

Concrete

Art
Design
Architecture

Design Tasmania



Design Tasmania honours and acknowledges the *palawa*
people as the traditional owners and custodians of
lutruwita.

As we meet here on their unceded lands, we pay respects
to Elders, past and present.

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Concrete: art design architecture is a major exhibition exploring innovative ways that concrete is being used by artists, designers and architects in Australia in the 21st century. Curated by JamFactory's Margaret Hancock Davis (Curatorial Director) and Brian Parkes (CEO), the exhibition includes 21 artists, designers and architects from across Australia and brings together products, projects and works of art that reflect many of the current preoccupations with concrete within contemporary art, design and architecture in Australia.



Glenn Murcutt + Hakan Elevi: *The Australian Islamic Centre*, Melbourne, Victoria, 2017

The Australian Islamic Centre is contemporary rather than designed in a traditional Arabic or Ottoman style. Glenn Murcutt's discussions with his client community revealed they wanted a mosque relevant to their current lives; more open and transparent, an accessible building for all visitors both Muslim and non-Muslim. Their new mosque is a white two-storey concrete building set well back from the street.

Newport's Islamic community is aware of Islam's struggle with its public image in this country. Hoping to change those perceptions through architecture they wanted an inviting and open building, more transparent and inclusive than traditional mosques. Newport's Mosque is stage one of a three-stage development called the Australian Islamic Centre, which will eventually have public spaces and a library, a restaurant and cafe and several meeting teaching spaces.

Murcutt used a limited range of materials in the mosque for greater cohesion of design. While concrete is the main material for construction and most interior finishes, blue glass walls and clear windows provide day light. Wood, metal and coloured light add contrast and patterning, while gold and water are symbolic materials traditionally part of Islamic mosques.

Gold is an exception for Murcutt's design philosophy as it is not a construction material. Gold in Islam embodies the yellow colour of sunrise and Paradise, meaning the Future. Murcutt added gold to a few key locations in the mosque: the gold crescent-moon at the highest point of the entrance wall pinnacle and in giant gold wall-texts, made with embossed calligraphy, on several interior walls.







Baldasso Cortese Architects: *Tarrawarra Abbey*, Victoria, 2016

A fire resistant concrete bunker-residence has been added to an existing monastery site of wooden buildings. The new bunker has work rooms, a gymnasium, a tailors' room, kitchen and bathrooms. Tarrawarra Abbey is a monastery home for 16 Cistercian (a Catholic order) monks set on 400 hectares of grazing land at Yarra Glen in Victoria's Yarra Valley, 60 kilometres north-east of Melbourne.

Monasteries are secluded self-sufficient residential quarters for religious communities, often including food gardens, work places for income-generating activities and spaces for study, guests and worship.



Baldasso Cortese Architects: *Tarrawarra Abbey*, Victoria, 2016

Baldasso Cortese's signature style explores qualities in their structural materials and devises interesting lighting in large airy spaces. Their philosophy insists that structural materials like steel, glass, wood and concrete are celebrated as key elements in the finished appearance of their work.

Sustainability features of Tarrawarra's bunker are embodied in its intended longevity and fire proofing design. As well as being fire resistant, concrete's thermal mass enables temperature control during the day by regulating ambient temperatures to a comfortable level for most of the year.

Reduced energy consumed from the grid (by being self generated) for heating and cooling the new building is also achieved by insulating against temperature loss or gain by several strategies: the thick concrete walls; by building directly onto the ground; by cladding the rooms under a thick turf roof and by setting the new rooms partially underground.



Candelapas Associates: *Punchbowl Mosque*, Sydney, New South Wales, 2018

This mosque is on a quiet residential street in Sydney's south west, a culturally diverse area where 35% of the population identify as Muslim. Following years of patient struggle seeking permission to build their Australian Islamic Mission, Punchbowl's Muslim community was eventually able to commission an architect in 2008. Then in 2018, after ten more years of building work this mosque opened to launch their centre. The whole centre provides a moral focus for worship and social meetings, with its masjid, courtyards and a primary school all serviced by an underground carpark.

Surprisingly the community chose a Greek Orthodox architect, Candalepas and his Associates, to design their mosque. Despite having early doubts about working for a different religious group than his own, Angelo Candalepas was encouraged to accept their faith in him by his own mentor. He immediately embraced the cross-cultural exchange with his client community, patiently working collaboratively over the next ten years to satisfy their requirements.

“The mosque posed a unique challenge to respect the sacred traditions of the Islamic faith as described by the qiblah wall facing Mecca and the minbar (like a pulpit), rising high to address worshippers and observe the planning guidelines and height restrictions of the red brick and tile suburb. The result is one in which the traditional wedding cake mosque with its high minarets and dome sitting on top of a cube has been reinvented.”⁵



CHEB: *CHEB Concrete product*, 2018

CHEB'S collection of concrete tableware at first appears simple and bland as the raw base material has no embellishments. Objects appear unfinished with every detail of their casting mould evident on their exterior surface. The varying cylindrical proportions of the plates, candle holders and tall vases are contrasted by the more angular objects in the collection, maybe for holding cutlery or serviettes. This tableware would be ideal for outdoor use and keeping the table cloth firmly in place on the table.

CHEB's tableware is made from concrete include bowls, dishes, candle-holders and vases, with a raw finish; no polishing finishes their pieces. The only post-casting process they use is rubbing the leather hard concrete items across the concrete floor in their workshop to level the base.

The tableware was cast using a general-purpose industrial panel grout using a blend of Portland cement, high grade very fine aggregates and additives. The fine quality of this concrete mix is ideal for hand finishing jobs like filling small holes or gaps in concrete construction work to get a high grade finish. CHEB use only readily available materials such as cardboard and ducting tape to make their moulds for casting. They are quite at ease with their tableware bearing the surface characteristics of the materials used in their construction. The unique surfaces are only achieved due to the type of concrete used which is known for its ability to record every detail of its casting mould.



“Cholewa and Jones both have a history in developing and producing hand-made products for retail sale and domestic use. Their evolving interest in and experiences with concrete through their public art projects have led to more recent experiments with casting concrete to create small-scale functional and sculptural pieces to add to CHEB’S existing product line, which include pieces in glass, ceramic, timber and fabric.”

Margaret Hancock Davis ⁶



Adam Goodrum: *Concrete Bench for Ovolo Nishi (formerly Hotel Hotel)*, Canberra, 2014

Adam Goodrum's fascination with building 'things' started at an early age in the family's back shed making objects to support his surfing lifestyle. Currently recognised internationally as one of Australia's leading Industrial designers Goodrum often acknowledges the role played by his early love of making objects and the importance of those foundations to his personal design philosophy.

Goodrum has created a large concrete slab which sits on two finely sculpted fin-like legs whose delicate angular edges provide a contrast to the solid qualities of the bench top. He has applied no finish to the raw concrete surface making it serviceable for its placement in an outdoor environment in Canberra City centre. The knee high bench is placed to complement nearby concrete seats which together provide an all weather outdoor utilitarian facility for the general public.



Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, *David*, 2018

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah is an Australian born Muslim who took up his artistic direction late after already having an establishing career as a highly skilled model maker. It was personal issues in his private life, particularly relating to his faith that prompted his move towards art. He needed to find a way to express the feelings which he had carried since his late childhood.

Abdullah used concrete as his medium for this monumental portrait bust of his friend David as he felt the density of this stone-like material captured some of the strength and uncompromising nature needed by a professional boxer. His friend had been fighting in the ring for 25 years and now owns the boxing gym where Abdullah did his Qantas Award residency. Abdullah has captured all the evidence of David's violent past in his angular features and the boxers trademark broken nose.

The masculinity of this portrait bust is subtly countered by the delicacy of the gold chain around David's neck. David is placed on a plinth to be at eye level looking into the face of the viewer as he would face off his opponent before their fight. Captured staring into the face of his future combatant David, known as 'The Iceman' in the ring, adopted this steely eyed technique, used by all boxers to break down their opponent's confidence.



Megan Cope, *RE FORMATION part 3 (Dubbagullee)*, 2017

Megan Cope is an Indigenous artist whose cultural origins are the basis of her artworks. Cope has investigated the historical colonial treatments of Australia's First People and the injustices which are often overlooked and perpetuated by the white population.

As an Indigenous woman Megan Cope wants to tell truth her artworks. The core of her practice is to reveal the constant and unashamed acts by colonial administrators of ignoring all signs of pre-colonial Aboriginal settlements. Her art alludes to the systematic destruction of sites which were of social and economic importance to local indigenous populations. Another aspect that concerns her is the fact that existing Aboriginal place names are never acknowledged. The ignoring of existing site names by early settlers was another part in the process of removing all signs of original ownership of their newly acquired land.

To make the many hundreds of shells needed to recreate her 'midden' installation, Cope hand-cast her shells by pouring concrete into moulds cast from real shells. Once the concrete had set her 'fake' shells were removed from their moulds now much heavier replicas of the original natural specimens.



“I’m not limited to particular forms or material. In lots of ways I’m a conceptual artist and the things that are paramount to or at the forefront of my practice are issues relating to identity, history, politics and, in particular, Aboriginal people’s disposition in Australia. For me it’s more important that the material most accurately articulates the point of what I am trying to address or discuss in the work”

*Megan Cope*⁹

Elvis Richardson, *Elvis Richardson*, 2018

Elvis Richardson's personal commitment is to achieve greater equality for women artists, particularly in the highly competitive local and international art worlds. Her art works explore this theme by commenting on how women artists struggle to be recognised.

Richardson lives and works in a social context she believes is unfair to women artists. Her art works address this situation by highlighting how uncelebrated women artists are in this society. In her Trophy Art series Richardson combined a diversity of found materials in strange assemblages to make her feminist statements. Her Elvis Richardson plaque, partly inspired by collected media and historic publicity material around Hollywood stars, connects directly to her larger theme of Trophy Art.

Richardson applies a detective-like approach to her collecting for her artwork by foraging for old photographs and mass media images along with old slides from op-shops, eBay and other recycling sources. Her interest in detective stories began at an early age when she started reading famous stories about detectives like Sherlock Holmes, Poirot and Miss Marple.

The items collected are often determined by issues occurring in her own life. They provide clues into unknown people's lives that inspire her own stories, which are later transformed into works of art.

Richardson's adult life has been focused on analysing social concerns such as inequalities experienced by women and girls. She explores career strategies used by artists for creating success and star-status for themselves.

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“Terrazzo is the most fabulous form of concrete. Known for its durability, pastel colours and bright stone aggregate, it is synonymous with the Hollywood Walk of Fame. With its historic roots in Egyptian and Italian building practices, terrazzo gained favour in Australian domestic architecture from the 1920s to 1950s and many brightly coloured bathrooms in the Australian suburbs still stand as a sparkling reminder of that period. Terrazzo elevates the everyday suburban experience towards Hollywood glamour. In Richardson’s hands, it speaks materially to identity, recognition and fame within the visual art industry.”

*Margaret Hancock Davis*¹⁰



JamFactory, Adelaide

Adelaide's present JamFactory was designed to rehouse the original Jam Factory workshops that were established by the State Government in the 1970s, in an old jam factory in Payneham, Adelaide in South Australia.

Now established in purpose built accommodation in the city, JamFactory has matured into a nationally admired centre for excellence in design and workshop manufacture, as envisioned by South Australian Premier, Don Dunstan, over forty years ago.

JamFactory now comprises four major training workshops, plus rentable studio spaces for tenants and sophisticated retail and gallery spaces. Each workshop focuses on exploring its core material, either clay (ceramics), glass, metal or wood. Workshops design and manufacture individually commissioned works and products for retail sale. Supervised by a Consultant Designer each workshop trains several associates who are graduate trainees of tertiary courses. Encouraged to develop their own practices, their individual works are often sold in the JamFactory retail outlet.

The Context: how the Jam Factory Workshops started

Over sixty years ago, during the 1950s and 1960s, a perception emerged in Australia that craft and design had an important role to play in the cultural and economic life of the Australian nation. By 1971 a Federal Government initiative, called the National Committee of Enquiry into the Crafts, published findings that led to the creation of The Australia Council in 1973. The Australia Council, through its various boards, began developing policies that created and supported opportunities for craftspeople. This development coincided with trends within South Australia in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, for establishing design and craft education to support artisan industries emerging around the state.

Locally several factors led to the growth of craft and design, including an increasing number of Adelaide galleries exhibiting fine craft and design, the influence of South Australian School of Art lecturers such as Alex Leckie, Margaret Douglas, Helen Macintosh and Milton Moon and the professional development opportunities created by the newly formed Australia Council Crafts Board. By the beginning of the 1970s increasing support was growing within the South Australian art/craft/ design community, and in government, for a programme or organization that would become the focus and key support agency for craft/design education and industry.

In 1972, the South Australian Premier Don Dunstan, through the Premier's Department, commissioned a comprehensive study of 'design and craft industries in South Australia'. The reporting committee recommended (amongst other initiatives) that a government initiated 'Craft Authority' be created to establish a craft and design training workshop in Adelaide.

Credit

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IMAGES:

1. Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, David, 2018. edition of 6 plus AP concrete, enamel, oxide. Photo: Abdul-Rahman Abdullah Courtesy of the artist and Moore Contemporary.
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5. Baldasso Cortese Architects, Tarrawarra Abbey, Fire Shelter, 2016. Yarra Glen, Victoria. Photo: Peter Clarke
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