

*The story of Northern Rivers Architecture*

13 April- 2 June 2013



“...the house that grows into garden  
the garden that grows in the home  
and the choice to build your own.”  
- David Hallett

**Not**

**Quite**

**Square**



**Background  
information**

## *Not Quite Square*



It was May 1973 and a group of students other young people gathered together in the village of Nimbin, Northern NSW, Australia. They were there to celebrate the Aquarius Festival, a festival of peace, music, culture and alternative ways of living.

The festival goers were inspired by the Vietnam War protests and the counterculture (Hippy) movement throughout the world, that was working towards peace as well as different ways of thinking and living.

### The *Not Quite Square* Dream

After the Aquarius Festival finished a number of these people stayed and decided to live in the area of Nimbin and in other Northern NSW towns and villages. They dreamt of setting up communities where they could live together in peace and harmony with the earth. They bought land with their friends and families, where they designed and built their own homes. Their houses were inspired by the love of nature and houses that had been designed by architects and cultures from around the world.

Many of these communities still exist today, such as Tuntable Falls Community near Nimbin, and Rainbow, Bodhi Farm and Dharmananda communities near the Channon, just to name a few. In this exhibition you will see photographs, films and historical materials documenting the homes and stories of the people who designed and built their own houses and dreamed of a life that could be lived outside the box.

In 2013, Tim Hixson was commissioned to photograph five exemplary houses started in the 70s and 80s and still lived in today. There are also historical photographs from the 70s and 80s by Hixson, David Liddle and John Witzig, and images and stories shared by local people. The film by Sharon Shosak was made in 2013 and the film by John Kirk was made in 1979.



## Imagine building your own home!

That's what the owner builders in *Not Quite Square* did. They were inspired by different architects and houses from around the world. As well as ideas about re-using and recycling materials to create environmentally sustainable houses, with a quirky individual style.



### What's an Architect?

An architect is a person who designs buildings.



They make plans and drawings to help them visualise how a building will look and to give guidelines to the builders of the the structure.

They also know about what kinds of materials houses might be built of such as; wood or stone, bricks or mud, steel or bamboo.

Some of the architects who influenced the owner builders in ***Not Quite Square*** were:

**Antoni Gaudi** a Spanish Catalan architect with his fluid organic style of design.

**Buckminster Fuller** who designed and experimented with geodesic domes.

**Bruce Goff** who created buildings with curves that intergrated natural as well as futuristic forms.

You may want to research these and other architects to learn more about how houses are designed and created.



### Not Quite Square Houses

The house owner builders in this exhibition were not all necessarily trained architects. Rather many of them were everyday people who dreamed of designing and building their own homes. Using materials available to them, they created interesting, unusual, individual homes.

They used rocks, mud and wood from trees on the land where they lived. They recycled materials they discovered around the area such as old windows and doors and coloured glass bottles to create beautiful walls that let the light into their home. They created homes where the inside and the outside met, where gardens grew on the roof and with solar panels and water tanks to create energy efficient homes that showed concern for the environment.



**IF YOU WERE TO BUILD A HOUSE HOW WOULD IT LOOK?**

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**Would you include solar panels?**

**Would you have a water tank?**

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**Where would your garden grow?**

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**What materials would you use?**



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### Design A House You Would Like To Build



## Activities

### Out of the Box

we were born in boxes/ we lived in boxes  
rows of boxes/ stacks of boxes/ cities made of boxes:  
brick-veneered plastered low-ceilinged red-roofed  
boxed in by the paradigm of building regulations  
by the hum-drum of conventional building materials  
by the strait-jacket of convention -  
we were pigeon-holed, then we broke the mould,  
jumping ship, travelling north into the sage of aquarius  
into the festival of new ideas,  
into the forest of trials and errors  
of self-sufficiency and sharing,  
trials and errors of relationships and communities  
of the owner-builder, the shape-shifter -  
shaping domes and A-frames and round pole homes  
mixing mud-bricks and straw bale walls  
stonewalling glasshousing greenhousing –  
an ingenuity of the affordable and the handmade  
and the commonsense of recycling  
building new homes from old housing  
not ticking boxes –  
from humble cabins and love nests  
to painstaking castles of dreamcatchers,  
step by step  
art studios and meditation rooms  
terraced wide verandahs  
and decks reaching out into ferns and palms –  
the house that grows into garden  
the garden that grows in the home  
and the choice to build your own

**David Hallett**



