

VISION

John Wardle Architects

Fairhaven House
Shearer's Quarters
Nigel Peck Centre

Viridian
New World Glass

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The Material Man

John Wardle leads a talented multi-disciplinary practice. The firm's latest residence perches above Fairhaven Beach and is their second project to win the prestigious Robin Boyd Award.

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Bruny Island Shearer's Quarters

A return visit to a house that hasn't sagged under the weight of huge acclaim. A precursor to the Fairhaven House and equally tuned to its remarkable setting.



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Covered by Vision in 2008 and virtually ageless with its fusion of technology and art to create an inspirational education environment.

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T E R I A L M A N



STRAW POLL ARCHITECTS TO DISCOVER WHO AMONG THEIR RANKS THEY MOST ADMIRE AND THE PRACTICE OF JOHN WARDLE CONSISTENTLY RATES. THIS MIGHT SURPRISE WARDLE, BUT NOT SHREWD OBSERVERS OF A FIRM THAT HAS BUILT SUCH AN OUTSTANDING BODY OF WORK. HE ENJOYS AN UNUSUALLY HIGH PEER REPUTATION - RARE IN A BUSINESS FRAUGHT WITH NARROW ESCAPES, FINANCIAL STRUGGLES AND GLOVES-OFF SPARRING.

The Fairhaven House, Victoria

Architect:

John Wardle Architects

Principal Glass Provider:

Viridian

Principal Glazing Resource:

Viridian ThermoTech™ E Double Glazed Units
incorporating Sunergy™

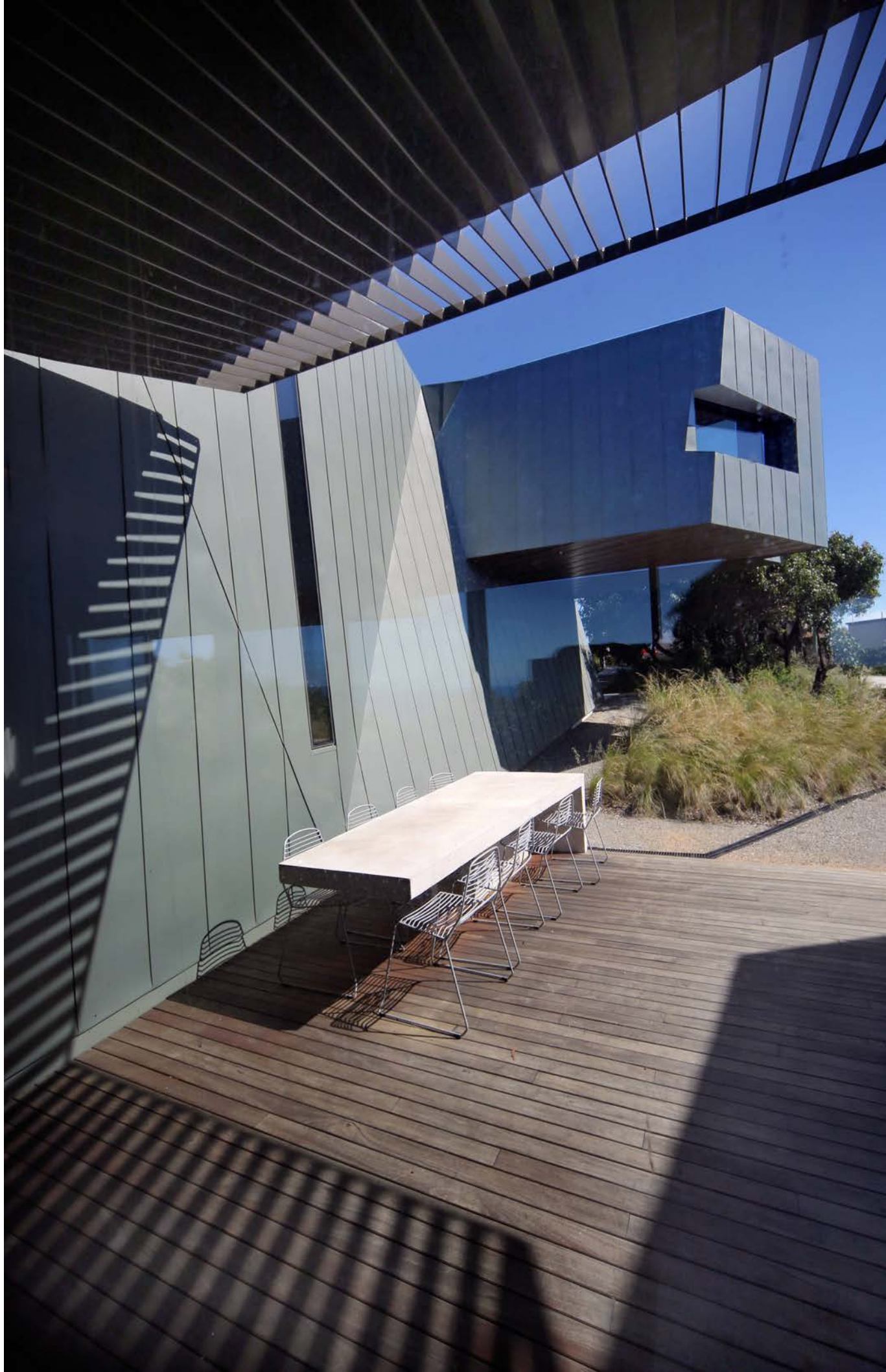
Images & Text:

Peter Hyatt & Jennifer Hyatt



Right
A para-glider swoops past
the house that occupies
a high ridge-line.





Left
Sheltered,
north-facing courtyard.

Design clarity and delicacy have helped win Wardle plaudits, not least among them his second Robin Boyd Award. The Bruny Island house on Tasmania's east coast earned his first Boyd Award in 2012, and in 2013 the Fairhaven House on Victoria's rugged surf coast brings home the prized double.

Reverence for place is always a fine starting point for any architect and in this regard he is amongst the best. Picture walls of Viridian performance glass are used like lenses high, wide, tall and slender. Sheet zinc exterior and boat like timber linings complete a beguiling ensemble.

John Wardle's design for the Fairhaven House is all luminous craft. High on a ridge-line above Bass Strait, the house is almost an eagle's eyrie, often shrouded in ocean mists at a near perfect elevation and circumstance for para-gliders.

In plan the house forms a long-sided horse-shoe on the west elevation with a central courtyard open to the north and protected against southerly blusters that often sheet from the cliff-face where the Otway Ranges slide into the sea. More often though the ocean, cliff and hinterland generate drafts for para-gliders who ply the prevailing winds in graceful, gravity-defying, sweeps and remind us of the spirit behind this architecture.

GLASS IS QUIETLY SPECTACULAR, DISSOLVING
THE ENVELOPE UNOBTRUSIVELY TO VIEWS
AND LIGHT IN QUITE MAGICAL WAYS.

While the outlook fascinates, the house reflects Wardle's intense interest in the natural world. His preoccupation embraces nature to bespoke chairs and tables. This Attenborough-like eye ensures an appreciation of the grand sweep and microscopic.

Modest in size, but not imagination, the house appears destined for greater things. An early inspiration, Pierre Chareau's steel and glass Maison de Verre at 31 Rue Saint-Guillame in Paris, is half a world away yet resonates at Fairhaven.



Sliding glass wall to
courtyard from kitchen



**Left**

The kitchen opens itself to the north-facing courtyard with sliding glass walls.

Right

Window wall edges disappear for an elegant resolution.

Below

Living area connects to kitchen and dining rooms with expanded space





Deflected light, breeze, ingeniously concealed hinges and latches, custom-designed furniture and streamlined surfaces are all clues to something very special.

Such visions might seem ephemeral to the role of architect and yet Wardle ensures the construction language has those glider-like qualities. And there is the emphatic, unequivocal sense to his work. Every part has a purpose rather than adding excess baggage. Even his hand-railings are exemplary. Producing a staircase is a good test of an architect and handrails that celebrate the occasion all the more so.

Glass is quietly spectacular, dissolving the envelope unobtrusively to views and light in quite magical ways.

“Our architecture has a strong narrative,” Wardle says of the story telling process that reflects the lives of all parties involved. “It should tell a story appropriate to its place and the ideas of everyone involved. I want architecture to go beyond the first appearance and reveal new layers on each and every visit.”

His work embodies the idea of not fitting people into arbitrary or willfully conceived shapes. His designs mould to site and around clients. It's a view fundamentally based on sharing ideas and an enjoyment of working with people. Wardle's passion for quality comes across as the gift that keeps on giving.

“I have a powerful belief in architecture as a transformative experience,” he says.

“What I'm most pleased about our practice is the breadth of reach, from small coastal houses to large residential and high-rise commercial towers, to university buildings.”

Right

View along main passage from front entrance towards ocean reveals splintered, kaleidoscopic light.

This latest residence hardly puts Wardle on the map – he's already there – but it reinforces how good clients can be introduced to an extraordinary way to live.

Vision editor Peter Hyatt speaks with John Wardle about a house already the modern classic:

What does the success of a second Robin Boyd Award mean?

When awards come I am very deliberate to make sure that any recognition is shared. Leo Schofield recently described a building of ours in Tasmania as ‘this big grey beached whale’ so the reviews aren't always positive. When you put yourself out into the public realm - which is what architects do - you have to be prepared for criticism. When good reviews come along I endeavour to share that around.

Your work is highly legible. How do you ensure that signature suits every client?

Our designs have never been from the hand of one master architect. What I do enjoy about the practice of architecture is a process that really involves creative input from many people working together. The project can be as small as a house, to a large university building, or office tower.

Is there a single biggest influence?

There have been various influences. Elements of our work refer to Alvar Aalto, Rudolph Schindler, Japanese architecture, Boyd Desbrowe Annear and other fine Australian architects. One of my first influences being lectured by Peter Corrigan was Louis Kahn and still to this day he is a great point of reference. Kahn's Fisher House is very influential as is Pierre Chareau's astonishing glass house in Paris, the Maison de Verre.

Was there a moment in your career when you thought: ‘I've finally worked this caper out.’?

Not really in a single moment. It really goes back to your point about how good we are, or not. I tend to be very self-critical. The repercussions of my visits to a building site reverberate right through the practice and building team. Because the building process is reasonably slow it at least allows for subtle modification through the course of construction. Fortunately the builder here provided a great team. They communicated incredibly well, delivered on, or under time and built beautifully.





Above
Handcrafted furniture specifically
designed by JWA for the house.

Right
Like a seductive lens, the architecture
releases towards the ocean.



What was the design inspiration and reference you first observed about Fairhaven?

The idea for its materiality and colour came from that very first visit. We asked the question could we make use of the existing hardwood and bush colours such as the eucalyptus obliqua. That influenced everything from the green zinc cladding to the glass to timber linings. The only applied colour resulted from where we took photos of lichen and fungi taken from the site. We proposed colours that really came out of the fungus, leaves and lichen and our clients were very receptive to this as fine areas of very intense coloration.

THERE'S A REAL
RAWNESS AND IT'S
AN ABSOLUTELY
RIGOROUS PROCESS.

John Wardle,
Principal Architect

That's a pretty irresistible rationale.

Once you set up such a rule it can produce some quite unexpected consequences and the colours on the forest floor become almost proportionally set in the house. You will see it in the details such as the key joinery elements where the smallest incarnation is evidence of that color just as the lichen may only be a small but important point of colour in the bush setting.

You bring a particular, idiosyncratic sensibility to your work. It's a very specific, material-driven architecture with a very singular voice. This seems to fly in the face of the mantra for collaboration.

We work at a fairly intense pace and very closely, drawing on many team members to work across each phase of a project. It's an absolutely rigorous and intensive process and the ideas build momentum as others from the office apply their own inputs to develop the detail. A great technical process is drawn into the creative mix to ensure the operation of all systems and elements.

You create your own rules about windows and walls where they substitute for one another. What is the background to that?

There is a program of invented logic to this house that states: "...let's not have any operable elements in those view lines." There are winders and fly-wire to the operable timber blades, but on the whole, the house has windows/walls with views south and north that don't draw air to distract from the purity of those views.

You dislike conventional windows?

That's true, but we love glass walls. Wherever we have a glass wall we make sure they vanish and the edges disappear.

By eliminating mullions?

We will push the sill below the floor and the two sides of the windows beyond the walls and the head of the window up above the ceiling. Then we will draw the air in from beneath, or from the side, and so there will be no usual distractions. Those timber blade panels could have been windows but we make them parts of walls that open. We're not really trying to get a view, but airflow so they explain their purpose very deliberately.



View from
master bedroom



What is another example?

Some of the great moments occur with the simple, singular idea where the air panels open up as walls that pivot open. They flex and deflect to scoop breeze and light and when they operate they completely change the experience of that house.

To borrow a metaphor, it has a sense of the old-fashioned kaleidoscope of fragmented surfaces and fantastic glass.

It occurs especially in the passageways but that kaleidoscope always un-ruffles towards the edge so that once you're near the windows for instance, the most contorted parts actually un-ruffle and become a smooth, calm surface. We could have carried those angular elements right through and ended up with jagged portholes but by carefully smoothing and flattening out those contortions you experience a very calm frame.

The corridor has almost been forgotten, yet you have reinstated it and made it an important transitional experience. It's a 'wow' just to be in this space. Rather than treating it as wasted space, you reinstate the corridor.

There is a powerful transition from hinterland to ocean and that is what that site is largely about. We tried to reinstate the bush and when you enter you are almost transported through a series of lenses before arriving at the point where the experience is all about the ocean view.

Being a prototype design and hand-crafted means it is a relatively expensive house, yet it never highlights 'status'.

We wanted to direct the money towards powerful architectural moments rather than such areas as extravagant light-fittings or fittings. It's not a house of flamboyant materials and systems so much as the use of indigenous, conventional materials. It really puts craftsmanship at the fore.

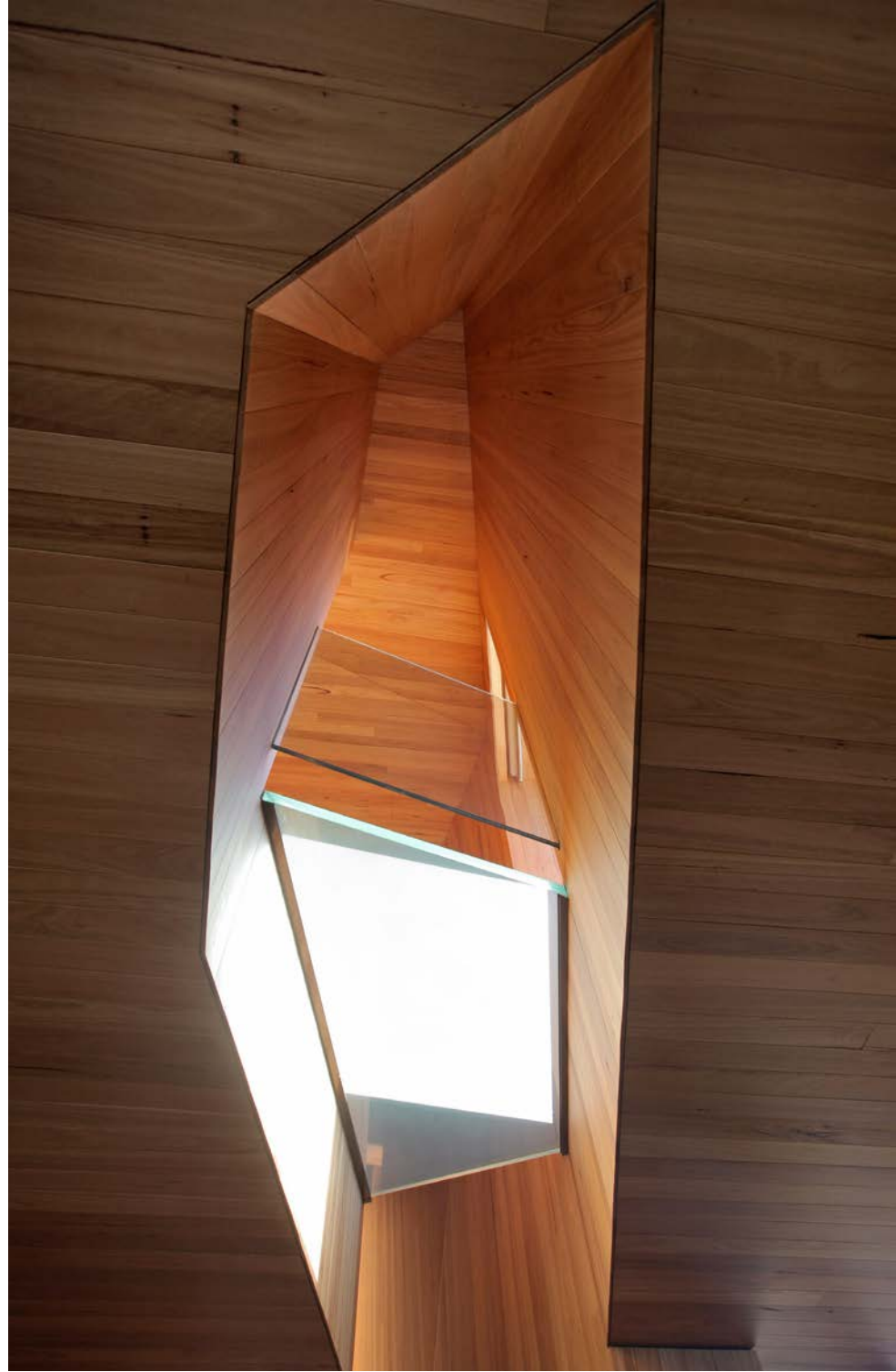


Your glazing has a sublime quality and dispenses with the idea of windows as we have come to know them. You invite so many opportunities.

Each piece of glazing is very deliberate and custom designed to enhance our focus and experience. Every window is carefully modeled to work in conjunction with operable walls and sight lines and then there's that seamless, skin-like quality to the glazing.

There is almost a spiritual quality that occurs in special buildings and here you have such a place that connects spectacularly with nature. This is much less installed architecture than an architecture that belongs to its place. It seems to say: "I'm part of where I am and this is what we can be". There is that wonderful heightening of appreciation of the natural rather than the synthetic and artificial and glass plays a huge role.

The result doesn't have a single means of representation or summary. I'm pleased when our work defies any single reading or recognition. If it is something that moves people then it's as much an expression of the heart as the mind, then it's a wonderful result. Often the interpretation and experience of others is entirely different from my own, or what was predicted.



Above & Left
Exquisitely angled, crafted volumes and glass footbridge no less to the roof deck produce nuanced surprises.

Right
Slender turned handrail
and glass balustrade
exemplify crafted detail.





Your work is emphatic but never dogmatic.

I think we are very emphatic and what you've said is something I'm really pleased with. There is usually a reason why architects are dogmatic. Dogma in any area of life usually reveals a lack of confidence to go beyond, or work outside a certain frame of reference, or particular formula. I've always revelled in the creative inclusion that a problem presented by a client might spin you off in another direction. That can take you into another realm and adds an enormous breadth to our work. We'll frequently debate the point in a way that excludes certainty but not to an architectural line or formula. This is evidenced in the difference between our two most recent houses at Fairhaven and Lake Wendouree designed within months of one another but completely different. The Fairhaven House plan is twisted, fragmented and crumpled, while the Lake Wendouree house almost goes back to our origins and is a much more organised, cellular composition.

What about color given those nuances you describe are so important and that every element plays its part?

We ask those questions and seek out specific performance criteria about the slightest shifts of color, reflectivity, hue or embodied colour that are connected to the type and manufacture of glass. All of those qualities are very specific and have to support the effect and performance we are looking for.

What is your view on the use of local versus imported materials such as glass?

I certainly believe in making the most of whatever power an architect has in supporting companies such as Viridian who research, develop and manufacture locally. We will support them and always work with them because apart from anything else it's critical that we get behind local manufacturing industry. In addition our experience with the product has been first-rate.



Credits

Project

The Fairhaven House, Victoria

Architect

John Wardle Architects

Design Team

John Wardle
Andy Wong
Diego Bekinschtein
Chloe Lanser
James Juricevich
Robery Kolak

Builder

Spence Constructions

Structural Engineer

Felicetti

Blackbutt Window Frames

Pickering Joinery

Glazier

Menzel Glass

Principal Glass Provider

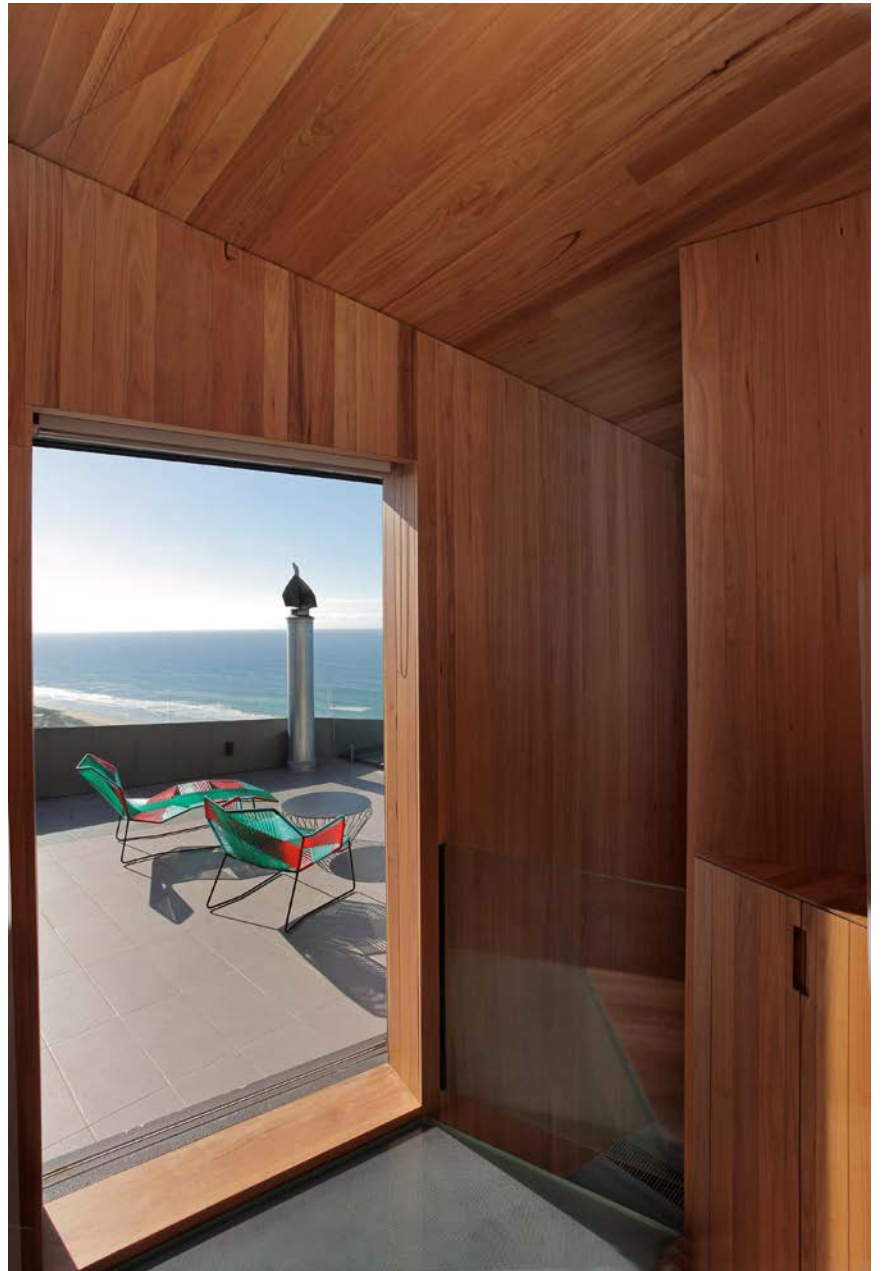
Viridian

Principal Glazing

Viridian ThermoTech™
E Double Glazed Units
incorporating Sunergy™

Left & Below

Roof-deck is a sublime vantage point to appreciate the floating and fixed vista.



2012

SHEARER'S

THE LINEAGE OF THE FAIRHAVEN HOUSE CAN BE CLEARLY SEEN IN THE BRUNY ISLAND SHEARER'S QUARTERS. EXPANSIVE, EMPHATIC OPENINGS PERFORM AS FIXED, SHIFTING AND SLIDING LENSES TO ENGAGE WITH THE LANDSCAPE AND SKY.

Shearers Quarters,
Bruny Island, Tasmania

Architect:
John Wardle Architects

Principal Glass Provider:
Viridian

Principal Glazing Resource:
Viridian VLam™ Heat Strengthened
Viridian EnviroShield Performance™ XIR
Viridian ThermoTech™ E Double Glazed Units

Images & Text:
Peter Hyatt & Jennifer Hyatt



CORE PRODUCTS



ENERGY



NOISE



CLEAR VISION



DECORATIVE



BUSHFIRE



STRUCTURAL



STORM



SECURITY



QUARTERS



THE LUSTROUS, BROADLY DELTA-SHAPED SHELL
SPEAKS OF PROTOTYPE RATHER THAN STEREOTYPE.





This exemplar of honed simplicity forms a mellifluous fit with its ancient landscape. The aptly-named property 'Waterview' is a working sheep farm of 440 hectares operated by the Wardle family for 11 years. Their rehabilitation of landscape is impressive enough with some 150 hectares reserved for conservation purposes and more than 7,000 indigenous trees planted. The new house Quarters is located on the site of an old shearing shed destroyed by bushfire in the 1980s. Of special significance is the relationship to an 1840 cottage built for Captain James Kelly as part of a Colonial land grant.

The design fully grasps a beguiling, yet potentially elusive, opportunity. Earthy, indigenous materials including timber, steel and Viridian performance glazing form a highly convincing connection to place.

The new building defers to the old cottage strengthening the other in the process.

A painterly appreciation of vista appears to draw closer a dam immediately south, rolling hills and bay to the south-east and a vast window wall to the east. It is an ingeniously refined solution, strong yet so slender as to almost provide a floating, unsupported library wall.

The lustrous, broadly delta-shaped shell speaks of prototype rather than stereotype - as if the architect has taken a pair of scissors to playing cards to create a playfully serious lightweight model. Windows and walls flex, open and yield in surprising ways. Other windows and breezeways are artfully concealed - a joyful blend of design detail and meticulous carpentry. Vast sliding glass walls, fixed windows and operable timber panels capture views every bit as thrilling as any on landscape view at the national gallery.



Above & Right
Indigenous materials contribute to
a sense of authenticity and conviction.







“IT’S NOT JUST A SHED,
BUT ABOUT HABITATION.”

John Wardle,
Principal Architect

The project’s use of authentic materials and patterns are realized in an entirely modern context. A modest 136m² footprint sees the structure nestled on the hillside for shelter from prevailing winds. Operable vents and louvres allow for controlled cross ventilation during summer. Viridian performance double-glazed units and insulation to floors, walls and ceiling, reduce heat loss during the winter months. Recycled materials include original hand-made bricks for the chimney, timber flooring and apple-box timber walls. Water is solar heated with a wood heater for year round occupancy.

“It’s not just a shed, but about habitation. The out-of-form plan is pretty much as first documented. Every room dimension, door and window all sit within a modular 750mm grid pronounced in the timber joints cut specially throughout the house. Everything follows this fundamental measure,” says Wardle. “This accuracy is very pronounced in every detail, door and frame. When we discovered how good the carpentry was we asked them to do more.”

Right

Fixed glass ‘walls’ and operable timber windows provide the best of both worlds – vista and cooling breezes.



Architect's Statement

This beguiling shearer's quarters sits as a companion building to an existing historic cottage on a working sheep-farm.

The plan form transforms along its length to shift the profile of a slender skillion at the western end to a broad gable at the east. The geometry of this shift is carried through to the layout of internal walls, lining boards and window frames. A singular palette of materials is used with corrugated galvanised iron to the exterior, and timber internally. Inside is a large open living/dining/kitchen area, bathroom and laundry, two bedrooms and a bunkroom. The primary internal lining is *Pinus Macrocarpa* sourced from many different suppliers principally as individual trees from old rural windbreaks. The bedrooms are lined in recycled apple box crates, sourced from the many old orchards of the Huon-Valley where the timber remained stacked but unused since the late 1960s.



A JOYFUL BLEND OF DESIGN DETAIL
AND METICULOUS CARPENTRY



NIGEL

PECK

2008

JEWEL-LIKE IN EVERY WAY, THE CENTRE'S VIRTUOSO GLAZING, FOLDED BRICKWORK AND DEFT BUILDING-AS-LANDSCAPE, PRODUCES A PROJECT OF EXCEPTIONAL ELEGANCE.

Nigel Peck Centre for Learning & Leadership,
Melbourne Grammar School, Victoria

Architect:
John Wardle Architects

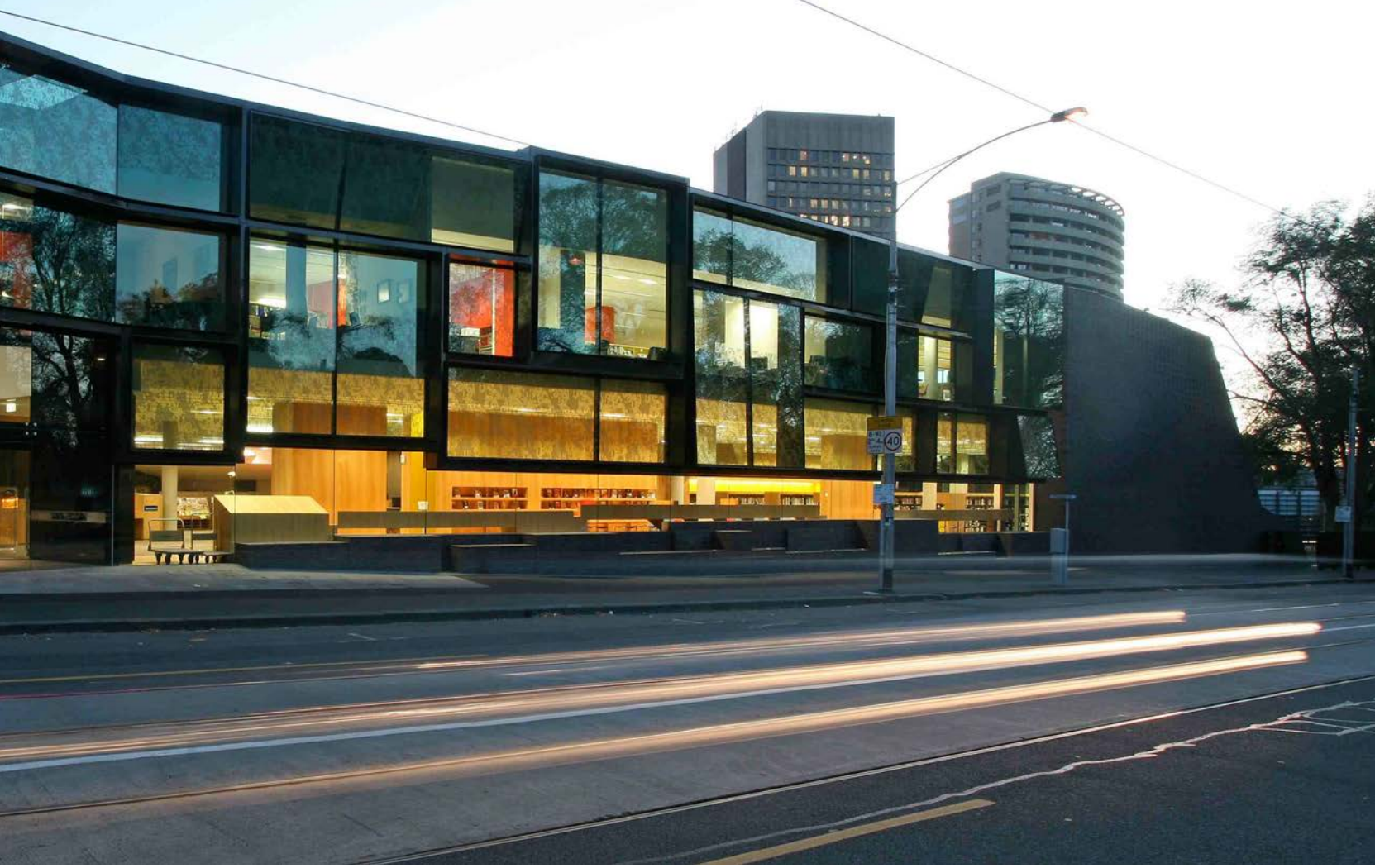
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SECURITY



Above
Gallery style study spaces
suffused with patterned light
of leaf and fritted glazing.

Right
Historic bluestone school
reflected in wing of the new.



THE MOMENT YOU
STEP INTO THE PORTAL
IT IMMEDIATELY PAYS
REFERENCE TO THAT
HISTORIC HEART OF
THE CAMPUS.

John Wardle,
Principal Architect



Over three levels, it incorporates a basement/ theatre, administrative offices, numerous meeting and classrooms and a vast library that un-scrolls across two levels. Rather than merely meditative and monastic voids, a series of mezzanine spaces and crystalline edges divine a whole new attitude and outlook to the olde-world view of academia.

John Wardle Architects demonstrates scrupulous care to ensure the firm's design narrative remains intact to create thrilling volumes, airy staircases, masterful brickwork and sublime glazing. The result of an international design competition, its enduring modernity is testament to emphasis placed on poetic function.

John Wardle Architects principals John Wardle and Stefan Mees discussed the project with Vision:

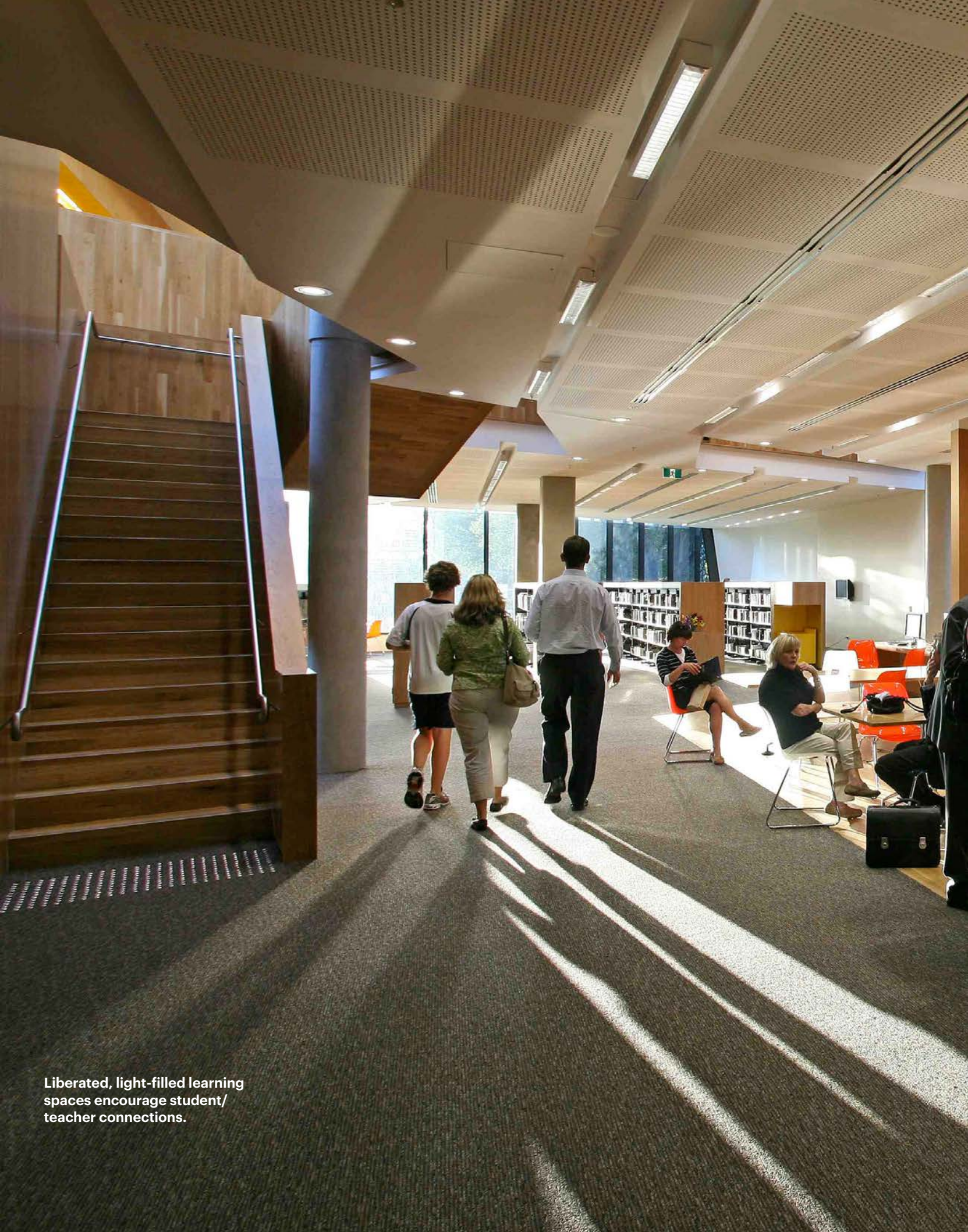
This project has an incredibly transparent, chrysalis-like, quality.

We worked closely with Viridian who delivered amongst the largest units of Australian manufactured double-glazing in this massive, suspended 'ashlar' front facade. We take that knowledge from the largest projects down to the smallest in terms of attributes and performance of glass.

The street elevation expression is exceptional.

JW: It starts with the massive glass entry and the way in which it aligns with the two points of the western facade of the quadrangle building. The moment you step into the portal it immediately pays reference to that historic heart of the campus. The massive façade along Domain Road is ashlar in its composition referring to the irregular geometrical composition of the Victorian-era ashlar bluestone walls on campus and translated as contemporary interpretation rendered in glass and steel. The other interesting thing about those multiple portal windows is that internally it produced a series of vantage points rather than one single view. The engagement here is much more compartmentalized and it re-orders the composition of the vast panorama of the domain.

SM: One of the other interesting aspects of the glazing is that we tilted the glass in one direction or another so that they are not only fragmented, but angled and that ends up altering the flat reflection so that in some you catch trees across the road and in others the sky.



Liberated, light-filled learning spaces encourage student/teacher connections.



Right

Main entrance employs the glass lantern effect of filtered, dappled shade.

“IT’S A GOOD TIME
TO BE DOING
ARCHITECTURE IN
THAT THERE ARE
UNPRECEDENTED
POSSIBILITIES.”

Stefan Mees,
Principal Architect JWA

There’s physical and design light and shade rather than as the one-trick pony. There are many small moments and details that add an appreciable grain.

SM: We really tried to layer and drape the detailing and this is very evident along Domain Road where there is the combination of steel and glass and that layered quality that also has the fritted glass pattern. Behind that again is some very careful joinery so hopefully it’s something that provides plenty of additional, subsequent readings. Similarly the bricks were specially fired at the top of the kiln to get that particular colour and those things all add to overall texture.

You could have easily saved costs by going for a much cheaper glass and cheaper brickwork for instance?

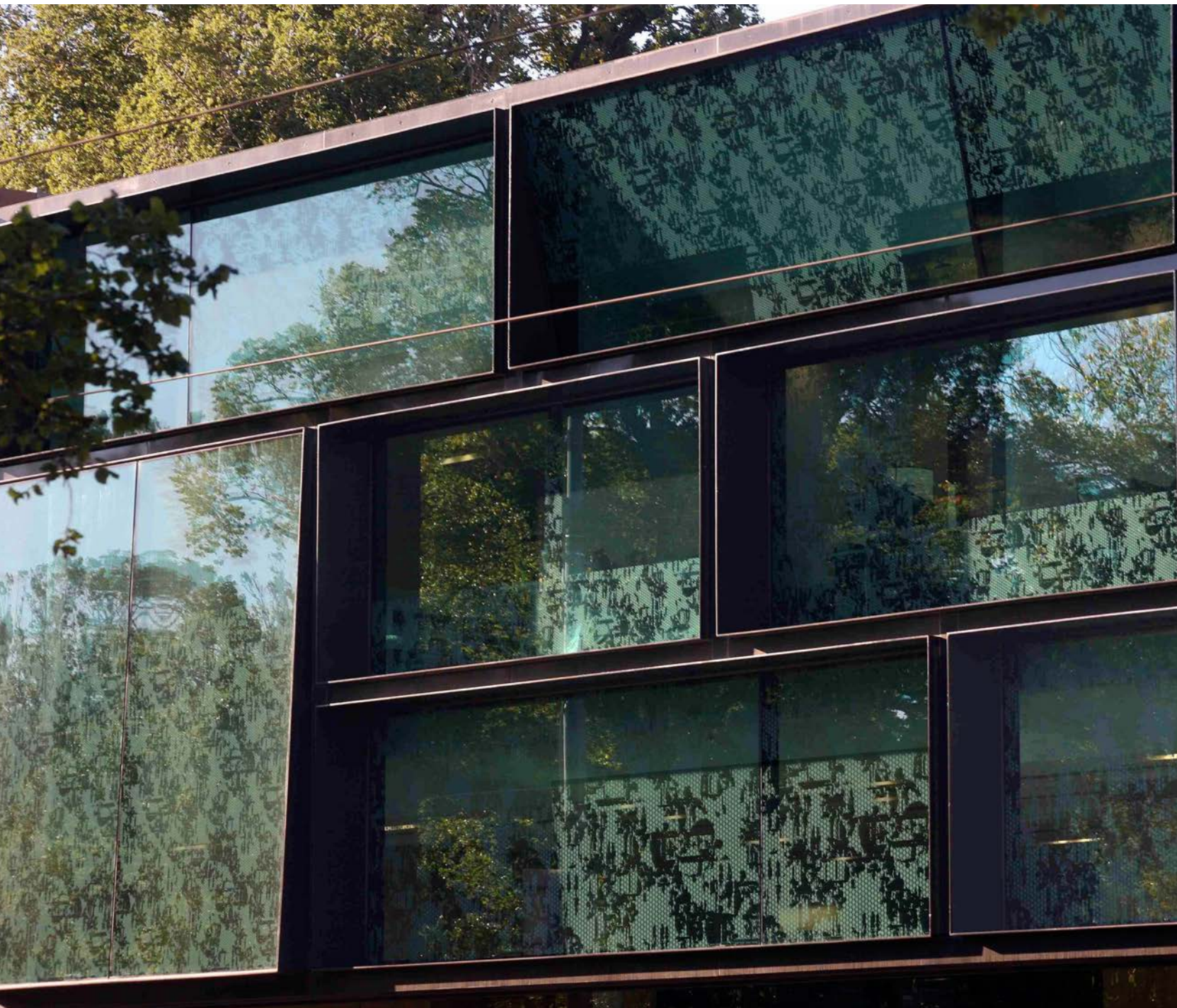
JW: Yes and yet they are the principal elements of the construction and represent a vast array of construction technologies, each exemplifying an intense level of craftsmanship. Over time there will be maintenance and operational savings because of their very high performance values and durability.

The early modernists could only dream about the kind of materials you use here. The glass is really beautiful with its tint, frit and varying dimensions. What was once a fantasy is now a reality.

SM: It’s a good time to be doing architecture in that there are unprecedented possibilities. The two main glass panels that frame the year 12 area are huge. They weigh around 700kgs each and I understand they are among the largest, single panes of glass on any project in Australia. We borrowed the biggest crane available in Melbourne to lower those steel portals into place. The steelwork cantilevers at least half a metre or so off the structure and really cradles the glass beyond the envelope, so there is that technology of presenting the glass as a veil rather than simply a curtain wall facade.

Specialist facade advice provided
by Con Kantis of Viridian.







Architect's Statement

This expansive centre presents a public face for an esteemed private school. It invites the community, reveals the learning activities of students and expresses a collaborative experience.

A series of variously glazed and linked pavilions run adjacent to a main thoroughfare and extend the existing heritage listed 19th century blue stone elevation to embody our central design idea of a transparent campus wall. Our design creates a new campus entry, consolidates the school's library facilities and provides supporting lecture theatre and seminar rooms that create a learning focused campus centre.

This building is open to its surrounding environment, exposing the process of learning to the community whilst establishing visual and physical connection to the existing campus buildings, adjacent park and gardens, and an enormous historic elm tree. By contrast, the western most end is abstract and monumental, a solid but delicately detailed brick facade that symbolizes the collection of books it encloses.

Behind this edge building, an auditorium is pulled out from the plan so that the roof for this space becomes an external amphitheatre - a sporting pavilion - that faces onto one of the ovals. Inside the main library building and against the glazed facade, a massive linear plank shifts alignment and size to become seating and desks, group learning zones and then a new collections area. Revealing the learning environment, these series of choreographed activities transform the building threshold to become dynamic and permeable. This building curates a journey of learning and discovery revealing the architecture and the surrounds to both the students and community alike.

2012 Winner Interior Category Harmonic Convergence

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Important Dates for Your Entry

1. Design and architectural projects must have been completed between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2013 to be considered for this contest.
2. Submissions will close on April 30th, 2014 at 11:59 p.m.
3. Winning designs will be featured at Glasstec 2014, the world's largest glass event, located in Düsseldorf, Germany.

The Jury

Winners will be determined by a jury made up of leaders from the international architectural and design industry including:



Joanna Sikes - Director of External Affairs at the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Washington



Angelo Derenze - Presidente of Casa Cor in Sao Paulo, Brazil



Andrew Moor - Principal of Andrew Moor Associates in London



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