

**Sacred Space as Patrons' Garden at Emmaus College Jimboomba 2012-2016****Design strategy & policy**

The notion that the natural environment can be a strong learning experience applies here.

The entire school campus is bordered on three sides by a federally proclaimed national heritage park. The park contains a species of plant life that is unique to Australia and the region and a number of covenants control the manner in which the school engages with its neighbouring property. The park is a natural resource for the school and numerous field trips are embedded into the extra-curriculum programme driven by the school.

Between the developed urban form on one hand and the raw natural environment on the other, strategically lies the idea of GARDEN.

Our design concept has been derived to express and exploit this idea. The garden is poetic. The garden oscillates between linking one's sensibility to spirit and/or science simultaneously. The garden is a place to be reflective, to play, to run, walk, sit, eat, meander and appreciate. The garden is a sacred space in all its aspects.

**Siting, Context & field**

The site is part of a master-planned campus laid out along an internal arrangement of pedestrian streets and roads.

The grouping of the junior middle and senior schools underscores a village atmosphere.

This privately owned multi-gender ecumenical school is situated in a rural setting south of Brisbane Queensland in a subtropical climate zone. The climate is warm and temperate with summer rainfall. The area is characterised by hot, usually humid summers and mild to cool winters.

The sloping site remained fallow for many years, as the campus developed around it. It is now bounded by the administration block, an assembly /multi-purpose hall and the entry driveway with pick-up and drop-off zones for buses and other traffic and has become a thoroughfare for hordes of pupils arriving in the morning and waiting for their bus in the afternoon.

**Formation & place making**

Our design resolves the inherent clash of purpose and use by setting out a walkway (ramped stairs) around the circumference of the garden thus defines its edge.

The ramped stairs of the peripheral walkway climbs the slope of the site and allows the internal space to be characterised with retaining wall terracing which forms a shallow amphitheatre of seating focussed on the 'stage' platform.

The planning form is based on an organic spiral geometry, which sinuously and seamlessly connects the stage to the terraces.

The school 'houses' patrons are represented by perforated discs with profiles and mottoes of their namesakes – a permanent set backdrops the stage and a temporary set marks the seating planning.

A bus top shelter has been planned and designed to complement and enclose the space.

**Soft & hard scaping**

The terrace walling are built as un-faced blockwork in counterpoint to the organic turf seating surfaces while the retaining walls are rendered black to de-materialize boundary edges.

All plant and trees species are indigenous and were carefully selected to represent the natural environments encountered across Australia rising from the coastal lowlands to the creeks in the highlands. Ground cover species range from dry to rainforest.

A number of educational projects are underway involving the labelling of each plant and tree with its food potential, history and meaning.

Concrete textures and colours support the botanical journey and help tie the sensorial experience of this garden together to its educational potential for its users.

**Statistics**

This project comprises a terraced garden and amphi-theatred enclosure defined by curved spiral ramped stairs and indigenous planting beds.

Built at a total cost of AUD \$300,000.00

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