

# VISION

ISSUE

41

PAGE TURNER

Moe, Victoria

BLACK BEAUTY

Essendon, Victoria

# CONTENTS



## 03

### PAGE TURNER

Moe, Victoria

Viridian performance glazing provides world-class optics for this new regional library and community facility. In addition to the screen and page, it offers a key vantage point from which to fully appreciate civic and country landmarks. Rather than hunkered down and aloof, Moe's Frank Bartlett Library and Service Centre rolls out the welcome mat in ways unexpected and uplifting.





# 22

## BLACK BEAUTY

Essendon, Victoria

Geometric glazing is key to the legibility and performance of a mini residential tower. John Demos' design for 28 apartments as social showcase reveals a micro-community enlivened by daylight and vistas. A common enough aim but too rarely achieved.



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1-29

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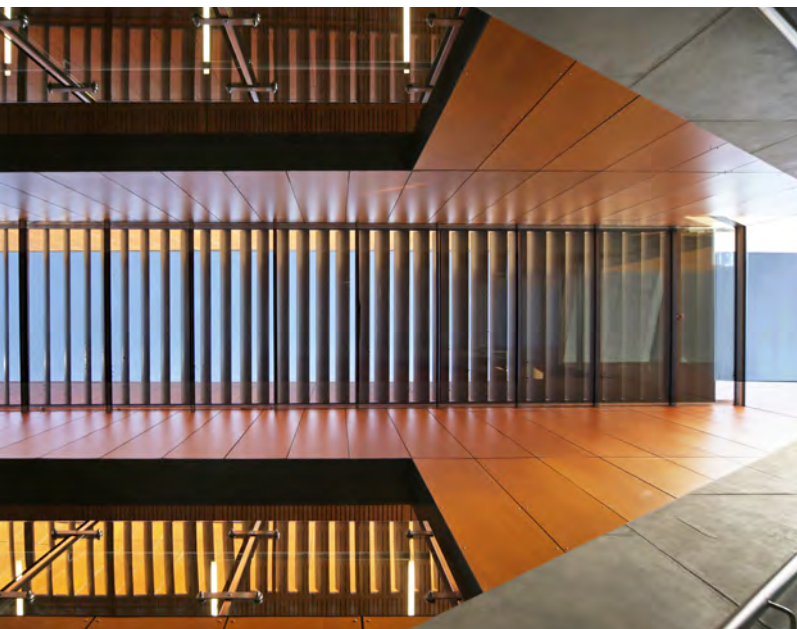


Two hours drive south-east of Melbourne in Victoria's picturesque Gippsland Valley, Moe has been hard hit by unemployment. With a reputation as deprived and something of a poor cousin, the town badly needed a self-esteem boost. With this library and community centre it could hardly have hoped for better. Architects FJMT have delivered a grand civic building of enticing legibility and fine human scale. Slender in plan and open in section, a deft glazing program flows along its length in a way that gently woos and invites the passerby.

Sweeping curves, cantilevers and piazzas are among the signals of a town-friendly resource connected to the whole community. Libraries and community centres are among architecture's new page-turners. As a genre, they are on the best-seller lists for municipalities keen to provide a social platform and showcase for real community engagement.

A pair of cantilevered, box-like 'binoculars' create forms reassuring and inviting. A rooftop garden provides elevated green spaces while a sculptural staircase and skylight glazing help suffuse it with daylight.

Occupying plum real estate in the civic heart, the new centre replaces a ragged asphalt strip of rail station car-parking with a story of hope and redemption.



A grand central staircase invites visitors and staff to circulate across both levels. Roof glazing brings striated light and shadow deep into the body of the building.

**PROJECT**

Frank Bartlett Library & Moe Service Centre,  
Moe, Victoria

**ARCHITECT**

Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp (FJMT)

**PRINCIPAL GLAZING**

Viridian EnergyTech™, SolTech™ Grey,  
ComfortPlus™ Bronze, Clear Double Glazed Unit

**TEXT, IMAGES & FILM**

Peter & Jenny Hyatt

Previously split by the rail line, the city of some 16,000 lacked a central community space. Dedicated to learning, leisure, scholarship and play, the Frank Bartlett Library and Moe Service Centre connects once dislocated town precincts. The intersection of new technologies and sharp architecture are showing the way. And not just with rows of old books and hand-me-down buildings, but places that celebrate local identity in unexpected ways. Peter Hyatt spoke with Geoff Croker of FJMT about how this project first raised a city's hopes, and then delivered:

**VISION What's the secret to its success?**

**GEOFF CROKER** It's very bold, but appropriate. The nice thing is it's community driven.

**Why a library in this place?**

We wanted to create a new heart and focal point for Moe. The city was divided by the train line into a north and south. This building aims to bridge both sides of the city while creating a new civic hub. The north-facing plaza fronting the main street really emphasizes the location and reveals views across the mountains to the north and south.

**Was there ever any discussion about whether the city needed a library, cinema, shopping centre, or some other focus?**

No, it was always going to be a library, but it's also a community building. There are also community meeting and consultation rooms and community kitchen for cooking classes. There's a green roof as public plaza. There's the main street plaza for community markets and activities and a café on the eastern end for train commuters. That's all part of a vision which we also participated in for the whole strip, so it's stage one. Then there's a park which includes potentially a skate park, playgrounds and community barbecue areas.







**It's a very pivotal site in a master planning, central town sense.**

It's an exciting site. We studied the whole linear strip and were very keen to engage in a crucifix plan, along the main rail line and retail strip. We wanted the building to be engaging across 360 degrees. There's no real front and back. You can view and enjoy the building from many angles.

**Moe is an unexpected location to find remarkable architecture.**

It's a bold move. The town and community was a little down and lost. We felt this was an opportunity to really do something quite strong and for the people to feel very proud of this new building. And people do. We read about the local community bringing visitors from neighbouring areas in to stay, to see this building. We felt that it was needed and it is very bold and iconic. Architecturally it's hopefully the start of a whole new renaissance of contemporary buildings in the town itself.

**These types of buildings can be viewed by the community as a great showcase for the architect with their big presence and yet disconnect entirely at pavement level.**

Moe sits within the Latrobe Valley and a lot of people forget that it is literally a valley. This building does two things; at a lower level it gently does represent the movement of a river. It's a very subtle, low form, the single lower level stretches out to maximise viewing into and out of the spaces. The upper level reading rooms are on axis with Mount Baw Baw so you can be in those spaces and see the mountains.

One of two cantilevered north-facing reading rooms that combine Viridian EnergyTech™ with broad external louvres, mediate strong summer sun yet admit lower level winter light.



The second reading room projects in parallel to provide daylight as tracery of patterns with high levels of natural illumination.





**Was this one of those ‘Ahaah’ moments, to discover that the city hadn’t really connected with the bigger picture?**

Many people forgot about Moe’s physical attractions. In the building you hear people saying, “Whoa, what a fantastic view!” So, it was quite deliberate in its form and it does respond, I believe, to its context. It was also deliberately formed onto the main street, and the plaza wraps nicely into the train station connection. It is bold but some areas are very gentle.

**This could easily pass as the very grand, modern residence rather than civic building.**

That’s to do with scale. We were very keen to spread the butter thinly on the toast at ground level. We could have had a more compact square, or form but it wouldn’t have engaged as well with a broader community and city, so the ground floor is deliberately stretched to have maximum interaction with the shops on both sides. The upper level is pushed to a more volumetric feel for a broader visual impact. Those two approaches hopefully make it feel like a very comfortable building.

**It’s obviously quite a task getting user circulation zones right because you don’t want to dominate, protrude or exclude building functions.**

We’re not ones for great, long corridors, for example, with lots of little rooms off them. We prefer to blend break-out spaces, circulation and functional space into the one zone. The stairs, for example, are directly in axis with the main street to Mount Baw Baw, so every time visitors use those stairs, they look through those windows and in winter see a snow capped mountain. In a library, in a community building, you want to feel comfortable and say to yourself “I can go into that space. I don’t have to ask permission.”

**How do you assess whether this type of project is truly successful?**

You know they’re successful when the community takes ownership. It has become their building and from day one we’ve picked that up when people walk around and enthuse about their building. So, a successful community building is not about winning architectural awards, it’s really about people having a legacy, which they’re proud of and they enjoy using.



Reading rooms are accessed by a floating Viridian glass floor that accentuates transparency and the transition to cantilevered reading ‘cubes’.



**There's quite a range of glass types that's central to the vocabulary and ingenuity of the building.**

The whole success of this building is its transparency. People want an outlook from the building, but in a community library, you want to attract the public that may not have visited a library for 20 years, or more. It's about people seeing more than just books but a whole range of activities. It's a safe, welcoming place that's light-filled, and you can see the community passing by on a daily basis.

**There's a wide variety of glass used for specific tasks.**

The selection of glass is interesting. We wanted it to be as seamless as possible and there's a lot of care that's gone into the detailing on ground level. On the curve of faces we've used a bronze tinted glass to really emphasise the curve, then it becomes clearer when it moves into the library itself. Then, the reading rooms, which are double and triple height spaces, really rely on transparency but also high performance because they're facing north. There's a lot of glass around the building and while it's all quite different, it all performs in a very positive way.

A tale of two elevations: the north and main street facing view (above) and the south-facing rail-line outlook (opposite)



**“It’s about people seeing more than just books but a whole range of activities. It’s a safe, welcoming place that’s light-filled, and you can see the community passing by on a daily basis.”**


GEOFF CROKER, ARCHITECT

**Was there much discussion about suppliers, such as Viridian for example, in terms of specifying the glass beforehand?**

We worked closely with the technical team at Viridian. There was an emphasis on using local trades but the glass is important. You need to get it right and we spent a lot of time finessing the glass because we like the material but it does need to be treated properly.

**Have you a prime spot in the project where you like to spend an hour?**

I really enjoy the view towards Mount Baw Baw. When we first went to the site it was a piece of asphalt. We hired a cherry-picker and I stood on that platform and delighted at the views. It still puts a smile on my face to go back and share that aspect with the broader community. That’s a lovely aspect of the building. It’s a very warm space to be in, to sit in the sun and just quietly reflect, or read.



“The whole success of this building is its transparency. People want an outlook from the building, but in a community library, you want to attract the public that may not have visited a library for 20 years, or more.”

GEOFF CROKER, ARCHITECT







A serpentine plan along the north to the main street reveals a confident Viridian glazing program for highly-comfortable occupancy.

“It’s a bold move. The town and community was a little down and lost. We felt this was an opportunity to really do something quite strong and for the people to feel very proud of this new building.”

GEOFF CROKER, ARCHITECT



#### Were there specific site challenges?

You need to be across all buildings, so it meant people in the office made lots of trips to Moe. The old site infrastructure was a challenge and involved early works such as optic-fibre and underground power-lines.

There's lots of challenges building next to a train station, vibrations, noise. The glass was supplied locally, so that was probably one of the easier aspects, if there is such a thing as an easy aspect in a very complex building.

#### Did the site and setting generate most of the design?

It was really about understanding the context and site. When we first looked at it, it was the back of shops facing a train line. We thought, "What are we going to do here?" Once we elevated ourselves a level and thought a little broader about this valley and mountains, it really started to fall into place. That's really when a project gets exciting.

#### Has there been any un-anticipated success?

Well, perhaps it's not a complete surprise but we're delighted that the community is really embracing it. The nice part about it is that people feel uplifted about being in the town. The community has produced lovely blogs writing about it. There were kids on open day, very excited about the new building and being able to watch trains come and go. It has genuinely given a true focal-point to a city, so it's got a much broader appeal than just as a library. It's quite an iconic, very dramatic building that cantilevers over the street by about seven metres. It has been exciting to see how people engage with it. We hoped it would happen but to actually be there to see it succeed like that is really a lovely thing.



**PROJECT**

Frank Bartlett Library & Moe Service Centre,  
Moe, Victoria

**CLIENT**

Major Projects – Latrobe City Council

**ARCHITECT**

Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp (FJMT) Architects

**BUILDER**

Bldg.Eng

**PRINCIPAL GLAZING**

Viridian EnergyTech™, SolTech™ Grey,  
ComfortPlus™ Bronze, Clear Double Glazed Unit

**FRAMELESS DOORS AND BALUSTRADES**

Viridian Clear

**GLAZIER**

MSF Thermal Doors and Windows

**PROJECT COST**

\$14 million

# BLACK BEAUTY

**PROJECT**

Buckley Street Apartments,  
Essendon, Melbourne

**ARCHITECT**

John Demos Architects

**PRINCIPAL GLAZING**

Viridian Thermotech™ Double Glazed Units,  
EnergyTech™ Clear

**TEXT, IMAGES & FILM**

Peter & Jenny Hyatt

Inner-city and outer-suburban apartment towers are sprouting across Australia like spring growth. Density is the new planning mantra and vision of most urban planners and governments to utilize vital space for population growth.

Rather than replicate the more introverted tilt-slab build, Melbourne architect Demos advocated an open expression and design generosity. Well removed from the bleak and the bland, his six-level apartment 'block' is a model of design compression and occupant release.

The result is a showcase of geometric glazing that frees occupants and building users from a lifts-only policy. Here 'fire-stairs' comprising Viridian Thermotech double-glazing invites and defines occupant circulation.



For this architect it was an opportunity to visually layer the project while connecting with the neighborhood and busy Buckley Street in particular. John Demos guided Peter Hyatt through the evolution of a mini-max tower where performance glazing guides the eye towards building-as-diagram.

**VISION What did you aspire to create with this development?**

**JOHN DEMOS** A very efficient use of the allotment. The building stands head and shoulders above its neighbours. There was no mandatory height control so we pushed it to the limit by firstly maximising the car parking capacity of the site at the requisite ratio of cars to units which in turn translated to a six-storey, 28 apartment building, well above the prevailing three to four storey context.

**What about the other qualities you look for such as experience of place?**

Vertical circulation elements like the lift and particularly the stair, are expressed overtly to promote an understanding of how the building works. So in this case, stair and lift are juxtaposed and with a common glazed foyer and landings results in an atrium form that extends up the building. This creates a dominant central element in the building's composition emphasised by a strong pattern of the diagonal and horizontal steel framing that grounds the facade and expresses the entrance. The steel frame supporting the atrium resonates with the structural form of the staircase thus promoting an awareness of that embedded element and its purpose.

**What do you hope the project says to the passerby?**

In a subtle but nevertheless overt way it is designed to be noticed. Hopefully this engagement will be positive and promote an understanding that the building introduces a new and progressive element into the streetscape. A building which consolidates existing neighbourhood characteristics revolving around a sense of security and amenity and moderate controlled growth as opposed to stagnation. The building must also express its primary purpose as a residential apartment that exists in balance with commercial and other similar buildings within the wider predominately suburban residential setting. This is achieved by emphasising flanking balconies as the street-wards oriented extension of individual apartments.







A streetscape  
façade animated by  
Viridian performance  
Thermotech™ glazing  
and structural framing



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BUCKLEY ST APARTMENTS






Common elements such as the atrium entry and the circulation combined with the patterned repetition of individual units collectively represent the idea of the building. At street level a small café and personal training business completes the impression by servicing directly the neighbourhood at large.

**There's often a theatrical quality wherever you have a large ratio of glass and there's a certain level of activity and people circulation/gathering occurring.**

Using glass can be a direct invitation for people to look into the building. For residential buildings, which are essentially private the number of spaces that bear that sort of scrutiny are limited. The prime example is, quite naturally, the entrance foyer. In this case the foyer and the ascending staircase, essentially the atrium structure are a single element that also includes views of the lift doors and the framed smoke doors leading to the inner sanctum of private apartments. The view into the stairwell/atrium is rewarded by the application of textured and coloured wall finishes and timber veneers that compliment the steel and timber treads of the staircase. In this way an outside observer is deliberately drawn into the building and its workings. This is a gesture of welcome by way of revealing as far as is practically acceptable to the tenants of the building. By identifying parts of the building within the spectrum of public to private spaces and making deliberate and considered choices about what and how to draw attention to you reveal more of the purpose of the building and make stronger albeit qualified connections to the social context in which it exists. I believe that this cannot be overstated in its importance in an age when a concern for privacy has become an unnatural and usually unnecessary obsession within our community. The use of glass to make such connections also allows the building to communicate via a wider palate of materials, textures, shapes and colours.

The staircase not as place of last resort but preferred means of circulation. Rather than rejection of the street, the apartment appears and feels responsive to the flow of light and life.



“The views from that staircase are elevated right across to the horizon or down into the street. That’s a nice way to start the day. There is a choice between waiting for the lift or taking the stairs, which physically, is easy. And there was that extra incentive that it could be a very nice experience as you just wind down that staircase.”

JOHN DEMOS, ARCHITECT



**Why does glass figure so prominently in this project?**

Glass has the potential to draw us visually deeper into the building to reveal its purpose, an understanding of how it functions physically, to display more rather than less of itself and to allow an expression of form, pattern colour and texture as phenomenon. Glass along with voids acts as the counterpoint to surface and the two juxtaposed substantially modulate degrees of revealing and obscuring as appropriate. Glass is the facilitator of natural light. It's also a very easy material to maintain over time. Durability is a very important consideration for all buildings and glass is one of the materials I think of first.

**Do you have contact with Viridian's technical resource team when you develop a project?**

Yes we do. They're very important. Viridian has been very helpful in providing its expertise on this project. Our relationship with suppliers and contractors is very strong. Viridian is particularly valued by me because of my propensity to use glass rather expansively. Viridian have always and over many years assisted with the realisation of projects and I think those projects have been better realised for that involvement and contribution. Viridian back their products and it's always a pleasure to work with them.

**Are there other qualities to glass beyond light transmission and transparency? Aren't we sometimes forgetful of the capacity to be beautifully layered like a veil or series of veils in a building to create intrigue or spatial depth.**

Glass has the potential to create various effects literally as different as day to night. Quite apart from the various forms it can take as a material from clear to translucent to opaque, from being a light transmitter to a light reflector and all the grades between it is a material that can be used to create effects like no other and of course it can be coloured intrinsically. Glass technology has advanced so much and continues to advance ensuring that it will always have a pre-eminent place in the palette of materials at architects' disposal. At 193 Buckley Street the use of glass especially in the atrium element creates a depth to the facade by permitting layered views into the interior and the elements arranged within.



“Glass has the potential to draw us visually deeper into the building to reveal its purpose, an understanding of how it functions physically, to display more rather than less of itself and to allow an expression of form, pattern colour and texture as phenomenon.”

JOHN DEMOS, ARCHITECT

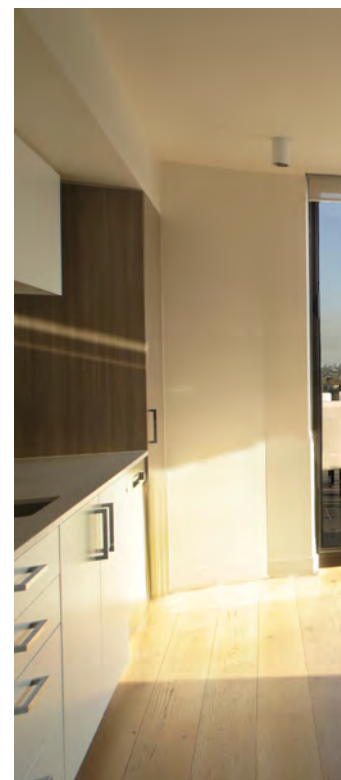
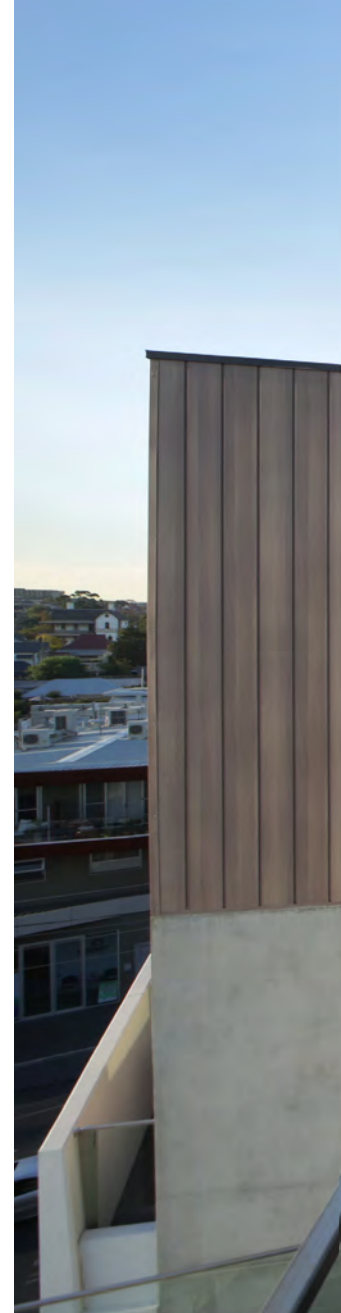


**How difficult was it to resolve that façade system when you could have easily opted for a standard system?**

A standard system implies that it stands alone. I attempt to fuse systems together in a way that allows one to abet another whilst retaining the performance required of each system or element. I regard this as potentially more efficient and certainly more interesting architecturally. Building formed that way possess greater potency due to the multi-valent idea that characterises each element of the composition derived as it is a composite of differing demands. In this case the atrium and stair supports and the idea of a patterned frame defining a super-scaled lantern-like element are all combined as a single structural system. This system takes into account the spanning capacity of glass no less than the deflection limits of the steel and the performance aspects of other components all of which have a critical inter-dependence. And that brings us back to the level of technical advice and assistance offered by companies like Viridian: it's their expertise that is invaluable when materials are subjected to the demands of architectural expression over and above conventional applications.

**How do you know your design limitations?**

You don't until you test them rigorously and often on a single project. Design is not just an individual exercise. Designing and constructing buildings is a team effort and one which increasingly is best done as an integrated exercise. The team provides expertise across multiple disciplines allowing designers to test their limits. It is therefore imperative that as much expertise as possible resides within the group of experts that collectively create a building. A team approach rather than diluting the architecture actually allows it to flourish to a maximum by virtue of the problem solving capacity of the participants. Architects should be aware that they are usually the ones who are most demanding in that respect and therefore should be the first to appreciate the invaluable assistance that experts, like Viridian, bring to the possibility of stretching the limits of design.







Apartments respond to the setting and elements by allowing glass to create an expansive appreciation of place.



“Glass lets you look in both directions at once. And that’s the same as the staircase. One of the reasons that it’s clad in glass is that it’s a way of greeting the day.”

JOHN DEMOS, ARCHITECT

**Anything else about the design and glazing in particular that stands out for you?**

Yes, it is the inescapable view from each level of the building as one enters the atrium structure when exiting the building. One can greet the day so to speak by observing the near and distant view and the sky from a glass bubble. There is a choice between waiting for the lift or taking the stairs down to the exit and car-park observing the view as you go and “acclimatising” to the day ahead. Given that the stair, beyond its mandatory existence use as an escape, is given over as an integral element of the architecture of the building it may just entice one to use it, at least downwards, instead of the lift and hopefully enjoy the journey.

**PROJECT**

Buckley Street Apartments,  
Essendon, Melbourne

**CLIENT**

MV Investments Pty Limited

**ARCHITECT**

John Demos Architects

**BUILDER**

MV Investments Pty Limited

**GLAZING CONTRACTOR**

Mills Glass

**PRINCIPAL GLAZING**

Virdian ThermoTech™  
Double Glazed Units  
EnergyTech™ Clear VTough,  
Clear VTough

**PROJECT COST**

\$7m

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**

Hyder Consulting

**SERVICES ENGINEER**

MacCormack Associates  
Consultants

## AUSTRALIA

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[www.viridianglass.com](http://www.viridianglass.com)

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VISION welcomes project submissions by our editorial team. Please send ideas and projects to:

[viridian@csr.com.au](mailto:viridian@csr.com.au)

### TEXT, IMAGES & FILM

Peter & Jenny Hyatt

[www.hyattgallery.com.au](http://www.hyattgallery.com.au)

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Nexus Designs

[www.nexusdesigns.com.au](http://www.nexusdesigns.com.au)