



FOOTSCRAY MALL WAYFINDING PLINTH

HEINE JONES

In 2007, HeineJones designed a dual-purpose sculpture for the Maribyrnong City Council. Located in Footscray's Nicholson Street Mall, the sculpture's purpose was to operate as an information hub while safely housing an electrical switchboard and irrigation control system.

OVERVIEW

Dominated by foot traffic, Footscray's Nicholson Street Mall serves as a meeting point and thoroughfare for locals, shoppers, students, pedestrians and business owners. Centrally located, this mall represents the heart of Footscray, operating as its hub. HeineJones investigated ways in which they could present directional information in a clear and relevant format

while providing a secure, uncomplicated and discreet portal for the irrigation control system and electrical switchboard in this permanent location. HeineJones's solution was to develop a functional sculpture to house the existing utilities. The innovative blade-like sculpture is encased in a 'skin' that intelligently conceals the assets within a weather-resistant casing.

Special features include a lockable access hatch, custom lighting solution to match mall colour scheme, and Australian Standard waterproof switchboard casing. The surface is digitally printed with wayfinding colour-coded informational text and graphics indicating locations and expected travel times.

Aesthetically pleasing, the sculpture is illuminated by a custom lighting solution that complements the existing colours of the mall's environment and ensures the public can access relevant location, distance and anticipated travel time information at any time of day or night.

Left: Side view of wayfinding plinth, Right: Detail of plinth wayfinding signage



KEY FACTS

Client: Maribyrnong City Council

Scope: A sculptural wayfinding and information directory solution to conceal an electrical switchboard and irrigation controls within the Nicholson Street Mall

Timeline: Delivered on time: November 2007 to January 2008

Location: Nicholson Street Mall, Footscray

Team: Mike Heine and contractors engaged and managed by HeineJones: MR Anderson Engineers, Banana Graphics Sign Builders.

CREATIVE APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

HeineJones consulted closely with Maribyrnong City Council and key stakeholders to establish the objectives, technical limitations and aesthetic value of the project. The result is an intelligent solution that balances form and function within council restrictions.

The process began with the creation of a design concept that took into consideration the environment and purpose of the structure. Inherent in these stages was the necessity to include specifications, liaise with manufacturers and end users and oversee installation of the sculpture. Working closely with council, and more specifically the team members who will need regular access to electrical switchboard and an irrigation control system, HeineJones investigated ways in which the inner utilities could be reached with minimal effort. A lockable hatch was the design solution that allows this multifunctional sign to operate as a dual-purpose structure.

HeineJones researched appropriate materials, including casing materials that will not only withstand possible damage but will also be resistant to inclement weather conditions. Working within Australian Standard waterproof

switchboard casing guidelines provided another parameter for the team to research and work within, ensuring the structure's casing met with governing body approval.

CHALLENGES

HeineJones managed several challenges on this project:

- Technical limitation and restrictions associated with encasing an electrical switchboard to Australia Electrical Standards;
- Developing a robust design solution and material specification that addressed the issue of potential malicious damage and vandalism;
- Ensuring replaceable parts were easily installable;
- Achieving key project objectives within budget; and,
- Providing sign illumination in a secure housing.

OUTCOMES

- A unique and distinctive design outcome, combining sculptural form with utilitarian assets;
- Practical building methodology and material specification to ensure replaceable sign components;
- Clear and engaging directional signage, incorporating highly visible colour-coding and iconography; and,
- A comprehensive and coherent wayfinding system that meets the functional requirements of the space.

After-dark view of wayfinding plinth



Detail of plinth wayfinding signage



VALUE ADD

With their experience and understanding of the region HeineJones brought an inherent understanding of the unique challenges that this site presented:

- Innovative response exemplifies HeineJones's problem-solving ability;
- Lighting and electrical specialists were engaged to deliver the specific requirements this project engendered;
- Three-dimensional structural response delivers its message via a visually simple and elegant bespoke design; and,
- The sculptural monolith design was informed by the notion of a blade. This unexpected and fresh approach lends an air of vitality to the entrance point of this important landmark.

FORWARD BENEFITS

The Footscray Mall wayfinding plinth project demonstrates key strengths HeineJones bring to wayfinding signage in the local government sector:

- Skilled and experienced team;
- High order conceptual development and design expertise;
- Practical and budget-wise specifications for signage materials, production and installation;
- Capacity to deliver complex signage projects on time and within budget;
- Flexible and effective consultative and project management; and,
- Extensive knowledge of current Australian and international signage standards.

CLIENT REFEREE

Mr Stuart Hale, Senior Urban Designer
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