

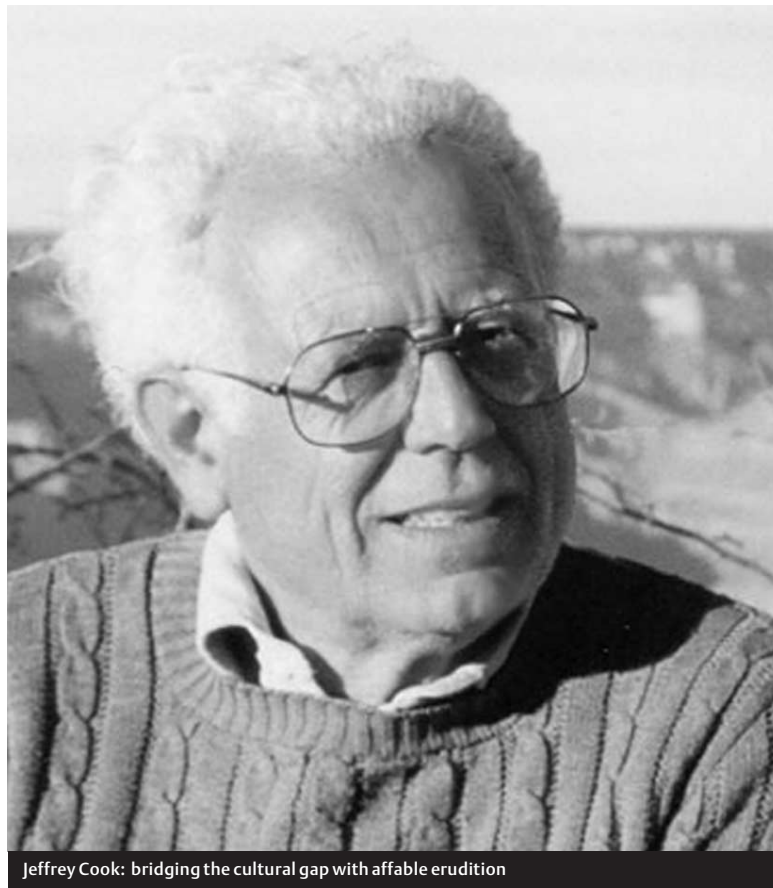
## Jeffrey Cook:

1934–2003

Jeffrey Cook was best known for his pioneering work on bio-climatic design. But what made his particular contribution to architecture distinctive was the breadth of his interests and his concern to make connections between them. Two examples of this were the wonderful studies of the Natural History Museum ('Designing the well-tempered institution of 1873' in *arq* 1/2, pp70–78 and 'Delivering the well-tempered institution of 1873' in *arq* 2/1, pp66–75) which he wrote together with Tanis Hinchcliffe.

Jeff was one of the members of the first *arq* Editorial Board. Both then and later, he was a generous and perceptive referee. And it was he who made the most helpful suggestions when a new board was formed after Cambridge University Press took over as publishers. Sadly, he was not a member of that Board but he continued to help us – and to gently castigate us for changing the layout: 'The old design was distinctive and couldn't be bettered' he wrote, '– all those wonderful large letters across the opening spreads!'

Jeff is remembered here by Dennis Sharp, Steve Szokolay, Dean Hawkes and Simos Yannas.



Jeffrey Cook: bridging the cultural gap with affable erudition

Jeffrey Cook, who died at his home in Paradise Valley aged 68 on 24 March, was widely acknowledged as one of the pioneers of solar and bio-climatic architectural design. He had a particular interest in passive solar energy and served as first President of the Passive Low Energy Association (PLEA). However, his areas of interests and range of research were far wider taking him into anthropology, vernacular architecture, and tribal cultures balanced by a lively interest in contemporary architecture,

architectural theory and criticism. These diverse interests were enhanced by elected memberships and awards ranging from CICA (International Committee of Architectural Critics) to Hon Fellowships from the RIBA and the Bulgarian Association of Architects. He was the founder-editor of the *Passive Solar Journal*.

For almost a decade around the time the last breath of Communism was being exhaled in Hungary, Jeff Cook began his studies of the 'Makona Group' of

architects that had grown up around Imre Makovecz. This was after participating in the PLEA Conference in Pecs in 1986 where he discovered in this provincial town new buildings of 'surprising freshness and originality'. After many visits to Hungary (some with the support of the Graham Foundation) there followed a number of exploratory articles until his work reached its culmination in 1996 with the publication of *Seeking Structure from Nature: The Organic Architecture of*

Hungary by Birkhäuser. Many of the book's illustrations were based on his own photographs underlining another of his many diverse talents.

In 1988, Jeff was elected as Regent's Professor at the College of Architecture, Arizona State University, Tempe where he had taught from 1962. His initial teaching was for the undergraduate course but eventually he took responsibility for a Master's course in Solar Energy Design. His first publication *Architecture Anthology* (1966) was a compilation of articles for students introducing them to a wide range of published sources on architecture and architectural theory. It was intended that the anthology would suggest to the student 'the breadth and depth of the literature of architecture without drowning', embarking with Alberti and docking with Daniel Moynihan and Paolo Soleri on urban design. His Master's coursework attracted students from many of the hot countries of the world, and through reciprocal visits arranged by such students Jeff was able to experience at first hand many of the issues that were raised by his courses. It enabled him also to build up an invaluable collection of documentary material – not only slides but articles, papers and books – to supplement his own vast collection of material.

Jeff Cook's scholarly interest in 'Organic Architecture' was enhanced by the publication of the first full-length monograph on the Oklahoma-based architect *Bruce Goff* (1978) in a series that I edited for Granada. His practical interest was nearer to home. Living just down the road from Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West and virtually next door to Paolo Soleri's Cosanti Foundation, Jeff was well acquainted with the demands of an architecture that responded to nature and to the wider environment. His own house, begun in 1968, was one of the first examples of solar passive energy in Arizona and its subsequent wide publicity catapulted him into prominence as a solar energy guru in the State. For inexplicable reasons Arizona had not been very strong on solar energy, although it probably has more sunlight than anywhere else in the world. Jeff Cook helped to right that. His own house was built on a two-acre plot surrounded by rough desert land. It proved an embarrassment to those neighbours who dwelt in

expensive villas with immaculate cut lawns. Its seemingly unkempt appearance reflected his own commitment and interest in the wild Arizona landscape while his elegant house with its double-height living room and sheltered external terraces exhibited his own creative commitment to an organic architecture.

Jeff was born in Canada in the fishing port of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, now a World Heritage site. He studied at the small and rather exclusive Manitoba University School of Architecture in Winnipeg, graduating in 1957. It was a School that had produced such architectural luminaries as the architect and building scientist and former head of the AA School Dr William Allen, and Harry Seidler, later of the Harvard GS who introduced modern architecture to Australia. Jeff completed his architectural training at the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn where Sybil Moholy-Nagy was one of his tutors introducing him to her work on 'native and anonymous' vernacular architecture which was to have a profound influence on his later interests.

During a long career in architectural education – and one he vowed to continue as long as he was able – he lectured in many parts of the world including Europe, Mexico, Egypt, India, and the Far East. His first appointment in the UK was at the Manchester Polytechnic School of Architecture (now part of the Manchester Metropolitan University). His knowledge of the work of Paolo Soleri brought him briefly to the AA School and the pages of the *AA Quarterly*. More recently he was a visiting professor at the University of Westminster where he worked with Tanis Hinchcliffe on major studies on the energy systems – particularly ventilation and heating – of major nineteenth-century buildings such as the Natural History Museum, London and Strangeways Prison in Manchester. They published some of their work in *arq*. Jeff served for many years as a guest tutor and examiner in energy design at the AA School and was for a time an adviser on energy matters for the US Government.

Among Jeff's many publications was an early photographic study of the homes and habitats of the Anasazi people, a tribe that preceded the Hopi in Arizona. *Anasazi places: the photographic vision of William Current* was published in

Texas in 1992 and reinforced his own interest in the rock-carved and climatically-controlled structures of the native Indians and examples such as the Mesa Verde in Northern Arizona. His interest in bio-climatic design was to take him to many parts of the world. He was an adventurous, inveterate and intrepid traveller searching out examples of humanistic, well-designed and climatically-controlled buildings. The most recently completed study was of the early 'Arcology' ideas and projects of our common friend Paolo Soleri. Now Jeff's life has been so curiously shortened by cancer it may never be published, although as a close friend and collaborator on many projects associated with Soleri and CICA. I am hoping to get it published as a memorial to him and his wide ranging interests and commitments.

Jeff Cook died at his own house in Paradise Valley in his beloved Arizona desert. He leaves behind a daughter Alexis and many saddened friends.

DENNIS SHARP  
Hertford, UK

*This obituary by Dennis Sharp is an expanded and revised version of that written for The Independent newspaper and published on 31 March 2003. © 2003 Dennis Sharp*

### **Fantastic house, fond memories**

We first met over 25 years ago, when I called in at Tempe after the ACSA conference in Nogales. I was to visit John Yellott, whose office was practically next to Jeff's. He invited us for dinner that evening and my wife still talks about his fantastic house. Friendship developed three years later, in '81, in Miami, where, after the Passive Cooling conference Arthur Bowen called a meeting in his top floor apartment. This is where PLEA was born. The first conference was held in Bermuda in '82. In '84 we visited him again, on the way to the Mexico PLEA meeting. Since then we met almost every year at the annual conferences of PLEA, of which he was president, following Arthur Bowen's death, until '94, when I took over. His was a difficult act to follow.

Jeff and I had several memorable side-trips: after the Athens meeting we hired a car and went for a round-trip of the Peloponissos. Two years later, in Delhi, three of us hired a taxi and went to see Chandigarh and on another day we went to

Fatehpur Sikri and Aggra. PLEA was our main shared interest, but we kept on meeting on so many different occasions, such as ISES congresses, various workshops and as competition jurors, that it often reminded me of Arthur Koestler's (scientific) 'Call Girls'.

Another notable meeting was in Florianopolis, where the hotel management asked us to share an apartment. We survived and enjoyed the conference. We met last year at the Toulouse PLEA conference and he gave no indication of any illness. We parted saying 'see you next year in Chile'.

Well, Jeff, I won't see you, but I will always have fond memories of our long friendship. I (and we) have lost not only a friend, but an exceptionally civilized and highly cultured person. As an architect, you promoted passive design principles, but also practised what you were preaching. I often envied your knowledge, your sensitivity and your sharp eye for art and beauty. And you had a great sense of humour: we had many good laughs together. The care you took in photography was a good investment: many (including me) envied your slide collection.

I do hope that your inheritance will get into good hands and it will continue to affect many a young person in the direction you always did.

STEVE SZOKOLAY  
Queensland, Australia

### **History, culture and climate**

Jeffrey Cook's academic life exactly covered the period in the second half of the twentieth century during which research became an essential part of the work of schools of architecture. In his long career at Arizona State University, Jeff was in at the beginning of this process and helped bring the discipline to maturity. His international reputation lies in the field that is now known as 'bioclimatic' design and his many publications will guarantee that his legacy is secure. He was a central figure in the international PLEA organization and I and many others enjoyed fruitful encounters with him and his ideas at the annual PLEA Conference.

In a field where the discourse tends towards the technical, Jeff acted as a kind of cultural ambassador. His papers were invariably reminders of the historical and cultural dimensions of architecture's relationship with climate. I recall with particular pleasure his contributions to the Venice conference, 1985, on 'Regionalism and post-industrial culture', at Cambridge in 2000, on 'The evolution of American office architecture', and Toulouse, only last summer, on 'Cool American comfort from Presidents Jefferson and Washington'. This ability to bridge the cultural gap is as rare as it is essential and Jeff's affable erudition will be sorely missed by

all who care about architecture as more than a purely instrumental operation.

DEAN HAWKES  
Cambridge, UK

### **Informal, approachable and generous**

I have a vivid first memory of Jeff Cook from sometime in the 1970's, - big hair, sun tan, colourful shirt, lecturing on solar projects in the US at the AA on one of his frequent visits here. A few years later we were both drawn into the PLEA network and the long adventure that this has been began. We met regularly at the annual PLEA conferences around the world and Jeff also became a regular contributor to our post-graduate teaching programme. He was with us for the last time in late October 2002, following his trip to Iran, in between lectures elsewhere in Britain, and his planned trips to Italy and Bangladesh before returning to the US. He was restless in his interest for new places, new themes, new syntheses, new people and they would all come together in his lectures and writings. Informal and approachable, informed and generous with time and information, alert and always on the move, his memory will be forever young and the gap he leaves impossible to fill.

SIMOS YANNAS  
London, UK