

COLLINGWOOD YARDS

A unique Krause brick blend provides a contemporary addition to Collingwood Yards



Collingwood Yards is built on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. Occupying half a block of inner-city Collingwood, the former Collingwood Technical College - built circa 1920s-1940s - has been thoughtfully restored and rejuvenated by a formidable team to deliver an Australian first.

Collingwood Yards is a new arts precinct based on a self-sufficient funding model that offers secure and affordable tenancies for artists, arts organisations and creative enterprises, enabling them to remain in inner-city Melbourne.

This remarkable collaboration by the Contemporary Arts Precinct, a not-for-profit social enterprise, Fieldwork Architects and a dedicated team of design consultants has been a labour of love for more than four years. Following intense thought and planning, the team is excited to see it occupied and open to the public.

The project ties together the existing group of institutional buildings on the site to create an active precinct. With a limited budget, consideration and creativity were key.

"The existing buildings were in a state of disrepair, so a lot of the work was about bringing them up to contemporary standards of compliance ... For us, the design process was

about a light touch and making interventions only where necessary. Where we did new work, we ensured that our interventions made as much impact as possible," says Tim Brooks, Associate at Fieldwork.

"The plurality of contemporary art and contemporary life calls for a design strategy that can accommodate complexity within a site with its own history and layering – a nuanced architecture that is equal doses pragmatic and poetic," adds Quino Holland, Director at Fieldwork.

Fieldwork has maintained the site's rich history, showcasing the beautiful age of the buildings while adding contemporary elements in strong contrast to the existing fabric. The material palette clearly emphasises the changes made. For instance, black steel framed windows with new orange glazing are clearly distinguished from the existing clear-glazed timber windows, while Krause Bricks on new external lift shafts are used in contrast with the existing heritage red bricks and cream renders.

In fact, Krause bricks are used to highlight one of the biggest design moves for the site. Fieldwork unified the campus with three new vertical circulation nodes. These provide universal access up the buildings with lifts and stairs, and attach externally to the buildings to maximise leasable space within. It was essential to make them beautiful.

The Krause bricks used on the new lift shafts were selected to complement the heritage brickwork of the original buildings, mimicking the garden bond laying patterns used, but in a clearly modern style. "We wanted to continue the texture and the tactile quality of brick on the site, but to showcase a more contemporary use of brickwork so that it's clearly read as a new addition. The lift shafts are laid in a gradation of tone from dark charcoal at the base up to a warm white, forming a really nice contrast to the existing red bricks. They're harmonious to the palette but also quite distinct," reflects Tim.

Against the hardwearing galvanised steel of the external staircases, and hammer-tone steel window frames, Krause bricks add warmth and tactility. Together these materials are bold, contemporary additions to the site, yet cohesive with the existing buildings.

"The lift shafts are really important urban markers and tie the whole site together. They implicitly show visitors how to move around the site, and have been really successful in that way," Tim notes.

As well as choosing local bricks, selecting full bricks rather than brick tiles was key. "It was critical to the story of the building that we used full bricks. They once taught bricklaying at the Technical College, so it was important to us that the craft of the bricklaying be evident and authentic," Tim comments.



Collingwood yards is now officially open to the public and has a full schedule of upcoming markets and events planned. Although it was difficult to open an arts precinct during a pandemic—given restricted visitor numbers and tenants to generate income—the entire team couldn't have hoped for a better outcome. As Tim says, "Everyone is just so proud of what they've been able to achieve. It has been a really big collaboration between the design consultants and the client group in developing this new arts precinct. And everyone was exceptionally excited to start welcoming people to the precinct."

Excitingly for the team, Collingwood Yards was named Gold Medalist in the Architecture – Community & Civic category of the 2021 DRIVENxDESIGN Government Awards.

Architect:	Fieldwork
Client:	Contemporary Arts Precinct
Product:	Krause brick blend (White, Light Grey, Mid Grey and Charcoal 230 x 110 x 76mm)
Builder:	McCorkell Constructions
Landscape and Public Realm:	SBLA
Photographer:	Tom Ross