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01.

Project: Gallery of Modern Art  
Location: Brisbane River, Queensland

# ART IN FRAME

Due for official opening in December 2006, the \$107 million Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland on the edge of the Brisbane River, is strategically sited and the final piece in the city's art's precinct.

Designed by Lindsay and Kerry Clare of Architectus Sydney, the project is a lustrous, iconic, form highlighted by filleted, light-washed interiors. Despite generous amounts of daylight – often a problem for curators and artwork alike – the architecture skillfully manipulates and controls interior light levels without compromise to exhibits. The result is a rare symbiosis of grand and intimate exhibition areas animated as much by the nuance of light as the grand gesture.

The design concept is both international and firmly rooted in tradition. It features a lightweight, open riverside pavilion containing two major levels of exhibition spaces, two cinemas, education facilities, restaurant and boardwalk café. The Gallery is organized into flexible, adaptive spaces and zones which house changing programs and exhibitions.

The urban design concept for the Gallery acknowledges the city grid and axis of Tank Street to the historic windmill and maintains the river connection for the west end district. The project is the largest cultural project undertaken in Queensland in recent history. With a floor area of 25,635m<sup>2</sup> the new building more than doubles the Queensland Art Gallery's size and enhances Brisbane as a world city. The Gallery will focus on modern and contemporary Australian and international art, indigenous Australian art and the art of the Asia-Pacific Region.

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02.  
Project: Auckland Grammar School  
Location: Auckland, New Zealand



# SPORTING AMBITIONS

Auckland Grammar's Sports Complex and Gymnasium demonstrates a robust, athletic elegance.

It provides the visual and physical anchor of the school's corner leg of a group of school buildings that front the number one rugby pitch. The school's emphasis on sporting excellence is symbolized by its investment in architecture that helps to further that cause through image and substance.

Visible from the city's southern motorway, across the basalt quarry, the new gymnasium reflects a whole sports driven ethos to complement its academic stream. Specific to its purpose and place – the school already has a heritage listed main assembly hall – the new complex creates a striking addition.

Such facilities typically isolate students/teachers, but here the architecture strives to maintain the connection of an open facility inside and out. A 'floating' clerestory roof and open glazing program at ground level contribute to a heightened site connection and dissolve the familiar internal/external boundaries. This vigorous glazing program ensures a high level of environmental awareness, apart from the more obvious pleasure of daylight, along with a sense of collegiate fraternity cultivated by an open attitude to playing fields and adjacent buildings.

Within the gym a raking ceiling tips up towards the clerestory glazing, to embrace diffused daylight. Classrooms and office incorporate full-length glazing and overlook the courtyard. Sunlight penetration is modified with vertical louver blades. This transparency is continued with full height internal glazed partitions between teaching spaces and viewing galleries with playing surface beyond.

An undulating brick façade bands the building's waist and speaks to the adjacent elevation with its oblique, folded, brick openings – an Architectus project completed in 2004 – and recalls the volcanic origins of the site and the idea of shifted terrain.

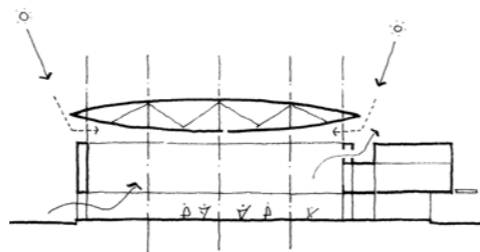
The gymnasium is essentially a 36 x 36m<sup>2</sup> open-plan, single volume, with provisions for volleyball, badminton, basketball and a full range of gymnastic facilities. A linear arrangement of support facilities wraps two sides of the gym. On the lower level are change rooms, entry foyer and equipment storage and on the upper level, viewing galleries office and teaching spaces.

One of the key design drivers was to ensure flush playing surfaces to the internal facades of the gym. This fundamental concept was carried through from inception to completion and informs the architectural detailing, material selection and integration of structure and services.

The structural solution features pre-cast concrete fins on four sides and supports a three-dimensional trussed roof. This structural solution eliminates the requirement for cross-bracing along the sides of the gym and allows for fully flexible space planning and openings such as where the box is broken in one corner by full height glazing up to the canopy line.

With its simplified, taut, exterior and light-filled interior volumes, the sports complex celebrates the opportunity and energy of youth.

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03.  
Project: Queensland Maritime Museum  
Budget: \$35 million



# WATER MARK

"Rejuvenation of the urban realm is one of the great opportunities for urban planners and architects," according to Dr. John Hockings, Design Director of Architectus, Brisbane.

Dr. Hockings was commenting on the firm's proposal to help Brisbane re-discover its river frontage. The firm has just completed master planning a major upgrade of Queensland's Maritime Museum. The plan encapsulates a vision for the museum to create a world-class facility for locals and visitors to better recognize and appreciate Queensland's rich maritime history.

"Architecture in isolation may be impressive but is all the more effective as part of a cohesive, wider urban vision such as that proposed for the

museum precinct. Architecture which engages with its surroundings ultimately benefits the city as a whole," says Dr. Hockings.

The existing museum, located at the eastern end of South Bank adjacent to the Goodwill Bridge, occupies a temporary building constructed for Expo 88 and is physically and visually disconnected by the Goodwill Bridge. The museum's main asset is the historic dry dock and associated pump house – dating from 1881 – and one of the few surviving examples in Australia.

"Brisbane once had a lively and active maritime precinct but over time the city turned its back on the river, leaving it as nothing but a transport corridor. We should remember its noble past – especially in the context of the renaissance that includes the new Architectus designed Gallery of Modern Art due to open in December," says Dr. Hockings.

Realisation of this plan will effectively complete a grand vision for the full length of South Bank to the Maritime Museum and mark it as one of the world's premier multi-functional, cultural, residential, educational and retail precincts.

The master plan locates the new museum building adjacent to the dry dock and pump house, and opens the entire site to free public access. It also completes the river walk by opening the river-bank to public access through the construction of a new boardwalk and bridge in front of the dry dock caisson. The museum and its external exhibits will be much better linked by the plan.

Master planning also identified additional commercial opportunities for the museum including a new functions centre, waterfront restaurant, coffee shops and food outlets. These facilities will line the boardwalk providing enhanced amenity. The old museum premises will be initially leased and subsequently redeveloped as a retail/commercial venture.

"The proposal, which will require government funding approval, is about the city seeing a new potential and vision for its future," says Dr. Hockings.

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# HIGH PERFORMANCE LEARNING

Primary and secondary schools are benefiting from architecture as educational opportunity and showcase.

Melbourne's Balwyn High School new Open Learning Centre is the fourth project Architectus has completed since master planning the school in 1998.

Designed primarily for year 9 students, the centre also provides an extended music school and performance space on the upper level. Based on an open plan learning environment, it allows for up to 120 students working in groups on various tasks.

This project-based, hands-on, approach to learning is regarded as highly appropriate to year 9 students in particular. The brief asked for a flexible space to foster a sense of wellbeing, comfort, and interest in the students. Many year 9 students typically turn off education at that time in their life. Consequently many schools offer camps and alternative programs in an effort to keep students engaged with the education process.

The Open Learning Centre has a high degree of natural light, ventilation and is thermally efficient in its structure. Acoustics was a major consideration in separation of the main open space from the first floor music and performance facilities above. A high level of access to data based information technology via computers was also required.

The first floor of the building provides for music practice rooms, a central computer-based music learning centre, recording studio and a dance, drama space.

The school is extremely pleased with the finished building, and has been over whelmed with the number of groups wishing to visit including academics from Harvard University in the United States.

The Architectus Melbourne team included, Greg Strickland, Simone Kosch, Garrett Crow, Lindy Zerman, and John Wood. The project took 16 months to complete including development of the brief, design, documentation and construction.

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## Interview

# PATRICK CLIFFORD

Patrick Clifford is Design Director of Architectus Auckland. One of the nation's leading design figures, he is responsible for the design leadership of all major projects in New Zealand.

Patrick's design skills have been recognised in competitions and in his selection for a number of juries and award panels. He is a visiting critic at the School of Architecture in Auckland and recently completed a term as Adjunct Professor of Design at Unitec in Auckland. He has a strong commitment to sustainable design and architecture and is a vital contributor to the private and public realm.

### What is the best time of the day to design?

There's formal time when I will sit and work like most people, but design is an associative process. You might be away from work but ideas often come to you when you are doing something seemingly unrelated. So design ideas can occur at just about anytime and anywhere.

### Even under the shower?

Maybe not a good image! But it can happen when I'm simply walking down the street and see something that relates to a design problem or issue I'm working on. I'm not limited to designing at 3 o'clock in the morning when there is perfect peace and quiet. You've got to be reasonably adaptable and switch into it even amid office distractions.

### Do you share Frank Gehry's view that it's unlikely, but commonplace, objects such as a crunched up piece of paper that can trigger much bigger, more exciting concepts such as his Guggenheim at Bilbao?

There's a part of that although I don't want to compare myself with one of the greats of our time, but that process of design by unlikely associations shouldn't be under-estimated. Idea can come from so many different places. A lot of architecture also comes from architecture – from the positive influence of other buildings. It's like any form of research or investigation, the technical turnaround. In science for example your work builds on what other people have done and I believe a lot of good architecture does that as well.

### Are there any moments of exhilaration?

Definitely.

### Your equivalent of the playwright's opening night?

Well there is the opening night and that can be incredibly exhilarating and it has happened on a couple of occasions that someone remarks that the building has changed their life – for the

better! Other memorable moments are when you might solve an especially challenging problem. There can be quite complex relationships which are part of a project, sometimes of course you invent constraints. It's enormously satisfying when a project falls into place in a very elegant way that addresses those complex range of considerations. It's not quite like Dr. Doolittle, but there's that realization that you've finally got it.

### Are you sometimes pleasantly surprised by the way a project turns out?

Absolutely. But sometimes the corollary occurs when you think it could have been better.

### If you had another life, what occupation would you choose?

I initially studied law at university and I'm not quite sure why I did that! I am married to a lawyer so perhaps there is something in that.

### What are some of the essential qualities to be a good architect?

Common sense. It's hard to over-rate it and it's pretty important in most things in life. You've got to make many decisions and evaluate things and common sense is the quality that will probably serve you best. That and persistence.

### Some would say you need to be able to imagine and draw.

That might make you an architect but it may not be enough to make you a good one. I think you have to also be able to see possibilities. Call that imagination, call that creativity, however it comes, but the challenge is to place it in the context of the available resources. It's relatively easy to come up with ideas in a world without constraints. Frank Gehry doesn't work on projects without constraints. You've got to be able to be creative in the context of the constraint. The other aspect about common sense and intelligence is that it isn't an accident that good architects get their projects built. They are able to give their projects the best chance of being brought to fruition.

### Who has been your biggest influence?

Kahn, Corbusier, Aalto, Moneo . . . the list could go on. I'm not offended by or discouraged by what others do. I enjoy it all.

### Is your work more about listening or seeing?

Part of the skill is to listen and be able to apply it. Listening needs to be somewhat selective so

you have to learn to prioritise. And of course it could be the single word or the throwaway line that the client drops that provides the real clue for a project.

### What is the biggest challenge facing architects today?

In the New Zealand context urbanism and how architecture contributes to the making of a great city. There are issues of resource – that's obviously a global challenge as buildings consume such a large part of the world's resources.

### What's the best part about living and working in New Zealand?

This is a sense of shared endeavour here and we really feel a part of this place where our history and roots are and it's a place where we can make a contribution.

### Architecture is often perceived as an expensive, luxury item. How do you respond to that assessment?

That's a question that's really about how you allocate resources. We've endeavoured to commit to the public realm. Where we design schools for instance, the architecture relates to the broader community and it isn't extravagant. There are those projects where more resources are applied. I think everyone would agree that in every community or society there is the need for celebration and the need for the boundaries to be pushed or extended and architecture can provide places to celebrate the work of others or simply be celebrations in their own right.

### Three of your favourite architects and buildings?

The Salk institute, California, Louis Khan, St. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Rome by Borromini and the Banco Popolare di Vicenza by Scarpa.

### What is the difference between a simply clever and truly engaging architecture?

I like work that has depth, that can be in terms of the program i.e. the needs the building serves, but it could also be in terms of the materials or the way it is made. Work that operates on a number of levels, that is appreciated over time will endure.

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04.

Project: Melbourne IVF,  
world leader in research and fertility treatment

Location: Melbourne



# ARCHITECTURE'S SWEET NEW SCIENCE

Long considered boffins and nerds, scientists have begun to take advantage of the power of architecture to raise their own profile and promote their work.

Australian universities have become especially active in engaging architecture to further the cause of science.

Architecture is also fostering increased self-esteem within the scientific community according to Peter Slifirski, Director of Architectus, Melbourne. "Great buildings contribute to great research. Local and international trends reveal that another consequence is more collaborative research as a result of better planned buildings. Scientists are being encouraged to build communication and connect with the wider community.

A new generation of buildings is making this possible. These projects speak not only of technical rigour and sound investment," Slifirski says, "but provide kinder, more

personable spaces than the sterile, anonymous box that largely left researchers to their own devices."

Architectus has emerged as one of the leading participants in this brave new world of architecture that brings a more human dimension to the world of nano-technologies and super-sciences.

The firm's extensive body of scientific laboratory work is hallmarked by a commitment to creating habitable spaces within highly distinctive envelopes. Slifirski cites recent projects by the firm that demonstrate this trend: the Victorian Government's \$200 million Australian Synchrotron, the Electron Microscope facility at Clayton, Victoria (which is part of Monash University's push to attract the world's leading researchers), and the new College of Pharmacy building in Royal Parade Parkville.

Slifirski believes that to create successful workplaces for the sciences, the design process must be integrated at a primary level. To achieve this, thorough design research must be undertaken from the very first stages of the project.

Buildings for the sciences are very refined in terms of their performance specifications. "They really are analogous to building a Formula One racer. Everything has to work. Universities and institutions need hard-working, good looking research buildings.

They are strong brands that can't afford to be caught with second-rate goods."

Slifirski notes that, "...it is institutions which typically buy scientific buildings and as they become more experienced in their purchasing, they are looking at architecture to underpin their long-term strategic aims. The University of Melbourne, for example, has gone down this path because it wants to be the place of choice on the basis of its superior facilities. Once you have this shared strategic aim, you have the possibility of great partnership with good architects."

The bottom line is that good science needs good building design. Melbourne IVF exemplifies this well, its business having grown beyond expectation since it started operations from its Architectus rejuvenated premises less than 12 months ago. Slifirski says even the client has been pleasantly surprised by the results. "They expected growth from the organisational synergies we've introduced but the view is that good architecture has delivered a tangible bottom line benefit."

Science, it appears, is finally discovering the elusive DNA of good design to be an investment that brings unexpected rewards.

(edited from an article written for TEFMA magazine)

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