Tim Schwager's contribution to Australian Architectural presence in China

In 1997 Tim met a young Chinese man with whom he formed a friendship and started to design projects in China - Shanghai. They were actually huge projects by our standards. It was a sort of happy accident in a way as Tim is a skilled architect with an interest in larger scale urban design issues as well as buildings. China offered another opportunity for him, I think.

His first project is now complete and is, incredibly, one of the most successful medium density residential project in the whole of Shanghai - 7000 units, about 4,000 villas and 3000 apartments. It has sold phenomenally well and has made billions (for some) - Cambridge Forest New Town. For Cambridge Forest he brought Oi Choong of Context to Shanghai - for their first project and the first of many, I think. He regards Oi as a major contributor to the successes of Cambridge Forest.

In 2000 he was personally invited to design a university campus and all its associated buildings. He put a team together and in, 11 months, an entire campus for 40,000 students was planned, designed, built and occupied. I've seen it and it's quite marvelous. His collaborators here were Bill Morrison of Conybeare Morrison whom he introduced to China and who are now doing other major works - and Stanisic Associates - two excellent Australian design firms.

In 2002 he was asked to plan a new project - about 8000 units. He started preliminary work and then decided that he should release personal involvement and bring in another Australian firm - so he introduced Reg Smith and Peter Ireland of AJ+C and they proceeded to produce the Baoshan Residential project which has been highly successful - a 4-6 storey walk-up apartment development of radically 'Australian' design. AJ+C have since gone on to do significant works in China.. For Baoshan he brought Bob Earl of Occulus to China as landscape architects. Occulus have happily continued with this project, together with AJ+C and are doing more work in China - a very creative Australian landscape firm doing work on a vastly larger scale than would be possible anywhere else.

In 2003 he introduced Tonkin Zulaikha Greer to design a major high school in his first project, Cambridge Forest. It was completed in 2004 and is an excellent school for 700 students for the British Nord Anglia Group. It is one of Shanghai's premier expat schools.

In 2003 he arranged for Philip Cox and Andrew Andersons (of PTW) to participate in the Shanghai Peninsular Hotel Design Competition - his company is JV with Hong Kong Shanghai Hotel Group and are developing a major 6 star hotel in Shanghai on the Bund.

Virginia Carroll has done colour consulting on a couple of Tim's projects, and came to Shanghai in 2003 to consult on one of the villa projects.

In 2004 he engaged Cox Group (already well known to China) to his Yellow Mountain (Huangshan) project as master planners. Phillip Graus and Phillip Cox did a great job, together with Gary Player, on the 1000 room hotel, 36 hole resort. It is now going into first stage design - a major resort in the sacred mountain province of China.

In 2004 he introduced Page Kirkland Partnership as project managers on two of his housing projects and this work is continuing through 2005.

Looking though his work here, he has done quite a few significant things to bring Australian design services to China, both in his own name and by introduction of a large number of Australians to China, who would otherwise not have made the step. He is now Vice-president of his company and would like to promote Australia more and more as he genuinely believes that Australian designers and planners have something to contribute of value to China.

In 2004 he also brought in Hassall (already established in Shanghai) to do a smaller elementary school. Peter Duncan again did a great job according to Tim.

In the last few years Tim has also brought four young Australian architects to Shanghai to work with him as Design Managers in his office. Working for a Chinese development company has been a great experience for all of them.