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2005 World Exposition
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AUSTRALIAN PAVILION

THE AUSTRALIAN PAVILION AT THE 2005
WORLD EXPOSITION IN AICHI, JAPAN,
BY STUDIO 505 AND THINK! OTS.

words
MARCUS BAUMGART



¹/BY DAY THE LASER-CUT FACADE PANELS SHIMMER WITH REFLECTED LIGHT, AND BY NIGHT THEY GLOW FROM WITHIN.

²/THE PAVILION HAS A THREE PART JOURNEY. ACT ONE: THE PAST: BOAB STORY

³/ACT TWO: THE PRESENT: DATA FOREST.

⁴/ACT THREE: THE FUTURE: THE PLATYPUS.



× design statement

Studio 505 worked hand in hand with the pavilion creative director and exhibition designers Think! OTS to produce the basic outline of the pavilion content and structure. Utilizing the theme of the Exposition, Natures Wisdom, and the three sub-themes – Natures Matrix, The Art of Life, and the Development of Eco-Communities – the design team created a show in three acts, representing the past, the present and the future.

The three acts cycle on a pulse, with each act receiving a new audience of approximately 120 people every three minutes. Continuity and flow were very important considerations in the design. Act One is a black box theatre with a major “peppers ghost” show created by Think! OTS.

Act Two is a gallery. Entry to the gallery is through a massive pair of automatic GRC clad acoustic doors. The doors disappear into the wall when they close, hiding the point of entry completely. The gallery is the highlight in terms of show content, performance and technology. A massive drum of carefully designed GRC panels clad the elliptical gallery. These panels enclose the room’s centrepiece, a “forest” of totem poles clad in plasma screens. The GRC panels weave in and out, creating a series of lighting, acoustic and material effects to enhance the content shown on screens. The floor is a spider web-like swirl of Australian timbers, enticing viewers and guests into the polished black granite heart of the data forest. The screens show images that pass continuously across their height and from totem to totem, creating an “environmental” screen to walk through, amongst and around.

Act Three contains the pavilion mascot, a massive sculpted platypus, and various sponsor information and message boards. From Act Three the visitor is guided through the retail area, the bar and bistro, and then to the outside. The pavilion housed a trade mission on an upper level VIP and trade floor. This area is a flexible function space to exhibit Australian products, design and innovation.

Studio 505

The first decision the designers of the Australian Pavilion at the 2005 World Exposition in Aichi, Japan had to make was one of diplomacy. The participants in the Expo, which was organized geographically on the site, were given generic cubic buildings as the basis of their national pavilions. In a reflection of Australia’s geographic situation, our pavilion found itself in the company of our poorer neighbours, many of whom were also suffering the economic effects of the recent devastating tsunami. In light of this disparity a decision was taken early on to avoid costly reconstruction or alterations to the basic pavilion that would symbolically or visually set us apart from the neighbouring nations.

This parsimonious approach inspired the key element of the external design, an applied grand ornamental panel that takes on a different character by day and by night. Members of fledgling architecture practice Studio 505 worked on the facade teams for Melbourne’s epic Federation Square. The practice possesses a level of highly specialized technical knowledge and expertise that is unusual in a young practice, and they were able to bring the full extent of this knowledge to bear on the problem at hand.

The result is a highly ornamental series of panels composed of perforated stainless steel sheets bonded to a proprietary polycarbonate substrate system. The stainless steel is laser-cut into an exuberant display of floral and star-like shapes, and while largely abstract, the Southern Cross and other constellations of our night sky are discernible to the observant visitor. By day the panels shimmer with reflected light, and by night they glow from within, creating a magical and ephemeral display.

Moving into the pavilion takes the visitor into the first part of a three-part journey, jointly designed by Studio 505 and project partner Think! OTS. This first act, representing the past or Nature’s Matrix, is essentially a black box where the visitor is presented with a visual narrative centred on a giant boab tree. Lightning, rain, thunder and fire create a dynamic sensory experience in the blacked-out space, and at the end of the narrative the screen folds up into the ceiling and a pair of large doors open up into the second chamber.

The second part of the journey represents the present, or the Art of Life, and consists of a three-storey-high volumetric drum with a data forest at its centre. The data forest comprises a series of totems wrapped in plasma screens that display a range of shifting images in a cycle. This element is

metaphorical of our contemporary immersion in information, equally informative and overwhelming, comprehensive and fragmented.

The data forest chamber is walled in modular panels of glass-reinforced concrete with an automotive grade finish, creating an extraordinary sense of enclosure and materiality. The pattern of the GRC panels creates an enfolding basket-like weave around the chamber. The absence of parallel surfaces creates excellent acoustics in the space. The floor of the chamber is finished in a selection of dark and light Australian timbers in a spiral pattern, and at the heart of the chamber, beneath the data forest totems, is a highly reflective black granite, which hints at the infinite extension of the totems in space.

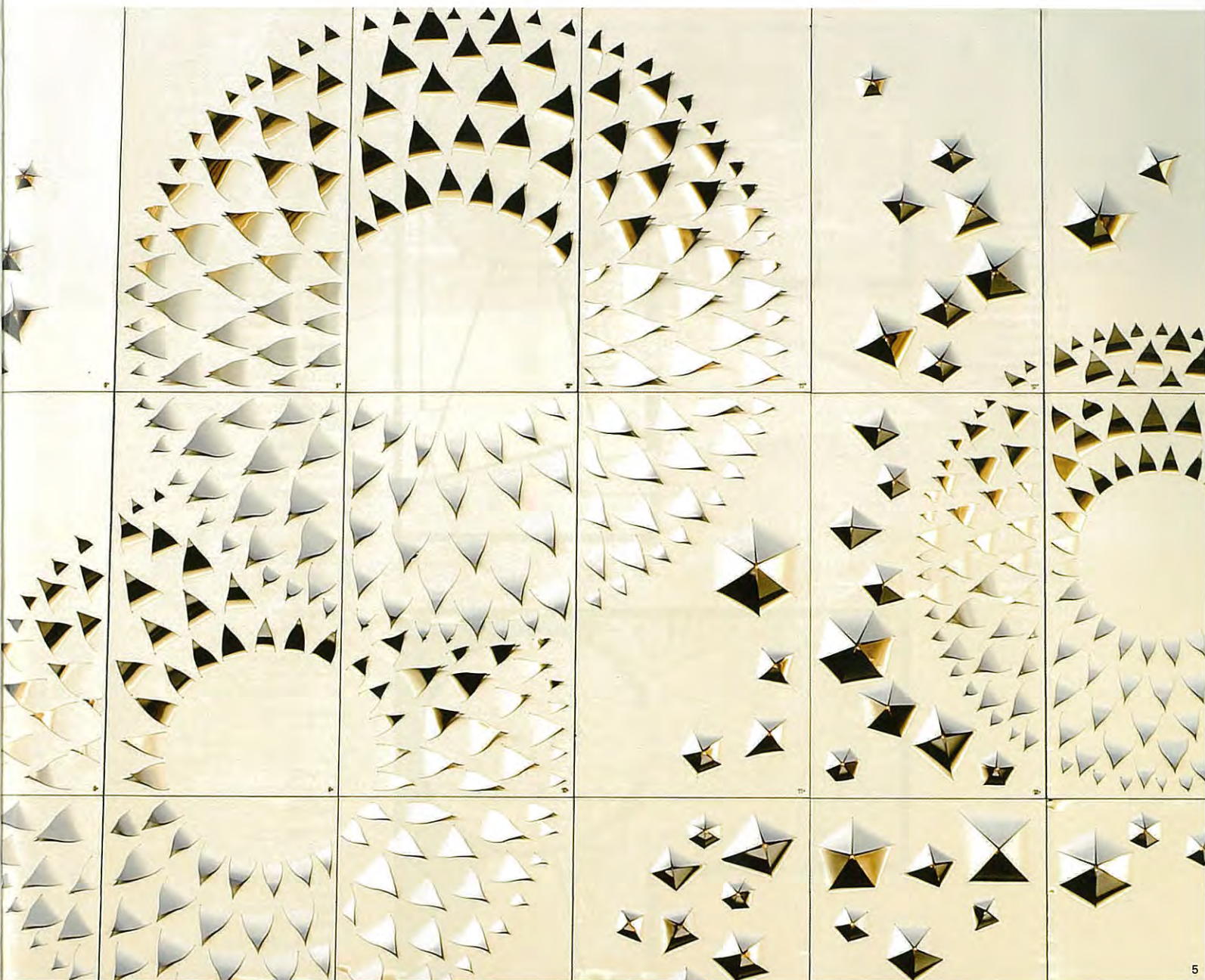
Upon leaving the second chamber the visitor enters the third and final part of the narrative, the future – the Eco Communities room. This room, a clear favourite with Japanese visitors, contains Kamone the giant platypus. Children are encouraged to sit on Kamone’s tail and watch a video presentation on an adjacent screen. Ultimately Kamone is symbolic of the key message of the pavilion: she is delicate in her reliance on a balanced ecosystem, and yet resilient – the platypus has been around for millions of years. The surreal, giant creature forms a link back to the past, neatly ending our journey where we began – in the presence of antiquity. To cap off the visit, the participant is invited to take a bite out of another equally ancient species, with the purchase of a crocodile burger adjacent to the gift shop. You’ve seen the country, now taste the wildlife!

The real business of the expo is conducted upstairs on the trade floor. This space overlooks the data forest chamber through a large window that would not be out of place on the set of Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*. A collection of meeting rooms and offices surround the trade floor. In these spaces the designers have carefully employed colour, and printed fabrics and wallpapers based on the flamboyant designs of the late Florence Broadhurst.

As a showcase for national talent and product the Australian Expo Pavilion would appear to be disarmingly modest, and yet it is resoundingly successful. The pavilion won the Exposition’s Silver Award – the first time an Australian entry has won an award at an international exposition. More than this, the pavilion design is proof that the experience and knowledge created by a major project, such as Melbourne’s Federation Square, can contribute to the broader knowledge pool within a local community of practitioners.

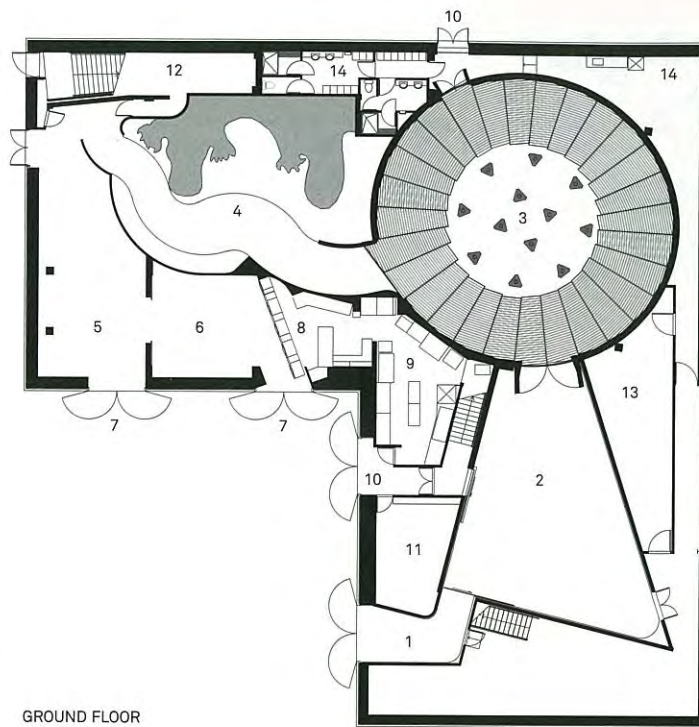
⁵/THE SOUTHERN CROSS AND OTHER CONSTELLATIONS OF AUSTRALIA’S NIGHT SKY ARE DISCERNIBLE IN THE PATTERN OF THE FACADE.

⁶⁺⁷/THE TRADE FLOOR WAS DESIGNED TO BE A FLEXIBLE FUNCTION SPACE.

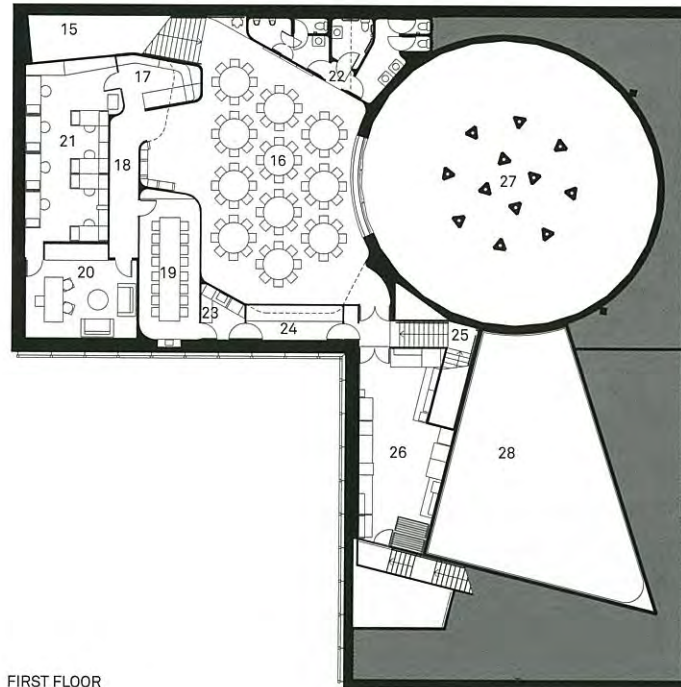


key

- 1 Public entry
- 2 Act One: The Past: boab story
- 3 Act Two: The Present: data forest
- 4 Act Three: The Future: the platypus
- 5 Retail shop
- 6 Food and bar
- 7 Public exits
- 8 Servery
- 9 Ground floor kitchen
- 10 Staff entry
- 11 Cool rooms
- 12 Back of house areas
- 13 Control room
- 14 Staff amenities
- 15 VIP trade floor entrance
- 16 Trade floor function space
- 17 Reception
- 18 Art hall
- 19 Nemawashi meeting room
- 20 Commissioner General's office
- 21 General offices
- 22 Male, female and disabled toilets
- 23 Interpreters booth
- 24 Bar and servery
- 25 VIP show entrance and staff access
- 26 Upstairs kitchen
- 27 Void to Act Two: The Present: data forest
- 28 Void to Act One: The Past: boab story



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



- × **project**
Australian Pavilion
2005 World Expo
Aichi Japan
- × **designers**
Studio 505, Think! OTS
- × **design practice**
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Facade artist (in collaboration):
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Design and documentation:
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Chris Guest, Tom Sloan
- × **design practice**
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Julie Squires
Producers: Tim McMahon, Anne
Sykes, Fiona McInerney
- × **time frame**
Design and documentation:
4 months
Construction: 6 months
- × **consultants**
Brunton and Brunton.
Arup Tokyo. Wizard Projects.
Van der Meer Consulting. PFM
Cost Planners. Hyder Consulting.
Light Designs Australia
- × **construction**
Japan:
Delphys Inc. Taisei. Hirano Steel.
Tokai. Katsumura Construction
Australia:
Glenn Industries. GRC.
- × **products**
flooring
Interloc timber floor panels.
Tretford carpet. Edwardstown
carpet. Creative Weave rug
walls
Glenn Industries GRC panels
window
Glassform laminated curved
glass. Unique Bending aluminium
curved angles. Clear View film
door hardware
Raven. Dorma
furniture
Zuster Victorian ash tables,
benches and desks. Sakimoto
joinery. Ramler Pisa chairs
upholstered in Signature Prints
Japanese Fan fabric. King
Furniture Linea couches.
Stylecraft Soho chairs.
Tomahawk Campfire coffee table
bathroom
Reece Design Marc Newson
range. Interloc panelling.
Signature Prints Florence
Broadhurst range