

# MAAK WORK

Makers' Workshop  
Burnie Tasmania

Terroir



# MAKERS' WORKSHOP





There is much to like about this building, set on a headland facing Bass Strait in Burnie, on the northwest coast of Tasmania. It is a little building writ large. Importantly, it represents the nascent new face of a town that once depended almost entirely on toxic industries.

→ Thankfully, those industries – pulp and paper, wood chip, chemicals for paint products and acids for industry – have gone, but with them went much of the town's employment and prosperity. Of the heavy industries, just one remains: a company designing and making giant mining machinery as well as machines for aquaculture and agriculture. But signs of Burnie's dirty past remain: the gigantic pulp and paper mill, which once employed up to 3,500 people, still dominates the town's waterfront and container port; while little mountains of wood chips remain piled high at the port's edge. There the similarities with the old town pretty much end. Today Burnie is recasting itself as a place for cheese making, milk production, whisky making and as a centre for arts and crafts. With its deep port, it has also become a regular stopover call for cruise ships disgorging passengers for day trips to nearby Cradle Mountain. Makers' Workshop, as it is known, was originally intended to house Creative Paper, a local initiative born from the town's paper heritage, showcasing handmade paper products as well as the work of local artists and craftspeople. The involvement of a strategic consultant saw the building's role expanded to incorporate a café, aspects of the local pioneer museum and the tourist information centre for the region.

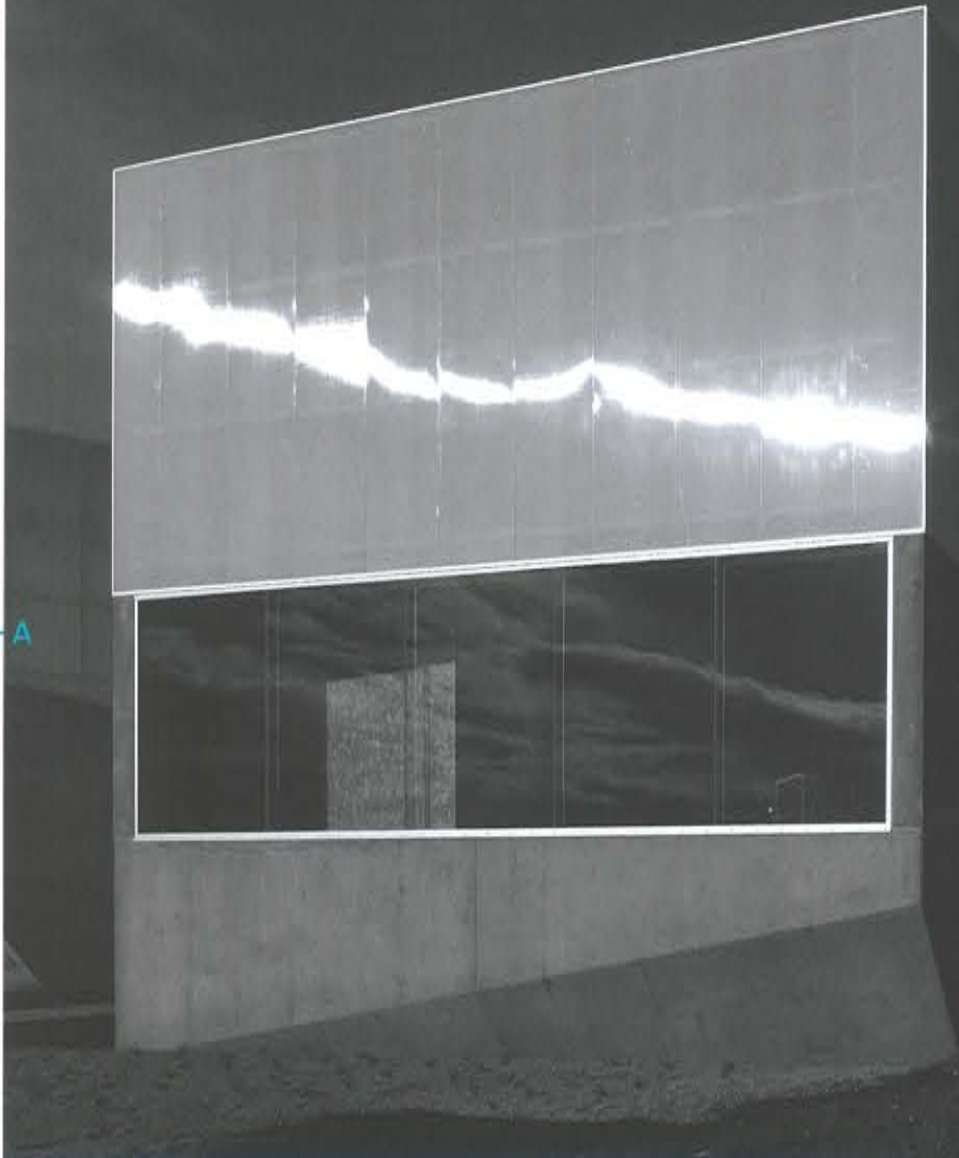
Terroir, the architects, devised a five-spoke design for the new centre which sits on the site of a burnt-out primary school – only one building remains standing – at the water's edge. The arms fan out, like tentacles, each affording views, through large panoramic windows, along the coast and out to Bass Strait. First impressions are of a series of super-sized shipping containers washed ashore. Two of the building's arms give views toward the port with its container stacks, heavy-lift cranes, the ever present former pulp and paper mill, and an assortment of industrial sheds. Others afford views of the hinterland, the town and some heritage buildings adjacent.

First glimpsed from a distance, the centre could be mistaken for yet another industrial building lining the stretch of coast. As you get closer, however, it's clear that this is a very neat piece of architecture making. With a base of concrete topped with polycarbonate cladding, the structure appears to grow out of the ground rather than merely sit on it. The combination of the waxy grey concrete and the pearlescent glow of the polycarbonate give it the quality of a gigantic lantern deposited on the foreshore.

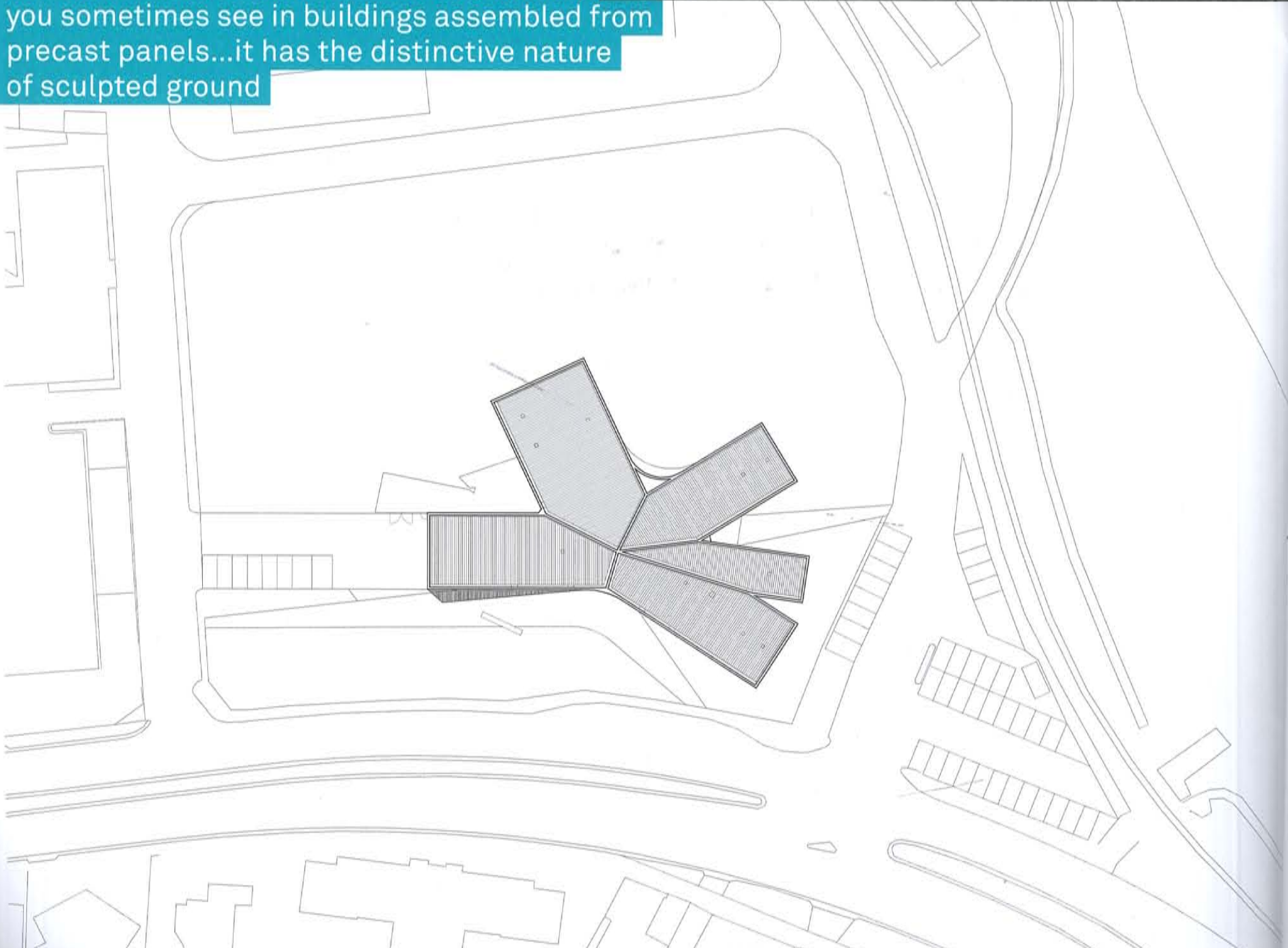
The concrete is precast but so well executed as to appear to have been cast insitu. It has none of the flimsy quality you sometimes see in buildings assembled from precast panels. And with its chamfered, cutaway, undersides it has the distinctive nature of a sculpted ground. The concrete base appears as an anchor for the lightness of the polycarbonate lantern, preventing it from "floating" away. The polycarbonate light box shimmers in the sunlight, providing an ever-changing spectacle throughout the day as the sun bounces off it in sharp flashes. Lit from within at night the centre stands as beacon for passing ships.

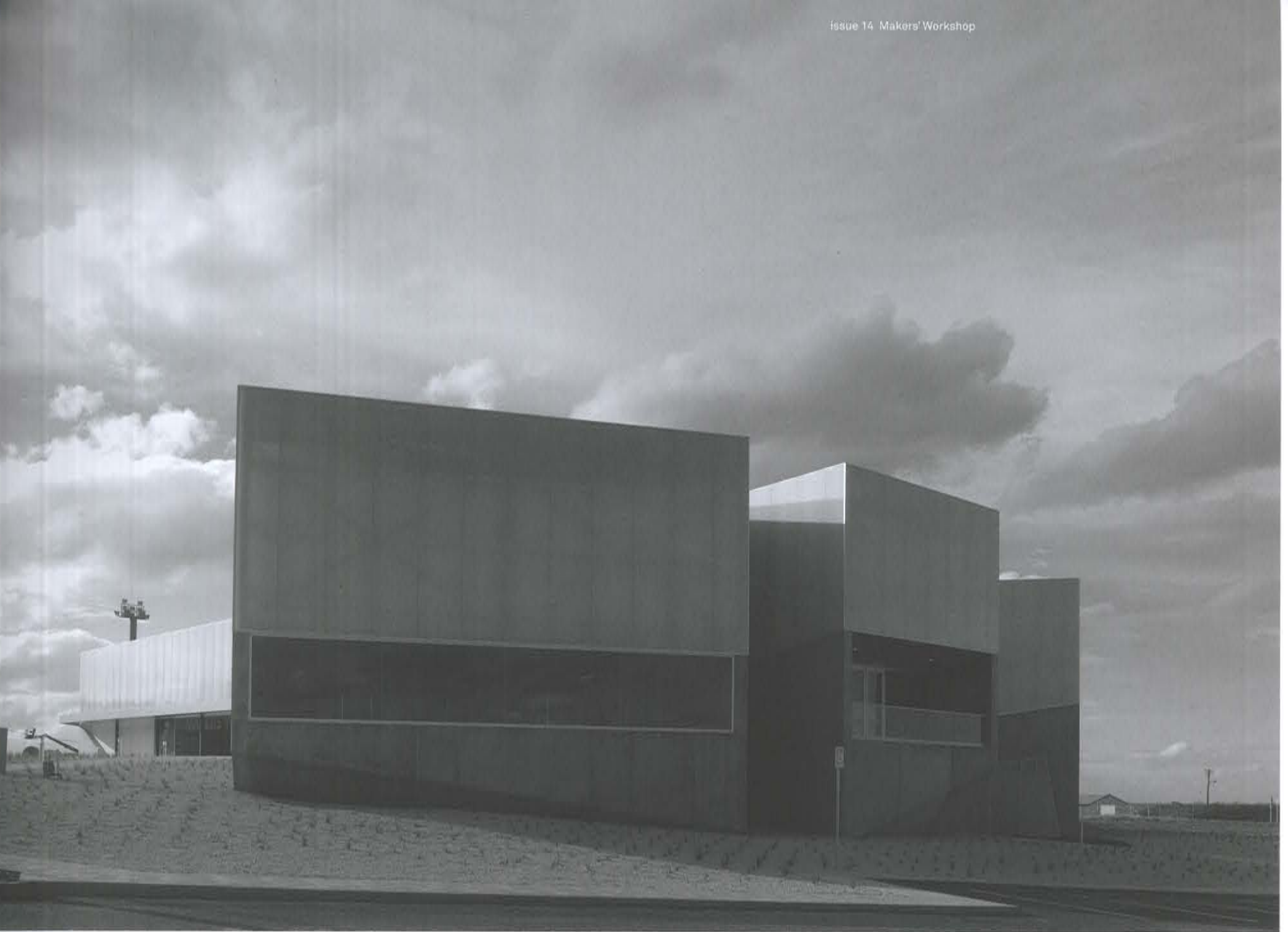
Each of the arms houses a different function – back of house, paper-making workshop, a multi-purpose exhibition/theatre space, a café and combined retail/gallery space. And it is here, once you step inside that the story changes. The openness that the exterior fabric promises inside is reduced to somewhat of a muddle by the many functions expected of what is, at 1,500 square metres, a relatively small building. Finishes, like those of the exterior, are few: oversize chipboard and concrete mainly, with the chipboard arranged as a series of stacked boxes at the scale of shipping containers, referencing the real containers clearly visible on the port in the distance. The boxes act as display cases for some of the arts and crafts and museum pieces on show, as well as housing some of the back of house functions. But they also serve to obstruct the big views promised by the picture windows at the end of each of the building's five fingers. Add to that specially designed moveable pods for local makers standing within at least one of the arms and you can see how the problem of clutter is compounded. Standing at the core of the interior you get glimpses of views – some tantalizing ones at that, through slivers in the concrete fabric – and it isn't until you step well inside each of its spokes that you get full views through the large panoramic windows. Still, these are small quibbles about what is a landmark building for a former industrial town hell-bent on reinventing itself, in part, through innovative, contemporary design where virtually none existed before. JR





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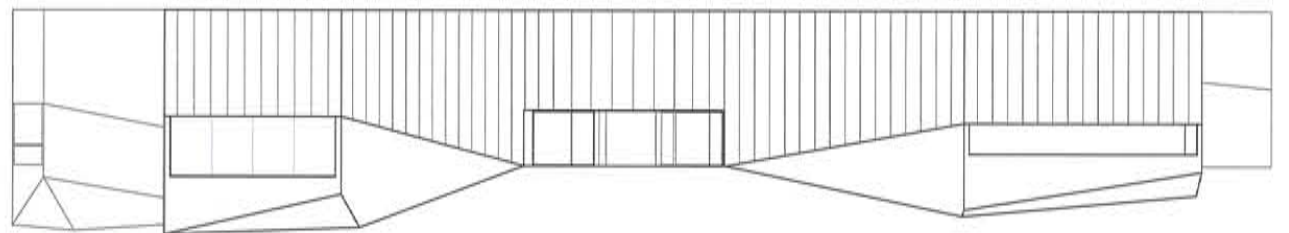




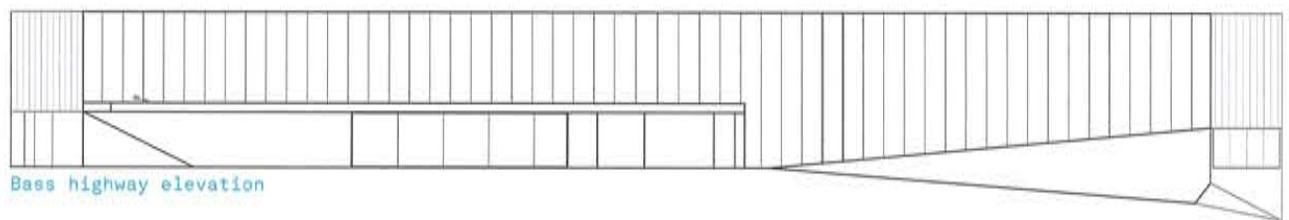
**Project Statement**

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 borne 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 centre 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 pioneer 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, 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 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.

**Terroir**



North terrace elevation



Bass highway elevation





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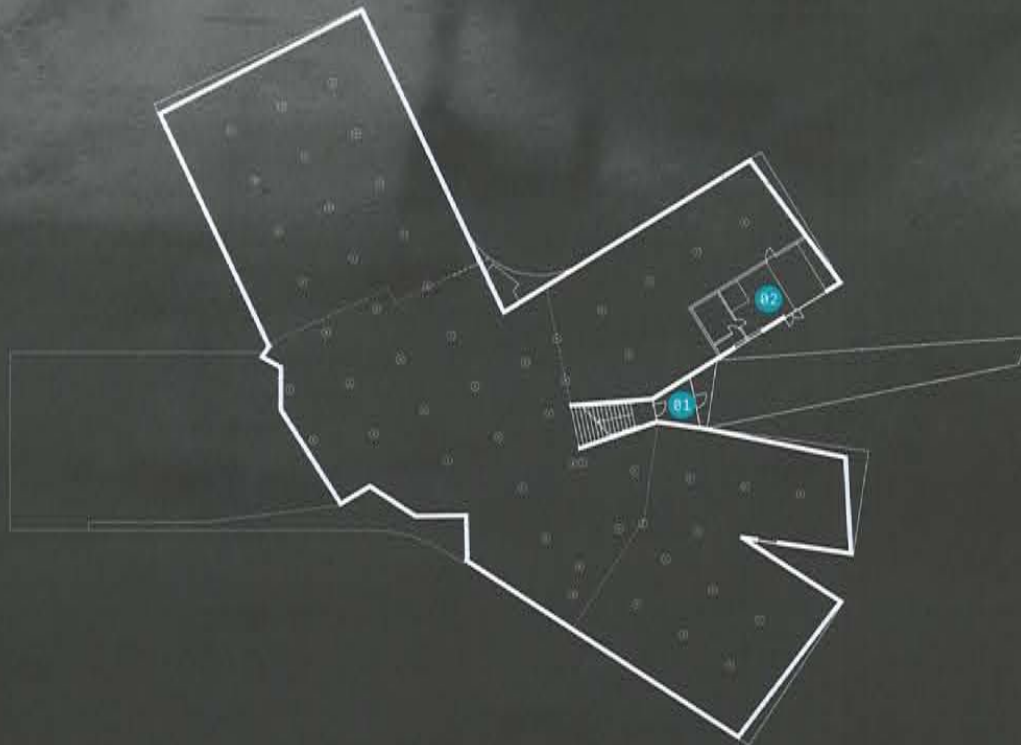
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Lower floor plan

Floor plans

- 01 Lower entry
- 02 Plant room
- 03 Forecourt
- 04 Entry
- 05 Foyer
- 06 Retail
- 07 Gallery
- 08 Artist studio
- 09 Cafe
- 10 Multi-purpose
- 11 Exhibition Pod
- 12 Paper making
- 13 Paper production
- 14 cafe courtyard
- 15 Reception
- 16 Exhibit
- 17 Loading bay
- 18 North terrace
- 19 Administration
- 20 Storage/display
- 21 Foyer below
- 22 Multi-purpose
- 23 Paper drying
- 24 Projection room
- 25 Comms/equipment room
- 26 Void to loading dock





Ground floor plan

Upper floor plan







Project Makers' Workshop  
Location Burnie, Tasmania  
Architect TERROIR  
Structural Engineers Gandy  
and Roberts  
Civil Engineers Gandy  
and Roberts  
Builder Fairbrother  
Photographer Brett Boardman