

THE COMMERCIAL

Amanda Williams

Alpine Bogs and Associated Fens, 2020

text by Michael Edward Harvey

'Architecture ... is the magnificent play of masses brought together in light. Our eyes are made to see forms in light' – Vers une architecture, 1923, Le Corbusier

In 2011 Amanda Williams travelled through India, photographing iconic modernist works of architecture by Louis Kahn, Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi and Le Corbusier. One of her subjects, Kahn's Indian Institute of Management (1974) is a monumental brick structure punctuated by simple geometric shapes. A play of Platonic solids carefully assembled in the landscape, the composition appears massive and ancient. The basic forms of the architecture made more dramatic by the subtropical light casting deep shadows on the reddish masonry facade.

In Carlingford, Sydney in 1963, building company Pettit and Sevitt launched a range of contemporary family homes. Designed by local architects Ken Woolley and Michael Dysart, these homes adapted principles of modernism to the bushland setting of Sydney's burgeoning suburbs. Characterised by a respect for natural topography and landscape, the designs were modest, low-impact symbols of progress and modernity. Scattered throughout the suburbs where Williams grew up, these houses were part of what would become known as the Sydney School of architecture. Integrating the natural and built form, the Sydney School was keenly concerned with place, ecology and sustainability.

Alpine National Park in eastern Victoria is the subject of the photographs in Williams' exhibition, *Alpine Bogs and Associated Fens*. Unique ecosystems inhabit a vast, undulating landscape. Older than the Himalayas and the European Alps, the Eastern Highlands of Australia have a geological history of approximately 520 million years. Formed by uplift rather than tectonic collision, soft forms rise from broad plains, Silurian schist and gneiss shelter rare sphagnum bogs and frost hollows. The texture of the rare and endemic flora is emphasised by the carefully graded tones of the prints. The chemical alchemy of the darkroom echoes the chemical process that has formed the subject itself.

In Williams' ongoing series of abstract photograms, *After Ansel Adams*, planes of gradated tones lean against the wall, replete with architectural intent. Overlapping grey scale blocks hint at three dimensional depth, evoking a modernist elevation rendered in sunlight.

Like subcontinental and Australian modernism, Williams' landscape photography is both a tectonic expression and a meditation on place. Geometry and form on a monumental scale. *Alpine Bogs and Associated Fens* presents country as architecture. Masses brought together in light.

Michael Edward Harvey is an architect and urban designer