

McGRATH

THE WEEKLY MAGAZINE



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Amanda Segers



McGrath's Cremorne specialist on travelling, food and "her boys".



Where did you grow up?

I grew up just outside Tamworth, so I am a country girl. My dad was the area auctioneer, and local real estate agency owner. Country real estate was very small and personal back then; it was all about who you knew.

How long have you been in real estate?

Since November 2001.

What did you do before that?

I worked in Melbourne for six years selling Australian holidays and corporate travel. I actually won an AFTA award for Domestic Travel Agent in 1994. I then moved to Amsterdam and worked for Canal+, Europe's largest Pay TV Station for four years. I then moved to London where I sold Australian holidays to UK residents.

What area of Sydney do you specialise in?

Cremorne.

Do you have a favourite street in your area?

That is too hard to choose, I love the whole Cremorne area. The streets are wide and a number have amazing views.

What is your sales philosophy?

The key to success is a combination of customer service, creating a 'clients for life' philosophy and simply being the best in the business.

What are your interests outside of real estate?

My boys: movie-making husband Karel, my 15-month-old son Baxter and Alredale dog Otto. We love going to the movies, Sunday breakfast and picnics in the park.

What are three things we wouldn't know about you?

I am a real foodie and judge a holiday destination by the cuisine. I have attended three Cannes Film Festivals with my husband and my lucky number is four.

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Gourmet delight Specialist Cheese Show

Cheese lovers will be pleased to note that the Four Seasons Hotel will host the Sydney Specialist Cheese Show on May 21. Visitors will be able to sample 300 award-winning Australian cheeses, plus quaff a range of local wines! For info, see australiancheese.org.



Thirsty work Lovedale Long Lunch

If you enjoy the finer things in life, such as a glass of vino and a fabulous meal, then you should diarise the Lovedale Long Lunch on May 20-21. An annual event run by several Hunter Valley wineries, the idea is you move between the vineyards over the course of the weekend, enjoying what gourmet delights they offer. For details, see: lovedalelonglunch.com.au.



Screen time Sydney Film Festival

If you enjoy going to the cinema, here are some dates for your diary. The 53rd Sydney Film Festival will take place on June 9-25 and promises to enthral film-lovers with a wide range of movies from Australia and around the world. To find out more about this excellent annual event, including the travelling film festival, visit sydneyfilmfestival.org.

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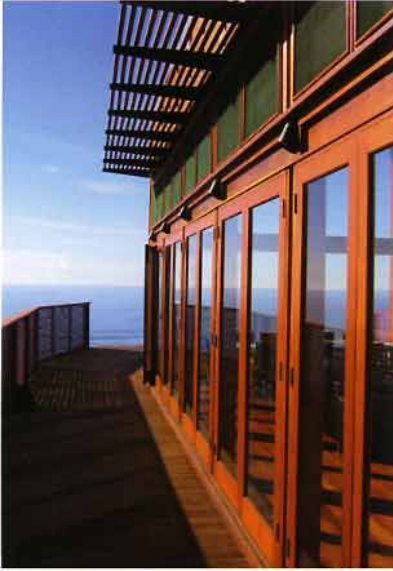
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Building blocks

From airports to animal parks, Misho's creations are grand-scale affairs. But with his right-on green credentials, this architect wants to save the planet by thinking big and building small.

Words: Lara Zamiatin



FOR MOST PEOPLE, spending time in airports amounts to jetlag, long queues and the prospect of bad hair. But, according to Hobart-based architect Misho Vasiljevich, the experience needn't be unpleasant. Having spent 15 years working on Sydney's International Airport, Misho, as he's generally known, is something of an aerodrome expert.

While Brisbane and Adelaide airports, according to the well-travelled 41-year old, are "glorified cowsheds", Misho has nothing but praise for Osaka's Kansai airport. "It's sculptural and fluid," he recalls with relish of the largely glass-enclosed structure. "You're constantly seeing planes take off directly above you. And when you can see a cockpit up close, it's amazing."

Good design, according to Misho, who holds degrees in architecture and interior design, is all about "how it responds to the environment, to the site and the climate it's situated in." Having spent many Saturday afternoons high above Melbourne's multi-storey residences in the cranes his Serbian father (a diesel mechanic) serviced, the young Misho had a bird's eye view of just how well (or not) buildings suited their landscapes.

Having formed the view that many urban structures obliterate rather than improve their surrounds, Misho's design vision has always been centred on buildings that leave a minimal impact on the environment. A critic of the so-called McMansions popping up in Australia's capital cities – "hideous developments," he insists, "inappropriate for the landscape, with paper-thin walls and no insulation" – Misho talks instead of using recycled materials.

"I'm realising that this world is fast running out of materials and fossil fuels," says Misho. "We can't keep pilfering the world as we've been doing for the last 200 years. We've got to change the way we perceive buildings and living spaces and we're running out of time."

Buildings, insist Misho, should have a life span of at least 100 years. To this extent, the framework of one of his current projects, Australia's Animal World – a vast fauna park on the site of Sydney's Aquarium (due for completion in September) – is 100 per cent recyclable. "The shell of a building has to be flexible," he says. "You can pull apart the interior of something but the shell should be able to be used for something else."

While Misho hopes the bare bones of his creations will outlive him, he has no desire to immortalise himself. "I cringe when I hear architects refusing to allow changes to their buildings," he says. "They're trying to protect monuments to themselves."

Misho, however, freely owns up to possessing an ego. "Anyone in this industry who says they don't have an ego is lying," he insists. "I have an ego because everything I do is an expression of what my life is revolving around at that point. It is a constant evolution and it affects my work."

Right now, work for Misho (and the three draftsmen who comprise

Misho + Associates) is anything from designing houses to high-rise apartments, to a small cabin resort in Port Arthur. He is also building a series of 'pods' in the Huon Valley – an idyllic spot that overlooks the state's wilderness, about 30km outside Hobart – for himself and his partner. With different functions (one for work, one for inhabiting), the six-by-six metre self-sustainable structures are low-key even by Misho's minimalist standards. "I don't need to live under one roof," he reasons. "I don't have kids. I'm just building something that's small-scale and won't become an obtrusive part of the environment."

Pods as liveable spaces may sound very futuristic (one of Misho's pods is literally transportable) but, according to the forward-thinking architect, it is the way of the future. Look at them as the "next generation of caravans," he helpfully suggests. "By the time people pay for a block of land and a mortgage, building a beach house on top is expensive." In contrast, Misho hopes to sell his "escape in a box" units for around \$50,000. And, just like Lego, the pods are modular in design – so when families expand, new boxes are simply added on.

Probably the biggest thorn in the collective sides of architects is having their lofty visions thwarted by the seemingly endless bureaucratic regulations imposed by councils. As a result, many of his peers end up bitter admits Misho.

Refusing to succumb to such a fate, the avant garde designer remains optimistic. "Essentially you have to like people," he says. "You also have to be artistic, be a good salesman and be able to communicate with people. If you can't do that your designs will stay on the page for a hell of a long time." ●

Misho + Associates
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Favourite Sydney building:

Queen Victoria Building

Favourite Melbourne building:

Spencer St. Station

Hobbies: Painting and sculpture

Childhood fan of: Star Wars

Favourite city: Copenhagen

