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OUT OF TOWN 



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OUT OF TOWN 

CRAFT WORK

Marcus Trimble visits a new project by **Terroir** that is reinvigorating a dormant Tasmanian industrial centre through clever programming and an unlikely blend of mass manufacture and craft.



project

Burnie Makers' Workshop

architect

Terroir

photography

Brett Boardman

review

Marcus Trimble

architect's statement

Makers' Workshop represents a major investment in a post-industrial future by the town of Burnie, on Tasmania's north-west coast.

Until recently, the town has been known primarily for its large-scale industries, such as the massive waterfront pulp and paper mill, and busy port. A local initiative born from the town's paper heritage, Creative Paper, has built a reputation for high quality, handmade paper products. In addition, the town has a rich sense of its heritage as a rural centre, as portrayed in the tired Burnie Pioneer Museum.

Terroir transformed the brief for a new visitor and cultural facility, combining the industry and museum components into something even more community oriented, with the idea of providing a 'living room' for the town. A five-spoke diagram is centred on an orientation hub that has free access for the public and features items from the museum's collection. Each of the five spokes (or arms) houses a different function – back of house, paper-making workshop, multipurpose exhibition/theatre, café and a combined retail/gallery space – and within some are individual 'pods' for local 'makers' with whom the public can interact. Each of the spokes terminates with a large picture window that captures portions of the panoramic view – identifying

different aspects of Burnie: port, town, hinterland, Bass Strait and adjacent heritage buildings.

Contextually, the building is understood as part of the collection of industrial objects along the coast. Rather than adopt a sentimental pseudo-industrial aesthetic, however, these objects have been re-imagined as giant 'toys' with which this project joins. Our toy is a lighthouse of sorts on the western headland above the beach, a sentinel both for passing ships and for the locals. The translucent Danpalon cladding, providing an ever-changing façade throughout the day, furthers its lighthouse quality.

The project was completed within a remarkable 15 months from the initial briefing, due in large part to the client's strong vision, developed in association with cultural and tourism-related projects strategic consultant Graham Morris, and the shared commitment from the team of consultants and contractors. The Burnie City Council's appreciation of the benefits of seeking innovative, contemporary design for this important project for the Burnie community and the value of engaging a young and energetic team to achieve a unique outcome, is, in our experience, exemplary.

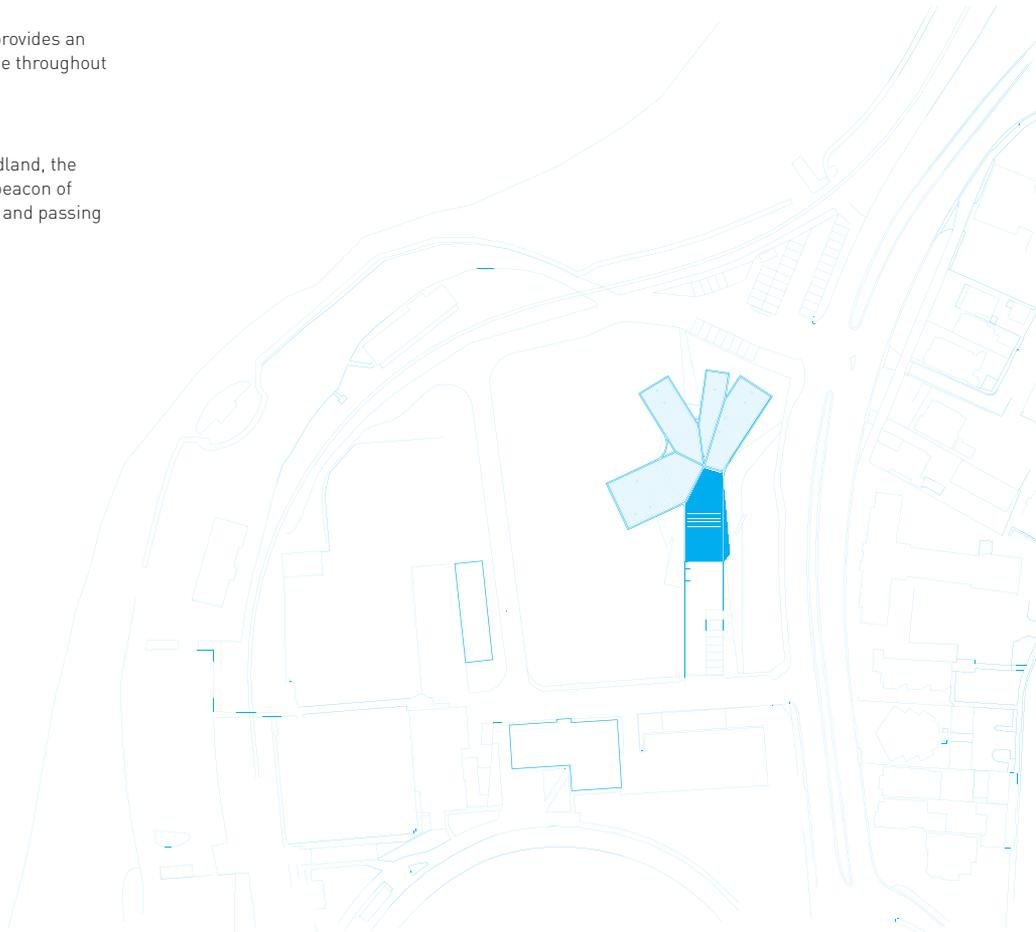
/01

Danpalon cladding provides an ever-changing façade throughout the day.

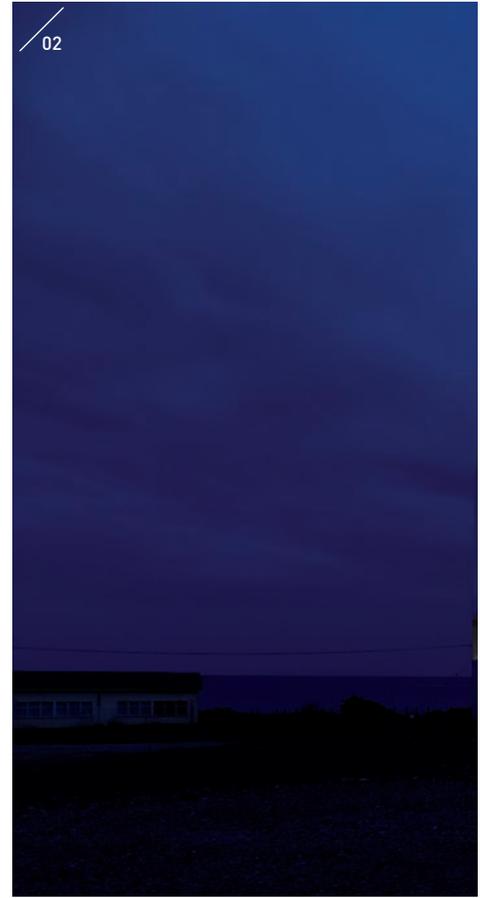
/02 /03

Positioned on a headland, the project serves as a beacon of sorts for both locals and passing ships.

/site plan



02



03





**/04**

A secondary entrance provides access and egress to and from the beach on the building's eastern side.

/05

Vertical slivers between the building's arms provide glimpses of the coast.

/06

Expansive glazing at the ends of the arms provide generous views of the landscape.

review: burnie makers' workshop

Located on the north coast of Tasmania and Australia's fifth largest port, Burnie has in recent years been proactively repositioning itself as a craft centre in northern Tasmania. Deflecting focus from the negative spin of forestry and mining, Burnie's history as an industrial manufacturing centre has been recast, the town being imagined instead as a platform for the making of things. It is an optimistic (and clever) strategy, creating common ground for the arts, cheese and whisky makers with the paper mills and other large industries in the region. Central to this strategy is the recently opened Burnie Makers' Workshop by Terroir, a building conceived to promote and foster these 'makers' under a common roof.

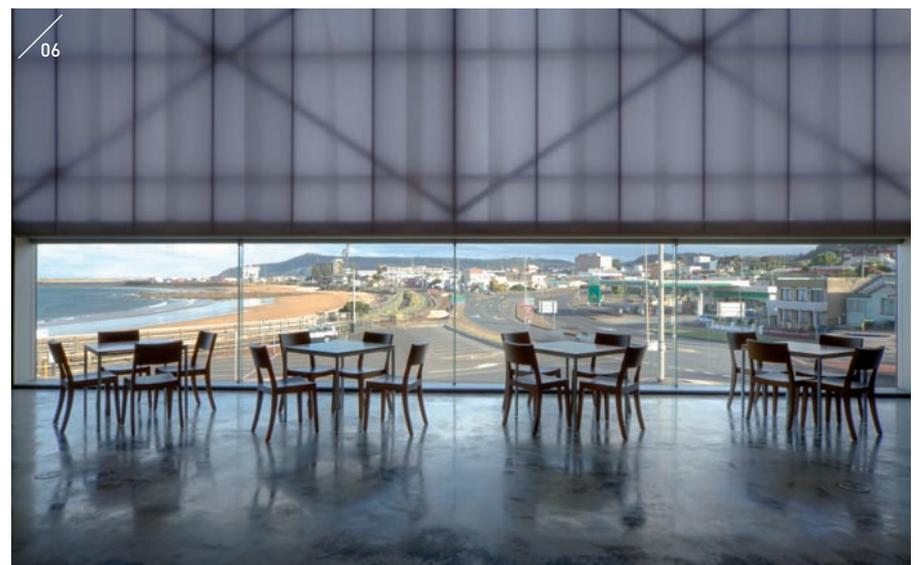
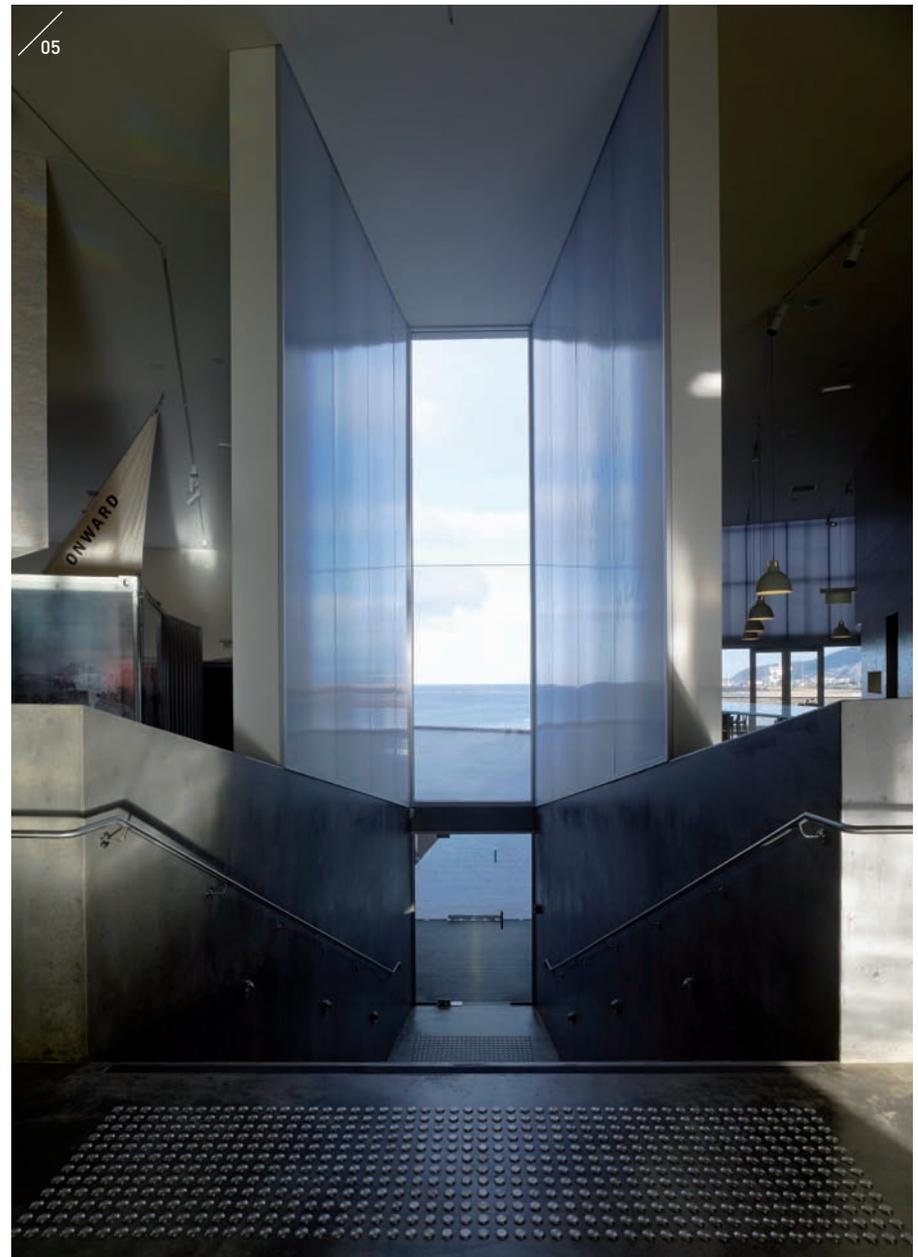
A focus on manufacturing has resulted in a coastline lined with industrial sheds and other fantastic contraptions, with the paper mill a dominant element. The Burnie Makers' Workshop sits on this stretch of coast, at the western end of the beach with the truly large scale gear picturesque in the distance, itself a kind of shed, lean like its coastal cousins, but idiosyncratic – clearly a place for the making of unique things, not of the industrial production line.

In this context it is a strange building, as though one of the sheds that line the road had been put through some algorithm and frozen mid spasm. Or better yet, the shed seen as a single cell in a petri dish, freeze-framed mid-division as a distorted star. This five-pronged star simply enough comprises a concreted base with a steel-framed polycarbonate clad lid sitting over. At the ends of the arms, the concrete base folds revealing an underside, lending a sensation that this is a building that has landed here rather than grown.

Intriguingly, the interior does not meet expectations set by the external volume (that there would be five large rooms with windows out onto the view arranged around a central space); rather this expectation is upturned by a fractured shard-like internal space where the various activities within overlap. The freeform interior, with exhibition spaces by David Lancashire Design, houses a number of activities concurrently: interpretative displays chronicling local history and manufacturing processes, a café, a (busy) shop, Creative Paper (a successful local initiative that recycles industrial by-products into art papers) and, most importantly, a number of

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workshops scattered within where resident makers produce their work as well as give demonstrations.

From within the building, glimpses to the coastline and Bass Straight are made possible by a series of vertical slivers, with views through the café, past a workspace and between the building's arms. It is only when moving through to the end of the arms that the windows open up to the landscape. Sitting in front of the workshop, between the headquarters of the Burnie Highland Pipe Band and the City of Burnie Brass Band, a penguin viewing platform employs a similar strategy where thin openings (reminiscent of the viewing slit in Ned Kelly's body armour) target specific parts of the coast likely to house penguins.

On the day I visit, the Dawn Princess has arrived in Burnie's deep-water harbour and it is chaos at the workshop – a fairly sedate chaos given the cruise liner demographic, but a compressed madness nonetheless. A throng of the superannuated fill the building and its immediate environs; helicopter tours launch from the car park; tourist buses are everywhere; guided tours of the workshop run; there are paper making classes and demonstrations from the resident artisans. The building works well when full, the fractured interior revealing glimpses of activity in every corner of the space.

I ask the manager of the workshop about the cruise ships, curious about Burnie's inclusion on the luxury cruise liner circuit. The reason is, I am told, that Burnie is the closest point by boat to Cradle Mountain, arguably Tasmania's best known tourist attraction. A bus trip and a quick lap around Dove Lake and you can be on your way to the next port before you know it, having ticked another natural wonder off the list. And so the team at the Makers' Workshop has cleverly hitched onto this water borne influx with abandon. A large chart in the offices tracks arrivals and much of the annual schedule is planned around these visits, which have tripled in the last year.

It points to Tasmania's latent tourism potential, and its inability to truly market its landscape broadly in the way that, say, New Zealand has. At Burnie, however, the more modest proposal that the Makers' Workshop represents and its direct ties to its community may prove in the long-term to be the kind of tourism project that has legs; drawing visitors to the town, driving local commerce and enriching the arts community.

The local council and community's devotion to this cause is evidenced by the extremely compressed time-frame in which the project was completed – just 15 months from commission to opening, an accomplishment requiring incredible commitment and collaboration from the entire project team, the client and the builder in particular.

The Burnie Makers' Workshop deftly negotiates the politics of Tasmania's dual character of heavy industry powerhouse and chain of charming arts and crafts villages. At once a super-sized industrial object and a market bazaar of craft, it provides a space in which the slow reinvention of a community may take place in the act of making. **ar**

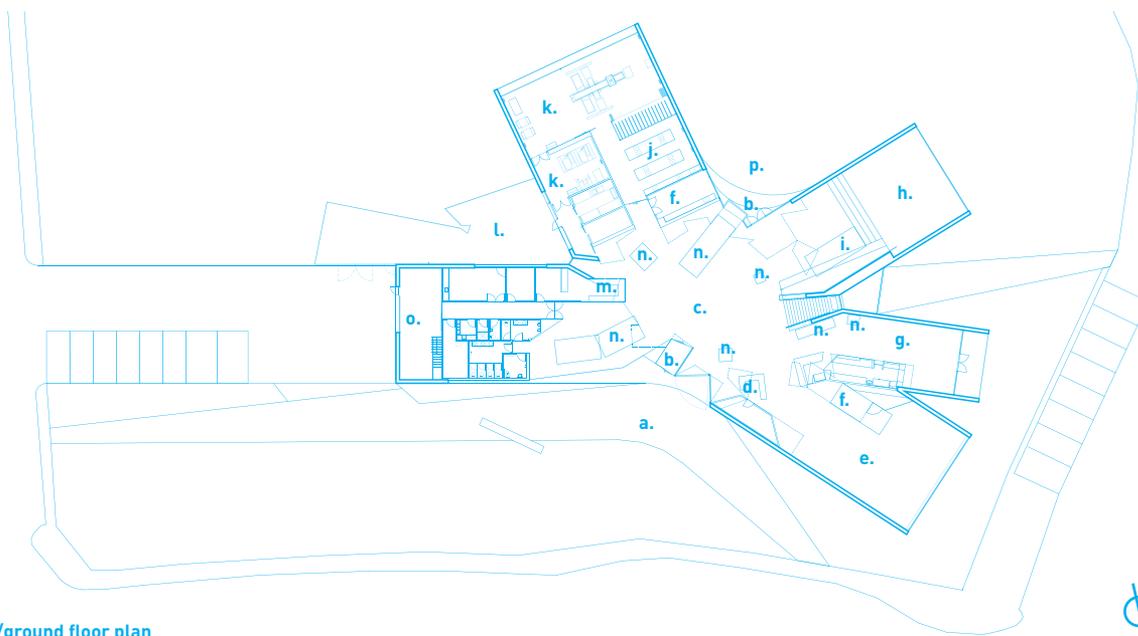
Marcus Trimble is director of Super Colossal architects. He maintains the Super Colossal website where the work of local and international architects is presented and various interests of the office on any given day are chronicled.

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/07
Terrace on the building's northern side.

/08/10
The interior houses exhibition spaces by David Lancashire Design showcasing Burnie's manufacturing history.

/09
Pods provide the public with opportunities to interact with local "makers".



/ground level legend.

- a. forecourt
- b. entry
- c. foyer
- d. retail
- e. gallery
- f. artist studio
- g. cafe
- h. multi-purpose
- i. exhibition pod
- j. paper making
- k. paper production
- l. staff courtyard
- m. reception
- n. exhibit
- o. loading bay
- p. north terrace

/ground floor plan



/11

The Burnie Makers' Workshop – a playfully idiosyncratic take on the industrial sheds and manufacturing facilities that line Burnie's coast.

ARCHITECT

principal architect Terroir Pty Ltd **project team** Scott Balmforth, Gerard Reinmuth, Richard Blythe, Tamara Donnellan, Nic Fabrizio, Paul Sayers, Chris Rogers, Shaun Miller, Sophie Bence

BUILDER

Fairbrother

CONSULTANTS

project manager Terroir and Burnie City Council **exhibition/interpretation** David Lancashire Design in association with Bluebottle (AV/lighting) and Designcraft (exhibition/fabrication) **structural engineer** Gandy and Roberts **services engineer** Engineering Solutions Tasmania **quantity surveyor** Stehel Consultants **building surveyor** Lee Tyers Building Surveyor **landscape** Terroir and Burnie City Council **mechanical** Degree C **electrical** Russell Smith **plumbing and drainage** GPS Plumbing Services **plastering** C & N Jackson Plastering Services **painting** Clarke's Painting **civil works** Treloar Transport

MATERIALS

glazing Laminated and Comfort Plus; supplier: GP Glass **structural steel** Danmor **precast concrete** Precast Tasmania **walls** steel frame on precast concrete base **wall linings** Precast concrete base **cladding** Danpalon 16-millimetre reverse UV polycarbonate (colour: Ice) **roof** Colorbond metal roof decking (colour: Windspray) **paving** concrete **glazing ceiling** plasterboard **internal walls** OSB with lime-stained finish **paint** Dulux Antique White USA **lighting/light fittings** Thorn Chartor galvanised bollard lights **flooring** in situ concrete, Ashford Formula sealer; Tarkett Micra Premium # 3110 613 vinyl; Tarkett Tecsom Prima 277100 carpet **joinery** plywood retail joinery and remainder OSB with lime-stained finish; supplier: Fairbrother

PROJECT

size 1500m² **time to complete** 15 months (design/documentation 7 months, construction 8 months) **council/client** Burnie City Council **design software used** AutoCAD Joinery