



A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Artistic collaborations in two Australian capitals has produced a series of drainage grates that add cultural flair to each cityscape

The sites of two high-profile locations across Australia — the Market to Riverbank Link in Adelaide and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), University of Sydney — are forever linked by art. Specialists in water management systems, ACO Australia was contracted to design and install a series of drainage grates that would improve the infrastructure and generate an attractive aesthetic within each city, lifting the humble metal fixtures to the level of art.

A joint venture by City of Adelaide and Renewal SA, the \$14.6 million Market to Riverbank Link project involves an upgrade of the city’s key streets, with the aim of creating a vibrant thoroughfare between Adelaide Central Market and the Adelaide riverbank. Paved pedestrian and cycle pathways covered with tree canopies, public art, lighting and street furniture all form part of the plan to achieve a picturesque route for local urbanites and visitors to the city.

Called *Geode*, the geology-inspired nature of the drainage grates installed as part of this placemaking project are the creation of Australian artist Amy Joy Watson. Adelaide-born, Amy developed a design inspired by the natural shapes of geode mineral deposits, which are a nod to the evolution of the local geology of the area.

“As if uncovered by an archaeologist the banded pattern running through the drainage grates and carved out of the seating elements seem to unveil traces of ancient landscapes and rock formations,” Amy said.

Acknowledged as a key element of the project, Georgina Vasilevski, Renewal SA General Manager, People and Place Managements, claimed, “Public art plays an integral role in transforming spaces, and this art installation is a subtle way to encourage people to really look and notice something new about our laneways.”

The newly revamped streetscapes are now pedestrian-friendly environments and provide retailers the opportunity to expand their business through outdoor dining, creating a more attractive space for commerce to thrive. By 2020, the Link is expected to increase foot traffic from 15,000 to 21,000 pedestrians each day.

In a like-minded move, the public space surrounding the newly constructed Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) building on the University of Sydney campus has received its own public art installation. Part of a \$700 million investment in new campus infrastructure, the six-storey FASS building will include a research centre, lecture theatre, general teaching spaces, office and meeting rooms and a rooftop terrace.

Wanting a custom concept that reflected the University’s ethos of recognising Indigenous culture, landscape architecture and urban design firm Oculus came up with a design that ACO



interpreted into its Freestyle grates. The pedestrian safe, antislip units were ideal for the location, coordinating with the surrounding paving material and providing a seamless integration that allowed the unique design to shine through.

Utilised at the top and bottom of the stairs onsite, the grates were directionally set to ensure the trench run and the distinctive design of the grate were orientated to appear to drift down the stairs between the two levels, further enhancing the flowing-water effect of the grate pattern.

“The design was related in part to a strategy the University has about recognising Indigenous culture and the split in the two levels across the site. The site design worked as a line that connected the two levels, and based on the organic form and flow of water between the two levels and these spaces the grate design emerged,” explained Keith Stead of Oculus.

The flexibility and durability of the architectural Freestyle range, part of ACO Australia’s Heelsafe® *Anti-slip* collection, has successfully produced a distinctive identity for each project, while also ensuring effective and reliable drainage in key urban locations.

PROJECT PARTICULARS

- Drains** KlassikDrain (general purpose trench drain)
- Grates** Freestyle (architectural custom-design)
- Adelaide Grate Design**
Amy Joy Watson
- Sydney Grate Design** Oculus

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