

# What I like about you



Photography: Philip Stejskal

## Fremantle College • 1967

Fremantle, Western Australia. Wajuk Country

Architect: Cameron Chisholm Nicol

Upon graduation many years ago, my first job with a local practice introduced me to the world of school design. I learnt that, in many ways, schools are microcosms of a city. And there are good cities, and bad cities. Certain cities entice you in, make you want to spend time there, they feel comfortable, logical, sympathetic, safe – a perfectly scaled piazza, a narrow laneway, an urban park, a bustling avenue. If schools provide the stage for our next generation to rehearse life, then we ought to set their sights high by giving them learning environments that emulate the qualities of our best cities.

I learnt this lesson nearly 20 years ago. However, it was only last weekend that I came to understand the value of this design principle first-hand, whilst attending the local farmers' markets on the grounds of South Fremantle High School (now Fremantle College). Catching a glimpse of something intriguing, I peeled away from the market stalls and

wandered toward a layered composition of spaces, textures, greenery and light. I spent the next several moments awakened and enchanted, relishing architectural moments and thoughtfulness, feeling nourished by something wholesome and purposeful, and delighted by the depth of view in every direction.

Designed in the late 60s by local firm Cameron Chisholm Nicol at a time when public architecture embodied something more than itself, South Fremantle High School has become one of my favourite places in Perth. A wondrous tapestry of buildings, piazzas, promenades and gardens, echoing those qualities we all find so endearing in good cities around the world.

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