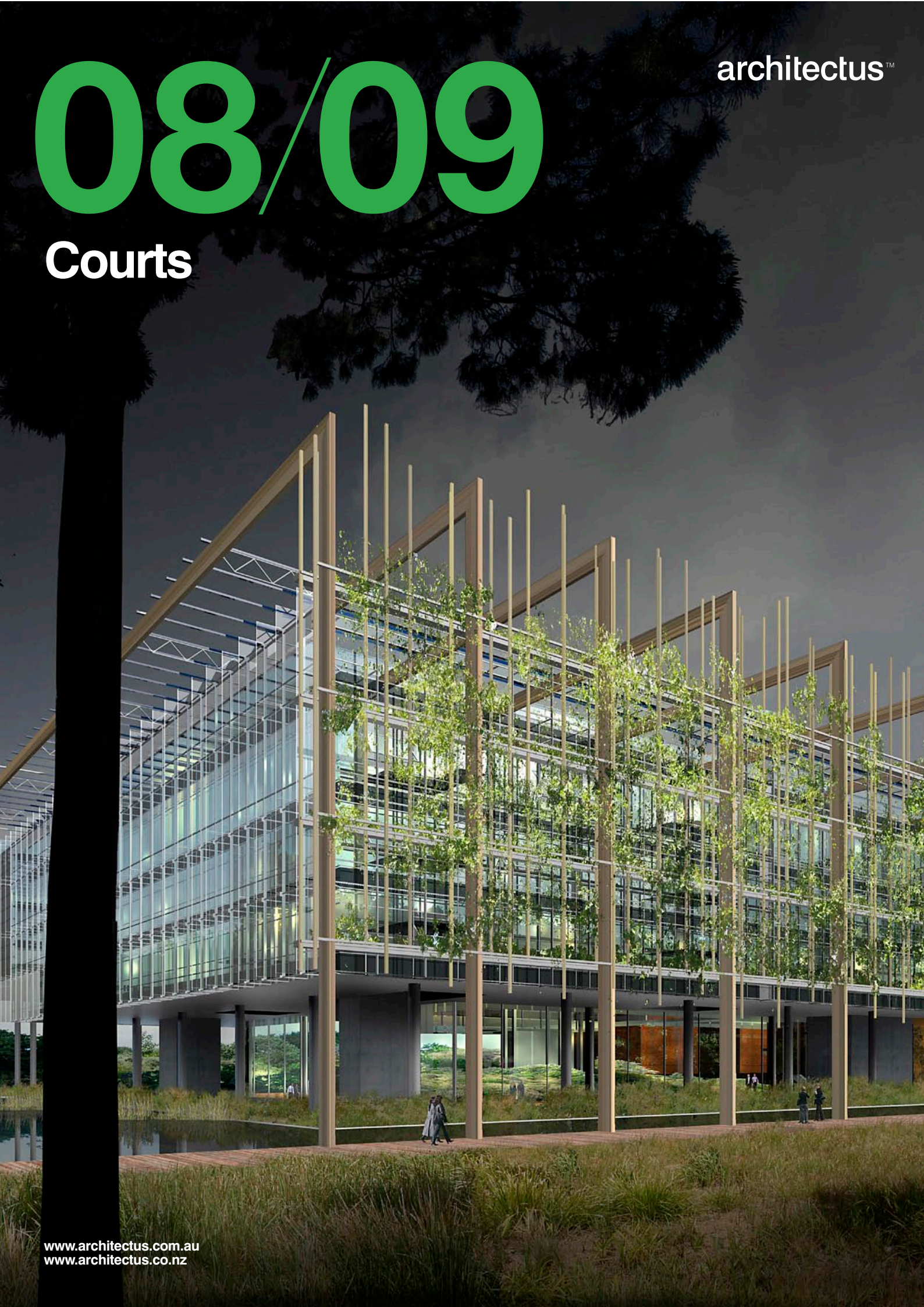


# 08/09

## Courts



# International Criminal Court at The Hague in the Netherlands





# Research key to Hague Court design

A field comprising 171 of the world's leading architectural practices competed for the design of the new International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague in the Netherlands.

Architectus was the only firm short-listed from the Southern Hemisphere. Selection in the final 20 was recognition of Architectus' capacity to resolve the highly complex design challenges.

A 17-member international jury, under the direction of the Netherlands' Chief Government Architect, Mels Crouwel, chose the 20 finalists that included Architectus and the eventual winner, Christoph Ingenhoven of Germany. The jury selected participants on the basis of completed works and experience in the design of projects with complex programs.

*Interview with Architectus Design Directors John Hockings (Brisbane) and Patrick Clifford (Auckland).*

## **Research is a critical component for all architecture, but especially so for such a significant client as the ICC. What was your approach?**

We belong to a Courts Network, which is a mix of the legal fraternity, academics, and architects. The aim of the network is to research and share information on the design of courthouses around the world. The network regularly publishes, and organises international courts tours and conferences for its members.

Our long experience in courthouse design has meant that we keep ourselves informed of all new developments, and in particular, look at new courthouses as they are designed.

Each new courthouse is for a different jurisdiction, with different functional requirements, so each jurisdiction needs to be researched.

## **Your team of design directors travelled extensively to familiarise and fully prepare itself. What did that experience reveal?**

We have been actively researching and organising study tours long before the competition in relation to other court projects, and we specifically travelled to look at European courts and European community courts as part of the research for this project. We visited French courts in Paris, and European courts in Luxembourg. We also visited other significant civic buildings including the National Library in Paris. This confirmed our understanding of the significance of scale, light, dignity and clarity as the most significant aspects of civic design. It also revealed the balance between formal concerns and unique character and sense of place.

## **The Judiciary is typically a conservative client. Did you sense in the case of the ICC that the client was receptive to innovation?**

I don't think courts clients are particularly conservative. They expect progressive and innovative ideas. They do however respond to the need for courthouses to express the stability, continuity, dignity and reliability of the law.

## **What are some of the abiding values that travel with you whether you're designing a court building, university or residence?**

Better perhaps to talk about the shared values of major civic buildings – art galleries, museums, law courts, houses of parliament, city halls – all should express something of the nature of the institution which is housed within them. All should have a sense of scale and a generosity and a dignity commensurate with the institution, and add value to the city. They also need to speak to all sections of the community and to different cultures.

This was particularly so with the ICC where the design had to respond to the fact that these courts try the most serious of all crimes: those against humanity itself. The design needed to produce a place seen by a range of victims from all cultures around the world, as welcoming and accessible.

## **Do you find clients to be deferential to what you can bring to the process or can legal minds be more challenging than most?**

They are challenging and so they make the whole process of design more engaging than most.

## **How important is it to bring human qualities into court buildings given their traditional formality and gravity?**

Very important. However, it has also been shown in research that habitable court rooms with humane qualities (light, view, calmness) de-stress people and lead to better trial outcomes.

## **What have been among the major learning curves and insights gained from working with the legal fraternity?**

The importance of establishing the best spatial relationships between people within the building and the courtrooms – this in turn leads to the best outcomes for individual proceedings and for the broader relationship between the community and the law.

## **Architectus was also the only firm invited from the Southern Hemisphere to compete. To what extent was your selection based on the relevance of fairly recent work?**

Totally. We are currently designing the most open, transparent, light and airy courthouse in the world. We also wanted to adapt this understanding to a very particular site, and a very different sort of trial.

## **Visibility and transparency appear to be central to your design. How important is this in the court system based on traditions of mass, solidity, tradition and hierarchy?**

In the ICC the courts themselves are the solid anchoring elements of the building, located deep within the form and to the ground, while the lighter more airy spaces wrap around the edges where people conduct their normal daily business.

Light in the courts comes through the roof and one side, bringing the universal sky and the gigantic (somewhat universal in its symbolism) scale of the coastal dunes into the courtroom itself. The working areas of the courts (75% of the total area) relate to the externals of the ground plane, and the surrounding daily life of the city.

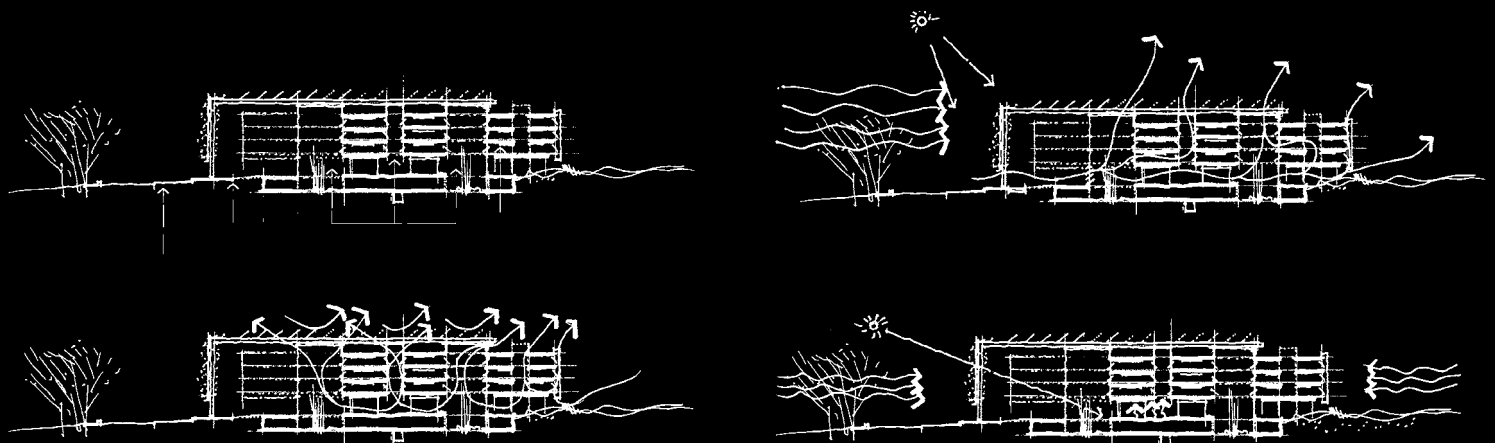
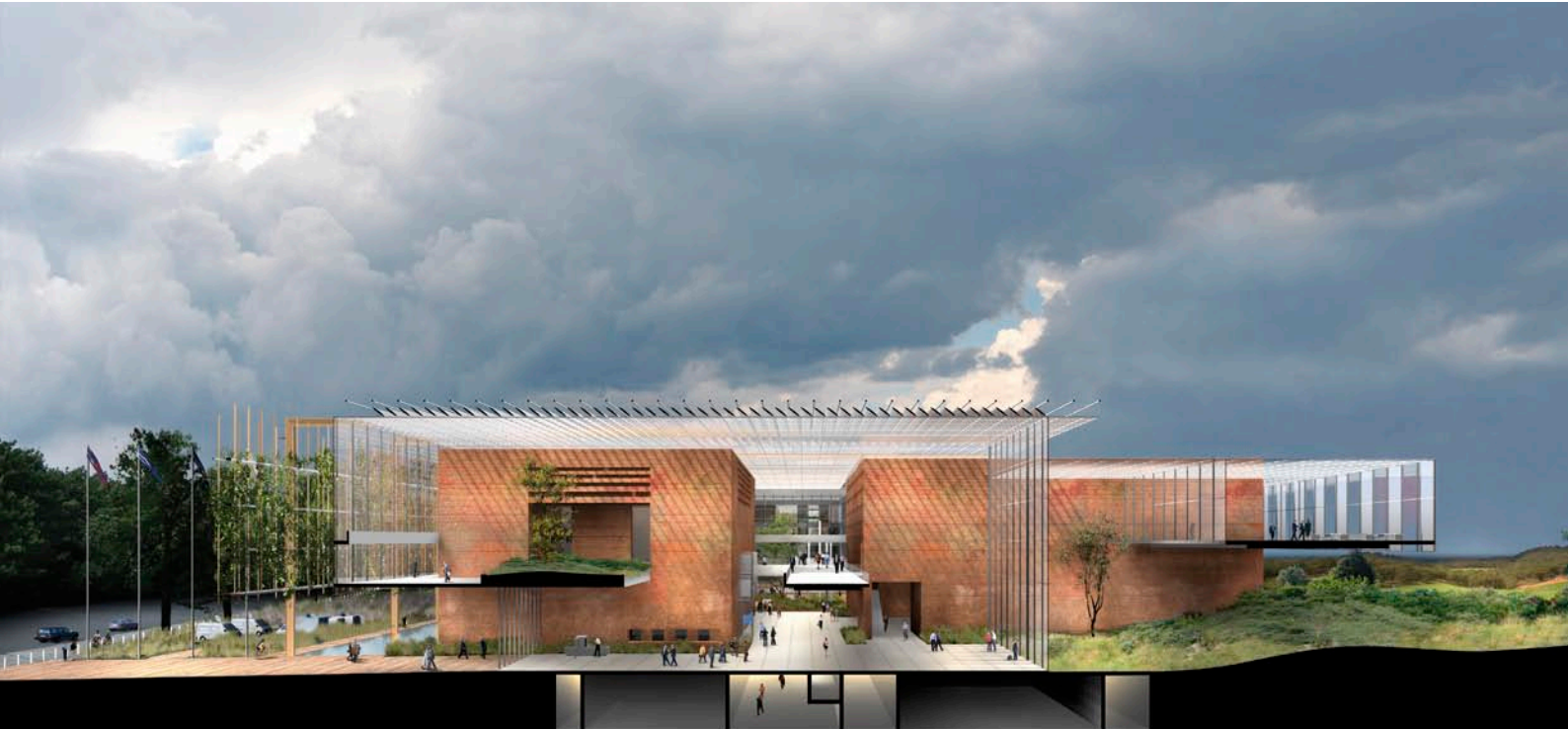
## **The ICC site is within the delicate coastal dunes and significant forest on the edge of the city. How does your solution respond to a place that is more natural than urban in character?**

The site's qualities of city and coastal landscape are reflected in the project's architectural form and character. Our proposal wraps the four major courtrooms within a larger architectural frame which is draped and wrapped with a landscaped timber screen, so that the building character experienced from the outside is one of natural materials related to the surrounding forests to the south, east and west, and which integrates with the rolling grasses of the dunes to the north. The building presents as a natural (tough but still formal) object within a natural environment.

## **What is its relationship to the city?**

The proposed court building has a formality and presence appropriate to a building in the International Zone. It has a memorable identity to sit beside the Peace Palace as a building of international significance for The Hague and creates a landmark structure along a major arterial of the city. The design uses architectural language which relates to the combination of civic and landscape qualities which define and distinguish The Hague from other Dutch and European cities.

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## Sustainability Statement

The design focuses on integrating the following four key themes to achieve and surpass the targeted levels of sustainability:

### 100% Carbon Neutrality

No net emissions of carbon dioxide is achieved firstly by minimising resource consumption through passive design principles, secondly by maximising energy efficiency in operation, thirdly by introducing a renewable energy component, and finally by offsetting any minor residual emissions by carbon offsetting.

### Health and Wellbeing

This will be a healthy building to be in. The passive design attributes of fresh air, daylight, thermal and aural comfort and emission free materials coupled with the integration and physical connection of the landscape within and beyond the building envelope are designed to enhance the experience of being in the building.

### Conservation of Water, Ecology and Emissions

Water and hydrology is a significant cultural issue in the Netherlands. The design responds with an emphasis on the conservation of water resources within the building and ecological management of rainwater on the site. Roof run-off is retained for reuse, whilst allowing natural filtration and soak away of rainwater. Light pollution is engineered to be minimised and emission free materials used throughout.

### Whole of Life Thinking

We have responded to the brief requirements for efficiency and life cycle assessment (LCA) by adopting whole of life thinking which recognises both the initial budget constraints together with the future impact of operating, maintenance and environmental costs.



## Brisbane Supreme and District Court

Everyone now understands the great advantages that come with making comfortable, healthy buildings. This is no less so in courts buildings than others, though it is perhaps harder to achieve. In the past, various security concerns influenced the design of courthouses to the point where the courtroom itself was typically a fully enclosed room with little or no access to natural light, fresh air or contact with the outside world.

Research indicates that courtrooms with access to natural light and other healthy attributes produce better trial outcomes, make people feel more at ease, more able to concentrate, and better able to make decisions.

With the new Brisbane Supreme and District Court, Architectus set out to push court design to a new level, with a great emphasis on making environmentally responsible spaces, filled with light, and with a generosity of scale which was matched to the important public functions enacted within the building.

This approach sits well with a desire on the part of the institution of justice to be open and

transparent about their proceedings, and their relationship with the community at large.

The security concerns which have driven court design in the past have not gone away. If anything, they have become more stringent. The challenge was there to find a way to meet these two seemingly opposed parameters.

By using a sophisticated layered facade system, essentially two layers of glass interleaved with solar-programmed blinds, glare blinds and frit patterns, Architectus has created courtrooms which are open to daylight and view on up to four sides, whilst maintaining stringent design parameters relating to security, privacy, acoustic isolation, solar control, and separate circulation (for judges, juries, the public and the accused).

From the beginning of the design, we also were aware of the role of the public space within the courthouse. In the traditional single level European courthouse, this main hall is known as the *salle de pas perdu*, and more than any other space, establishes the dignity and significance of the courthouse within the public realm.

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Architectus supports environmentally sustainable initiatives. This newsletter has been printed on sustainably produced paper using vegetable based inks and an aqueous varnish.



**“...the new courthouse is deliberately designed as a place for dignified and natural human occupation, using simple, legible and generous spaces, full of natural light and contact with nature and the outdoors.”**

The multitude of courts required in the Australian judicial system means that there will always be many levels of public space. One common response to this circumstance has been to connect these levels into a large atrium-style space, usually very busy and very noisy. Architectus has deliberately kept the public spaces on each level of the courthouse separate in order to make them peaceful, quiet and dignified spaces, which open out through full height glazing to the large parklands to the north.

The courthouse takes its place at the western end of George Street in Brisbane, the main civic axis of the state's capital. As with all the other civic buildings on this axis, the new courthouse has been designed with an accompanying civic square. Its scale is large, and on a par with the other five major Brisbane squares. It has been designed as 'people space', with large green lawns and shaded arbours, not for purposes of ceremonial formality, but as a place for lunch, for socialising, and for recreation. In this way, the civic institution can express to the public at large its openness and connectedness with the daily lives of the citizens of Brisbane.

Architectus has also provided a private courtyard for users of the building so that, without having to negotiate the security provisions at the court entrance, they can have ready access to a green external space.

In all aspects, including the extensive use of natural materials, the new courthouse is deliberately designed as a place for dignified and natural human occupation, using simple, legible and generous spaces, full of natural light and contact with nature and the outdoors. Clearly then, this is not a normal courthouse. Its naturalness and civic presence has been achieved through a highly sophisticated design approach which has solved all the complex technical issues to achieve humanist outcomes.

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## Townsville Courthouse + Watchhouse

Townsville courthouse is one of the largest courthouses in regional Queensland. It comprises two blocks that separately accommodate the Magistrates Court and the District Courts and a watchhouse that connects the two wings.

Architectus, with Guymer Bailey Architects, undertook a facility review and feasibility study to identify expansion options. The long needed development includes four additional Magistrates Courts along with new lifts, services upgrades and modernised areas of registry and court administration.

A generous veranda roof on Walker Street signals the new entrance and accessible public entry pavilion designed for transparency and openness.

The entry pavilion provides orientation and accommodates security, and the public space between the Magistrates Court and the District Court creates a naturally lit people friendly meeting hall, appropriate to the needs of a modern courthouse.

One of the key considerations was the architectural integrity of the existing building. The existing upper court rooms incorporate natural light and good planning practice and compare well with contemporary courtroom design. The key change to the Supreme and District Court has been updated access for

judges, the jury and persons in custody which required careful and economical remodelling of the existing service core.

Additional opportunities for sustainable design such as water storage, improved natural lighting and energy saving air-conditioning systems were identified by the design team and incorporated into the proposals.

**Schematic Design Completion:** End 2009

**Stage 1 and 2:** \$64M

**GFA Courts:** 9450m<sup>2</sup> (existing 6750m<sup>2</sup>)

**GFA Watchhouse:** 2122m<sup>2</sup>

**Project Architects:**

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## Courts a long-term Investment

Mark Wilde director of Architectus Melbourne notes their extensive experience with courts facilities in Victoria. "Courts are among the most complex and demanding architectural types. Thorough consultation and precise delivery for user-friendly court environments are central to our design approach."

Their projects include the refurbishment of the 1880s Bendigo Law Courts which was converted to house Circuit Courts for the Supreme and County Courts, the permanent Magistrates' Court and new facilities for

Geelong Law Courts including Supreme, County and Magistrates' Courts, and the Frankston Magistrates' Court which comprises both Magistrates' and Children's Courts.

"Courts must be highly functional," observes Wilde, "but the obligation is to ensure an overlay of calm, transparency and dignity. We certainly look to create appropriate and inspirational spaces. Courts are a long-term investment and have an important place in our society. Our courts make decisions on some of the most complex and pertinent issues of the day."

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## Auckland High Court

Architectus is working with the Ministry of Justice on projects in Auckland including the provision of additional Judicial Chambers at the High Court. This institution was first established as the Supreme Court in the 1860s with additions built in the 1930s before being extensively modified in 1988. The original two storey brick and stone building is a powerful example of Gothic Revival architecture and an important landmark in what was the centre of governance in the provincial era in New Zealand. The building is notable for its almost continual use as a courthouse – a circumstance that must prevail whilst the current work to the 1988 addition is carried out.

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