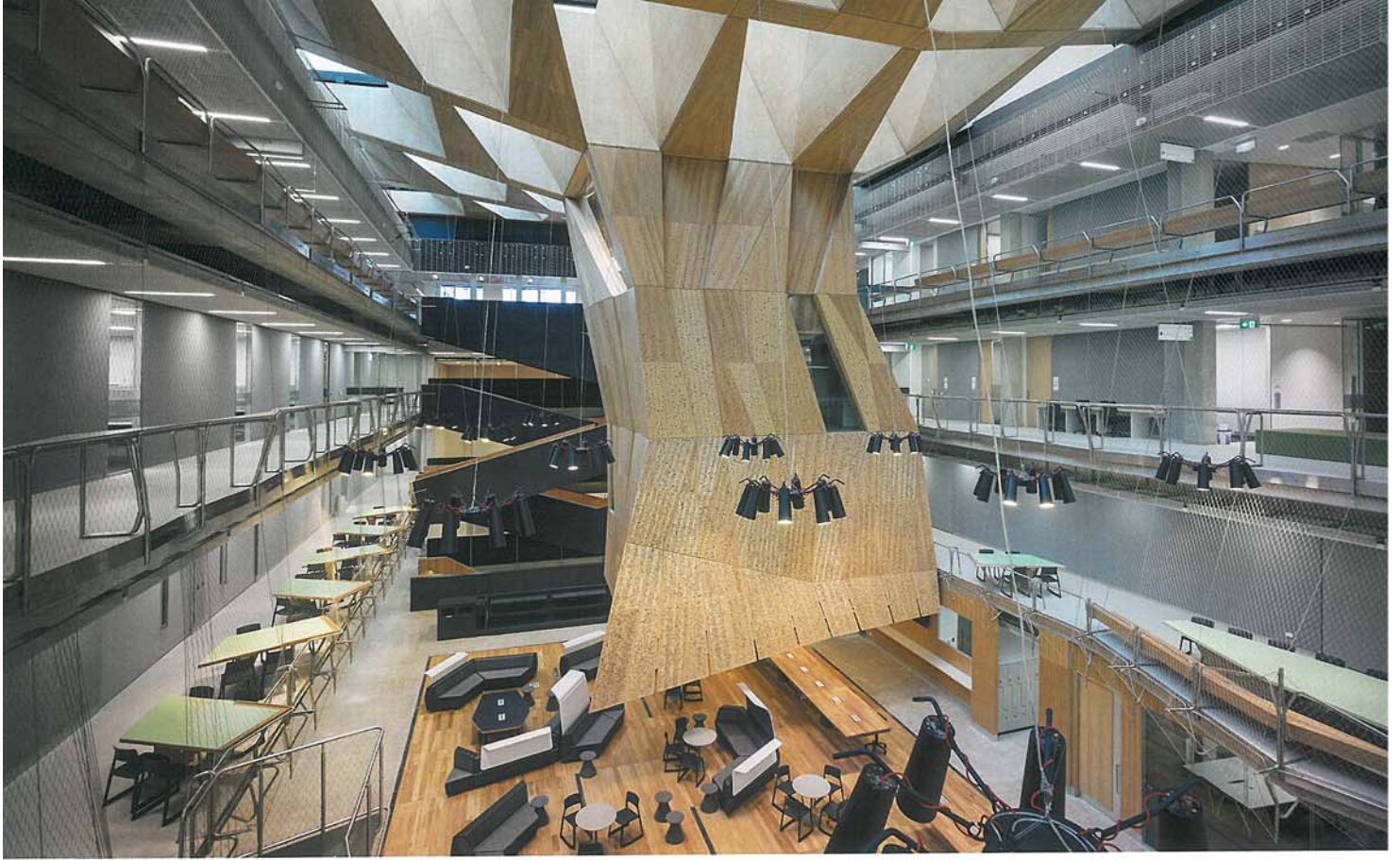


# ENHANCED LEARNING

The Melbourne School of Design caters for a new generation of educators and students. Here, its faculty members explain how it meets their brief.

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PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN GOLLINGS, JAMES RAFFERTY  
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LOCATION MELBOURNE | AUS**





Institutions that operate with the traditions of decades and centuries are challenged for any faculty to be provided the opportunity to create a new purpose. In this instance, the opportunity was at the heart of the campus, so the goal was not to create simply a home for disciplines embraced within the Melbourne School of Design (MSD), from policy formulation to project delivery, but also an opportunity for an approach to research and learning that encourages interdisciplinary engagement and innovation.

In the past eight years, the undergraduate curricula of the MSD have been fundamentally rewritten to prepare graduates collaboratively with their communities and professions and their particular bodies of knowledge. In creating a graduate school, the MSD afforded the opportunity for students to engage in deep study in their chosen profession, learning in both formal and informal learning environments with peers in one of the other five programs.

To support this across all six disciplines, we devised subjects that introduce students to the results of scholarship, the professional practice, and immerse them in the challenges of the field. The basis of studio learning, this practice is common across design schools, yet few buildings support open peer-engaged learning that this design school does.

After two years of curriculum review and consultation, beginning with the first year of teaching the new curriculum, we engaged in a thorough, year-long process of spatial needs. Extensive consultation with faculty and students led to a very detailed design program, not only of specific functional requirements, but also, and importantly, an articulation of how space supports these outcomes. As an academic institution, the challenge in teaching and research, the challenge





translate these aspirations into purposeful experience. For this, we reduced the lengthy user needs specification down to four phrases that captured our intent. The project was framed as one in which to explore the future of the academic workplace; to investigate the future of studio as a place; to deliver a living building; and to create a pedagogical building. With this framing, we established the project as a research opportunity for the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, home of the MSD. While all four facets of our project informed our decisions, hindsight shows that it was the latter that was most powerful.

An international competition was run to find a research partner, attracting 134 entries. While a building form was described in the competition entries, it was not the basis for selection by the jury. We sought not a form but an understanding of the partnership that could develop between the informed client (ourselves) and the consultant team. Selection of consultants and contractor subsequent to the competition was conducted on the same basis – how would they work with us as research partners. A key step too was to quarantine one per cent of the budget for innovation, the sum drawn down only when the whole team agreed that the innovation proposed in the design was worthy of support.

The building, completed four months early, demonstrates the success of this approach. The central atrium is a manifestation of discussions of the future of studio learning. Peer engagement on ill-formed questions, the fundament of studio, is openly practiced at the tables in and surrounding the atrium on two floors. The mesh barrier ensures that conversations and sight lines are unobstructed. There is ample space for collaboration in spaces that can be reinterpreted for different purposes. The entrances to the building welcome everyone to come through, appreciating activities on the ground



Windows of the student lounge  
 close inspection of the 1856  
 SW façade by Joseph Reed  
 : ABOVE The 20 x 60 metre  
 animated on three levels by  
 f by the classrooms  
 d in the void  
 : BELOW Deep coffers brace  
 box beams from which the  
 d classrooms are slung  
 ie articulated soffit under the  
 d rooms creates an intimate  
 hin the large atrium  
 e raw structure exposed on  
 'side of the elegantly finished  
 ig stairs reveals the  
 tion process





level the library and the workshops and passing the galleries where our work is shown.

Casual visitors and knowledgeable professionals are engaged alike in the use of a range of materials and their detailing. The robust strength of the main staircase is revealed by leaving the underside untouched, the factory markings still there. A second steel stair of folded plate, in the atrium, traces the line to the second floor with comparative elegance.

The research value of the project has already been confirmed. The building readily earned its 6 Star Green Star award, the only building to achieve this with all 10 Innovation Points awarded. It is a teaching tool; it is easy to teach all aspects of design, from conceptualisation through delivery, by walking around the building. Delivered for less than the cost of the average academic building, the structure demonstrates how budget decisions can support good design; frugal aspects of the building such as the simply detailed yet high performing façade have allowed for the richly detailed atrium shared by all. Most importantly though, it is the exterior spaces of the building that have brought the most to the university. The building has revitalised the core of the campus and enhances the learning experience of all students, invigorating our academic community.

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*Andrew Hutson is Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne.*

## MELBOURNE SCHOOL OF DESIGN

**COLLABORATING ARCHITECT** John Wardle Architects

**PROJECT TEAM** John Wardle, Stefan Mee

**COLLABORATING ARCHITECT** NADAAA

**PROJECT TEAM** Nader Tehrani, John Cho

**INTERIOR DESIGN** John Wardle Architects and NADAAA

**HERITAGE ARCHITECTS** RBA Architects and Conservation Consultants

**TOTAL FLOOR AREA** 15,772m<sup>2</sup>

**JOHN WARDLE ARCHITECTS**  
johnwardlearchitects.com

**NADAAA**  
nadaaa.com

**FURNITURE** Furniture throughout: Jacaranda Industries, Schiavello, Steelcase, Stylecraft. Seating: Sebel Theatre Seating, Vitra, Space Furniture, Gregory Seating.

**LIGHTING** Lighting throughout: Eas Maxlight, Dean Philips. Lighting control systems: Eascom.

**FINISHES** Carpet throughout: Godf Hirst, Interface, Supertuft. Fabric finishes throughout: Kvadrat Maha. Flooring throughout: Forbo, Buch: Emotion. Glass throughout: Viridia Century Glass. Metal finishes throughout: Fabmetal, Jakob, Tensile Design & Construct, MacDonald Marine, Alucobond, Bluescope Lysaght. Paint throughout: Dulux. Windows, curtains and doors throughout: Seelite, Hu Vertilux.

**FIXED & FITTED** Sinks: Radiant, Stie Sinkware. Hydro tap: Zip. Plumbing water systems throughout: Syfon, Caroma, Astra Walker. Elevators: Thyssen Krupp Elevators.

For the full directory of supplier contacts, visit [indesignlive.com/dissections60](http://indesignlive.com/dissections60)



**ABOVE** Zinc louvers on north façade above 'outdoor room' in the landscaped campus. **LEFT** Book stacks in library are completed by the fair-faced in-situ wishbone beams illuminated by soft south light.