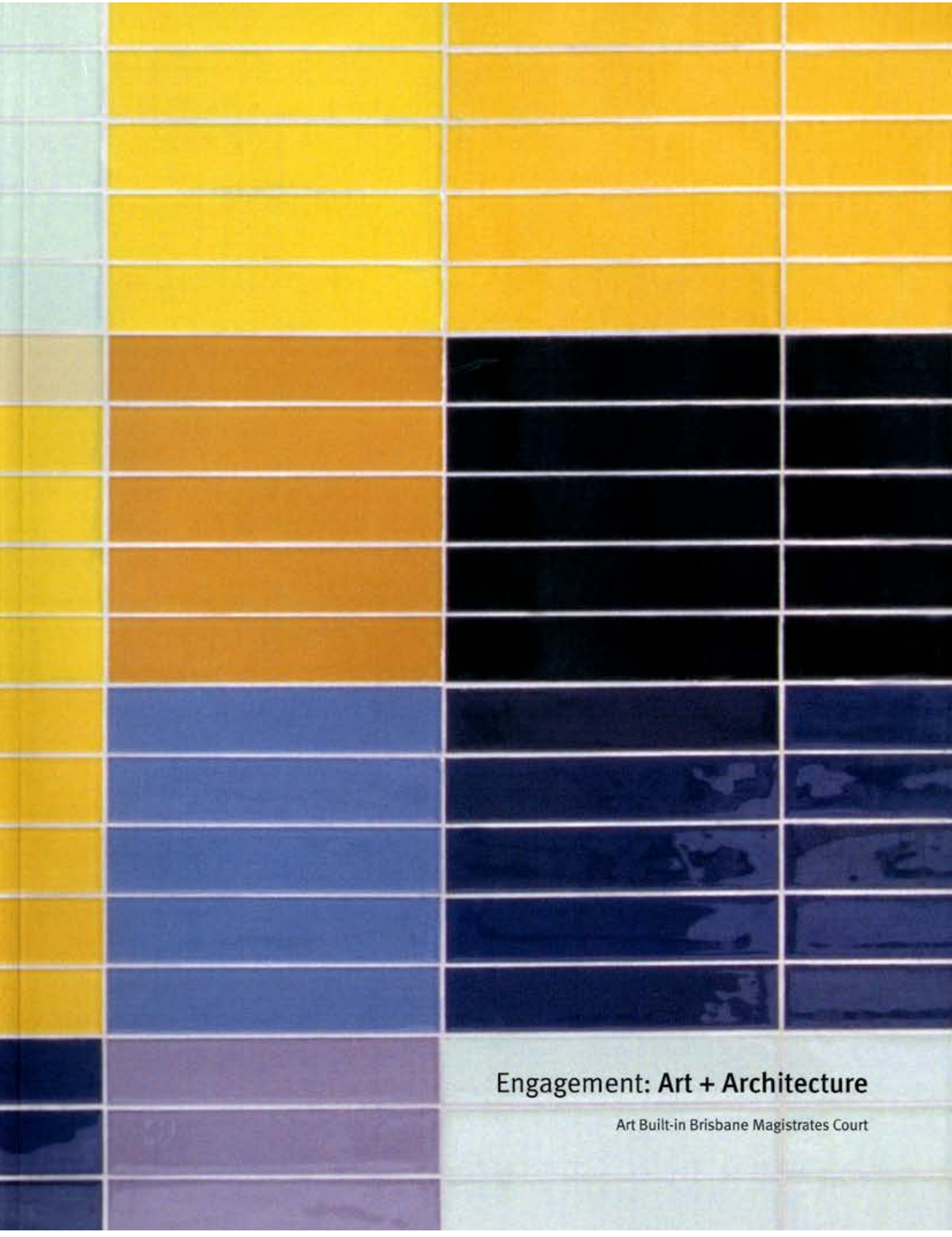

Engagement: **Art + Architecture**

Art Built-in Brisbane Magistrates Court

Brisbane Magistrates Court, Queensland, Australia

Located on the corner of George and Turbot Streets in Brisbane, the 14-storey building is one of the few custom-built courthouses in Australia and provides 19 Magistrates Courtrooms including a Murri (Indigenous) Court, two Coroners Courtrooms, four Small Claims Courtrooms, administration areas, day detention facilities and prisoner transfer facilities. The complex also houses 25 hearing rooms, with the capacity for a further 14 to be added in the future. The building design pays particular attention to the needs of people involved in domestic matters before the court, including separate waiting areas and exits. Brisbane Magistrates Court provides support for victims and their families, assisting vulnerable witnesses through video links that enable evidence to be presented from remote locations and from protected areas within the building.

Queensland Government

Queensland **the Smart State**

WALTER Construction Group

COX Rayner

Published by:

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- Public Art Agency, Arts Queensland, Department of Education and the Arts

WALTER Construction Group

Cox Rayner Architects

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Foreword

The Brisbane Magistrates Court building and its public art collection not only pay tribute to Queensland's people and its legal system, but have also reclaimed the historical and cultural significance of a large inner-city site.

The site has been an Indigenous meeting and ceremonial place, the water supply for an ever-growing colony and the location for the once-bustling Turbot Street food-and-produce markets. At the turn of the twentith century, it housed buildings across more than 50 blocks, while, in the 1970s and 1980s, its disused buildings were the site of radical artist initiatives. After demolition of its buildings in the 1980s, the site served as a car park for almost a decade.

Fourteen public art works by some of Queensland's most established and respected artists, as well as exciting new talents, have been integrated into this landmark building.

These contemporary art works range from Indigenous works that reflect the site's cultural heritage to innovative works that make statements about the building's purpose as a legal facility. The collection is responsive to the building's function as the 'people's court' and the quality is consistent with the status and respect accorded to Queensland's judicial system.

The collection was commissioned with a budget of $1.7 million under the Queensland Government's Art Built-in Policy. By committing two per cent of capital building project costs towards the integration of public art works, the Government both supports the local arts industry and also improves the amenity of our public places for all Queenslanders.

People from all walks of life will pass through the doors of the Brisbane Magistrates Court. The public art works have helped create a non-threatening and accessible environment, and have contributed to the building's architectural distinctiveness and cultural significance.

We congratulate all those who have been involved in the public art works commissioned for the Brisbane Magistrates Court building and commend to you this official catalogue.

Anna Bligh MP
Minister for Education and
Minister for the Arts

Rod Welford MP
Attorney-General and
Minister for Justice

Art Built-in—creating better public places

This year, 2004, is the national Year of the Built Environment. What better year could there be to promote broader community awareness and debate about the quality of our built environment and how good public art gives it greater meaning.

The public art commissioned for the Brisbane Magistrates Court marks an exciting milestone for the Queensland Government's public art program, Art Built-in. This project, at $1.7 million, is the largest in value since the policy was introduced on 1 July 1999. It also sets a new standard for the program's goal to 'integrate' art works with the built form.

The fourteen commissioned art works, by recognised and emerging artists, vary in scale and budget, but each adheres to the curator's theme of making visible the 'process' of art practice. These works highlight what artist, architect and curator can achieve when committed to a vision that our sense of place, our regional identity and the creativity of our artists can be reflected in our built environment. Exquisitely crafted courtroom door handles by jeweller Barbara Heath and a monumental sculptural entry statement by Daniel Templeman reflect the diversity of form possible, yet still achieve that goal in the new Brisbane Magistrates Court.

All of the individual art works in this building invite aesthetic scrutiny. The way in which they were integrated may also be discussed in terms of 'best practice'. But it is vitally important that we also contemplate larger philosophical issues. This project has reaffirmed the distinctive role that public art and its artists can play in 'placemaking' and in engaging communities. Art Built-in aims to help our communities gain 'ownership' of state government buildings in Queensland's towns and places.

The integrated public art in this new court facility also reinforces the Government's key objective of providing real job opportunities for artists to live and work in Queensland. It gives artists the chance to develop creatively and to diversify their art practice beyond the confines of the gallery space. Importantly, Art Built-in also helps create new jobs in associated cultural and small manufacturing sectors

This project demonstrates how contemporary art practice intersects with other disciplines, such as architecture, engineering, planning and environmental management. Through public art, these specialist professions come together to form a complex and necessary matrix of negotiation and creative decision-making. While this engagement may be robust in nature, it is hoped that each new public art encounter continues to encourage collaborative and sustainable relationships between these disciplines.

Artists in this project have proven that, in the company of built environment professionals, they too can contribute to an overall vision of place. Ultimately, their work, and that of Art Built-in, will be judged on how successfully such public art integrates with its environment and resonates with its communities.

John Stafford

Executive Manager

Public Art Agency, Arts Queensland

The Building-In Process

WALTER Construction Group is proud to have played a part in integrating the major public art program into the Brisbane Magistrates Court project.

As Managing Contractor, an essential part of WALTER's management of the project was coordinating the delivery and installation of the work of fourteen artists. Consistent with WALTER's relationship-driven approach and commitment to excellence, we commissioned each artist and worked closely with them and the design consultants to ensure a seamless installation. This required developing empathy with and understanding of the objectives and priorities of the artists, to ensure there were no compromises between their original concepts and the final reality. The success of this approach was reflected in how the line-of-sight issues, which arose when installing Judy Watson's *heart/land/river* in the ground-floor lobby, were resolved.

True to the brief of Art Built-in, the WALTER team worked with a number of the artists to help fabricate their works and coordinated our workforce to guarantee a straightforward installation. This was particularly evident in Bruce Reynolds' work, which saw the artist collaborate with skilled formworkers and concreters to produce an outstanding result in concrete quality and relief-work definition. Typically, as each new piece was installed, the site workforce was captivated by its unique form, often with lively debate ensuing.

In common with our involvement in the public art program, WALTER adopted a 'best-for-project' approach to the design and construction of the Brisbane Magistrates Court. In difficult market conditions, exemplified by a chronic shortage of skilled labour, we worked to produce a high-quality building appropriate to its civic status and anticipated long operating life. The building incorporates the best technology available today, but is flexible enough to accommodate future change.

With a view to the future of the construction industry, WALTER pursued a training regime on the Brisbane Magistrates Court that saw over 100,000 training hours provided and 100 apprenticeships offered. The Murri Court on Level 7 was constructed using only apprentice labour and achieved a level of quality equivalent to that in the remainder of the courts. This training initiative was supported by the subcontractors, who provided staff to supervise the apprentices, and also by the design consultants, who gave guidance during the shop-drawing and fabrication stages.

WALTER applied this constructive-thinking approach to many aspects of the court delivery, from the innovative construction and lifting techniques employed in placing the 12-tonne cantilevered main roof and ground-level canopy sections, to the staging strategies developed to overcome the resource shortages in critical trades. In every instance, the WALTER team strove to consider the interests of the other project stakeholders and, ultimately, the building users.

The Brisbane Magistrates Court adds significantly to Brisbane's public infrastructure and to the vision for public art in Queensland. WALTER Construction Group is proud to have participated in such a milestone project and congratulates the whole team for their part in creating a unique artistic legacy.

Peter Wood

General Manager, Northern Building and Engineering

WALTER Construction Group Limited

Balancing Creativity and Process

The role of the public art project manager, on a project of the scale and complexity of the Brisbane Magistrates Court, is to maintain the delicate balance between the individual artists and the project as a whole. Across the two-year construction period, this balancing act played out between maintaining the integrity of the art-work concepts and the need to deliver the entire project on time and within budget.

Art making, by its very nature, is about pushing boundaries and taking risks. Most of the proposed art works for the Brisbane Magistrates Court had not been created before, so with clients and contractors seeking to minimise risk across their construction program, substantial research and development was undertaken to ensure they were successfully integrated into the project. The public art team played a vital role in supporting the artists to ensure that these issues were identified and resolved.

The Brecknock Consulting team working on the Brisbane Magistrates Court comprised Chetana Andary, Louise Rollman, Jodie Cox, Jose Da Silva and myself as project director. The team had the responsibility of delivering the largest and most complex project that the Queensland Government has initiated to date under its Art Built-in policy. It involved a total of sixteen artists at concept stage, with fourteen artists being finally commissioned. Coordinating such a large group involved many hours of meetings, site and studio visits, phone calls and countless e-mails.

Over the two years, hundreds of people have been involved in the art-work program, in addition to the core team of curator, architect and managing contractor. A range of other professionals provided technical support, such as structural engineering, lighting design and art conservation. Each artist also utilised the services of skilled tradespeople to assist in, or totally undertake, the fabrication and installation of the finished art works. Daniel Templeman's Confluence, for instance, required a team of sheet-metal workers, painters, concrete contractors, experienced installers and crane drivers to fabricate, transport and install the work.

The public art project manager must ensure that these complex inter-relationships happen smoothly and efficiently. Of equal importance is the task of ensuring that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and the people of Queensland, gain a legacy of high-quality artwork of aesthetic and monetary value.

On the Brisbane Magistrates Court, the WALTER Construction Group has, as managing contractors, been incredibly supportive of the artists and their needs. This supportive environment has made it a positive experience for the artists, especially for those who had no previous experience of working in public art.

Visitors to the Brisbane Magistrates Court will enjoy the results of their creativity throughout the building. The fourteen art works are the end result of a two-year journey through a process that balanced creativity with the pragmatics of constructing a landmark Brisbane building.

Richard Brecknock

Director

Brecknock Consulting

Process in Architecture: Process in Art

The Brisbane Magistrates Court originated in an architectural competition in 2001. It began a journey of design and construction which entailed continually reviewing answers to questions as to the nature of court buildings and their role in the city, and with respect to the interaction between art and architecture.

Collaboration was implicit in the design process from the outset as we entered the competition in joint venture between Cox Rayner Architects and Ainsley Bell and Murchison. Within a short timeframe, our two firms had not only to resolve the fundamental needs of the design brief, but commit our most profound urban design philosophies to paper.

It was a hectic period, during which we debated intensely different approaches, fixing on two guiding principles. The first was to reject conventional attitudes that law courts need to be monolithic, alienating structures manifested to convey awe. We determined that the Brisbane Magistrates Court should be as transparent and participatory as possible. The second was to optimise the building's interface with the public at ground level. This principle was fundamental in the shaping of both the building and its edges, especially with respect to incorporating artwork.

Fortuitously, as we evolved the design these principles became mutually reinforcing. The seminal idea was to radiate the plan such that it could form the first stage of a new civic connection between the city and its parkland rim. This gesture simultaneously opened up the centre of the building to view from both ends, thereby creating the transparency we envisaged. Another attribute of the idea was that the plan appears to form a 'clasp', cradling the open space to the north of the site known as the city's speaker's forum, thereby forming a symbiotic relationship between justice and freedom of speech.

For the forms and patterns of which the building is composed, we developed an idea that scale and mass are relative notions, informed by surrounding context, in this case, ranging from buildings of substantial height to low parkland. We evolved patterns of overlapping planes and repeated these from very large elements, such as the roof, down to more tactile elements such as seats and window enclosures. Our purpose was to remove any sense of foreboding or intimidation.

The materials were chosen to impart an impression of honesty and tactility, as against one of grandeur and bureaucracy. An intrinsic aspect was environmental response, which was extended through to all the finishes inside the building. Externally, materials include concrete (cast *in situ* concrete and precast) reinforcing the overlapping patterns, copper left to weather naturally and translucent fibreglass—not at all the stuff of time-honoured legal institutions.

These initiatives were evolved, some during the competition phase and some as the design developed, through a process that is apparent in reading the building. Notwithstanding the functional complexity implicit in designing law courts, nor the question of whether architecture is art, we conceived with the curator, Jay Younger, an idea that the art works would be most integral to the building if they too revealed their conceptual and manufacturing process.

I admit to a particular interest in collaborating with artists, rather than merely using their art work to adorn the public realm. This interest stems from an evaluation of the ambivalent relationships between artists and architects that characterised the evolution of modern architecture over the past century. I believe the time has come to revive collaboration as a means of enriching and diversifying the meaning of public places, rendering them responsive and relevant to the increasingly multicultural and pluralistic society in which we live.

The choosing of artists was based upon three main criteria. The first was passionate commitment to their practice, regardless of whether the artist was established or emerging. The second was an ability, and a willingness, to share and debate ideas about the public realm and the fabric of the city. Finally, we chose artists whose work revealed the process of its making.

Short-lived as the competition to conceive the project was, the true journey of its evolution was one of reciprocality between art and architecture. We do not hold that architecture need revere art, nor vice versa. The building is an interaction between them. There is, however, no denying that the architectural concepts preceded and thus informed the artists of core values to be interpreted. Nonetheless, we did not want any artist to be compromised by the need for engagement with architects, project managers or clients.

There is an extraordinary diversity of art forms throughout the project, due to artists working in different media and pursuing their practices with freedom. Degrees of collaboration varied, with some artists privately responding to the given brief, others keen to delve into the architect's heart and mind. These, of course, from the architects' perspective, were the most rewarding and have resulted in the most challenging, multi-layered works. Ultimately, my goal is to work with an artist or artists on the totality of design.

The Brisbane Magistrates Court represents a paradigm shift from convention on many levels, resulting in a new way to conceive not only courts buildings, but also any structure that participates in the public domain of the city.

Michael Rayner

Cox Rayner Architects

Process in Practice

Court buildings can be austere structures. As architecture, they often have incorporated 'cold' polished black or white stone in highly formal designs, with imposing steps rising up to a foreboding entrance. Similarly, commissions for law courts have traditionally produced such symbols of state authority as statues of liberty or justice, as well as scales and crests. In comparison, the Brisbane Magistrates Court has provided the opportunity to commission contemporary art work and design that humanises the built environment, while creating powerful statements of enduring social significance for Queensland's civic life.

The Brisbane Magistrates Court is known as 'the people's court' and it is commonly the first point of contact with the justice system. Due to the role of the courts in deciding the fate of its users, and the resulting tension for those who appear before judges or magistrates, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General wanted to create a building that is calming and humanising, rather than alienating and institutional.

The initial curatorial challenge was to realise a conceptual relationship between justice and contemporary art. In considering this relationship, 'process art' was chosen as a general curatorial framework that is open and inclusive and also provides a reflective metaphor for the legal process. Just as lawyers ask questions about reality and the perception of reality, so too artists have been similarly preoccupied. Much of art practice in the 20th century responded to philosophical and aesthetic challenges that questioned the role of art and its ability or inability to represent 'reality'.

'Process art', also known as 'procedural art', is one of the many different art movements to employ alternative strategies to question traditional forms of realist representation. Emerging in the late 1960s, its fundamental philosophical approach continues to have currency for artists and designers. The principles of 'process art' emphasise the creative act of the artist and grew from the practice of 'action painting' and 'tachisme' in the 1940s and 1950s. Jackson Pollock's drip paintings and later Morris Louis's stain paintings were records of the technical procedures employed to produce them; 'process' became both the means and the subject of the works. Richard Serra's *Casting* (1969), an impermanent work made from throwing molten lead into the angular join between the gallery floor and wall and then peeled away as residue, revealed the behavioural properties of the materials that account for their form (or, in Serra's case, 'anti-form'). 'Process' art work provokes thought in terms of how the work is made—the process, experience or task of its making.

'Process art' can be viewed as a process to acknowledge the art work's 'whole story', including the performative role of the artist in creating the work. While materials and forms underwent change as a result of artists' interaction with them, art works also continued to evolve and change after this interaction. The art work was the vehicle for the interaction of time, chance and change. The materials used and actions undertaken by the artist were often non-traditional. Materials and actions from everyday life were recontextualised as art. While gestural—and performative interaction was important—'process art' also produced systematic and serial works, where similar artefacts were produced in a repetitive format from the same parameters.

For the Brisbane Magistrates Court, 'process art' principles were integrated into each unique artist's brief and collectively into the overall brief for the art works. The major concept is that the artistic outcome is the consequence of a set of actions. The art work

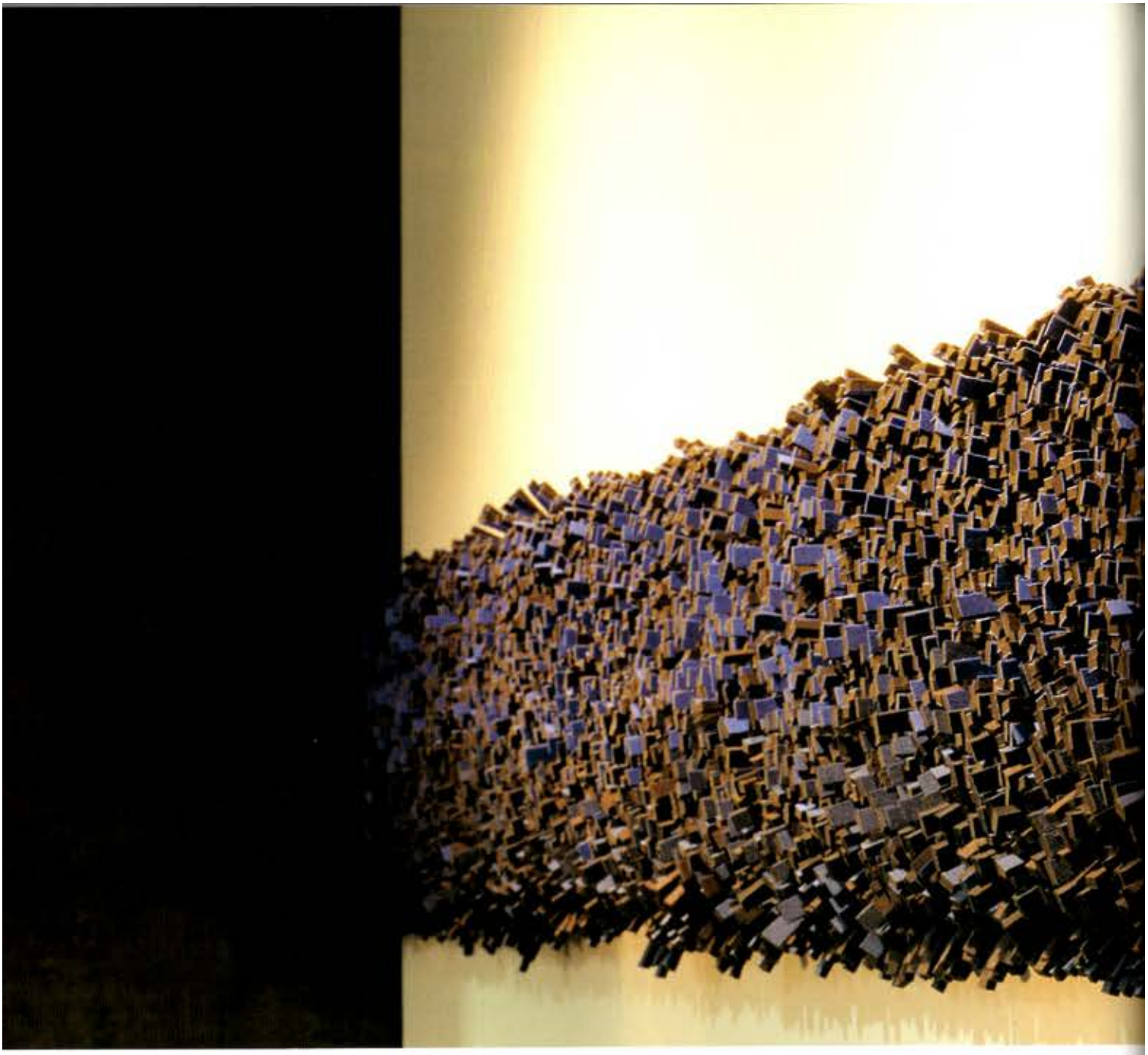
is evidence of the actions undertaken and reflects on 'the laws of nature' in a cause-and-effect situation. The metaphoric relationship between artistic and legal processes within a coherent system is the lynchpin of the curatorial rationale.

In keeping with Art Built-in philosophy, the public art work is conceptually and physically integrated with the architectural approach. Cox Rayner Architects responded to the client's aims by using natural materials with a 'raw' palette and strategies of layering. The art works echoed and developed these strategies to reflect on a 'bigger picture' of life by employing system, series, cycles, interconnectivity and repetition.

The artists selected for the Brisbane Magistrates Court reflect difference; young and mature practitioners from culturally diverse backgrounds, artists with first-time commissions and those with broad experience in public art, emerging and internationally recognised artists are included. Brisbane Magistrates Court proudly showcases some of Queensland's most innovative contemporary artists. In keeping with the nature of the curatorial framework, artists have used a wide variety of media to produce their art works—neoprene, textiles, collage in concrete, photograms and suspended tensioned threads. Similarly, artists have used series within their overall approach, including works that continue in a sequence through the floors of the building, as well as variations in different formations, repetition or pairing. All of the artists involved have produced art works that continue, and develop, the integrity of their own individual practices. Each has taken the brief very seriously.

The works collectively reflect on the nature of life, humanity, justice, history and place. The experience of the art works as a whole is layered and sensitive, with a balance between spirit and rational coherence. Throughout, there is a sense of being inspired by the issues that arise when contemplating the role of the courts and the effects of the judicial system. Successfully integrated with the building, the art works at the Brisbane Magistrates Court can become a part of the lives of Queenslanders who find themselves at the courts.

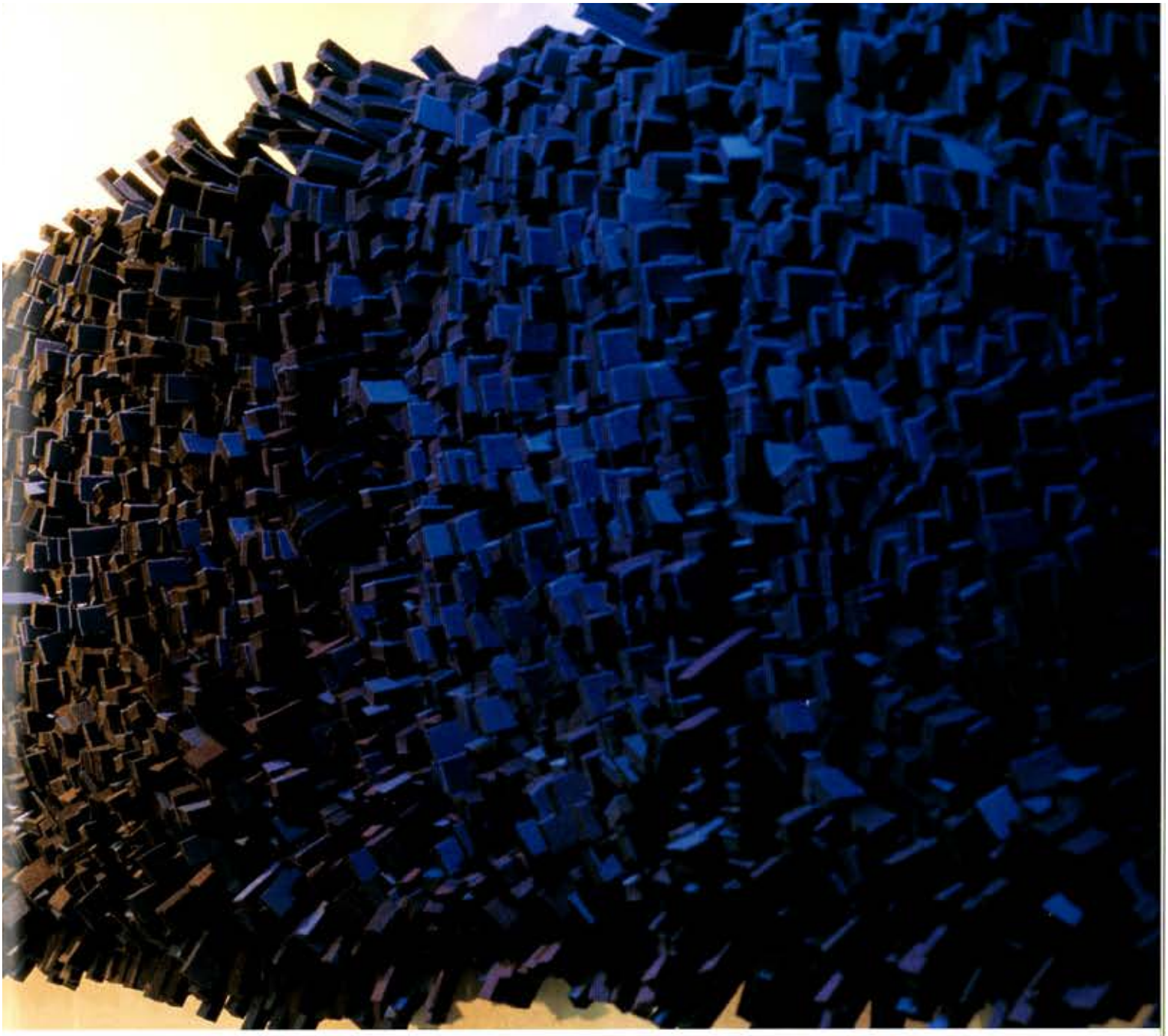
Jay Younger
Public Art Curator



Sebastian Di Mauro
b. 1955 Innisfail
blur between 2004
neoprene, timber,
plastic mesh and glue

Sebastian Di Mauro
blur between 2004

blur between refers to the blurred horizon line of sea and sky, the place where the two essential elements of water and air meet. Sebastian Di Mauro's work relates to materiality and spirituality, the transformation of the mundane and everyday, as well as the relationships between people and nature. The artist uses unpredictable materials to make his art works. Sebastian Di Mauro transforms mundane materials, in this case wetsuit neoprene, into organic forms that are whimsical and humorous.



Project Profile

The art works displayed through the Brisbane Magistrates Court are artists' responses both to the architectural spaces in and around the building, and to a curatorial rationale focused on the use of 'process' in the making of art. They have been developed in collaboration with the project team to enrich the meaning and experience of the place.

Project	Brisbane Magistrates Court
Location	Queensland Place (eastern end), corner George and Turbot Streets, Brisbane, Queensland.
Client	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Principal's Representative	Project Services, Department of Public Works
Managing Contractor	WALTER Construction Group Allan Robertson and Tony Gillett
Architectural Team	AB+M Cox Rayner Architects Michael Rayner, Terry Murchison, Carl Brooks, Jeff Bennett, Tim Morgan, David McCabe
Curator	Jay Younger
Public Art Project Management	Richard Brecknock, Jodie Cox, Jose Da Silva, Chetana Andary, Brecknock Consulting, Louise Rollman
Artists	Eugene Carchesio, Sebastian Di Mauro, Marian Drew, Fiona Foley, Barbara Heath, Judith Kentish, Guy Parmenter, Freya Pinney, Bruce Reynolds, Sandra Selig, Daniel Templeman, Judy Watson, Lilla Watson, Judith Wright
Art Built-In Advisor	Public Art Agency, Arts Queensland
Public Art Advisory Group	Barry Mulheran, Principal Project Officer, Department of Justice and Attorney-General John Stafford, Executive Manager, Public Art Agency Gary Cumming, Project Manager, Project Services Dennis Revell, Department of Justice and Attorney-General Michael Rayner, AB+M Cox Rayner Architects Tony Gillett, Simon Crooks, WALTER Construction Group Richard Brecknock, Brecknock Consulting Jay Younger, Public Art Curator
Date of Completion	16 November 2004
Budget	Project: $135.5 million Art Built-in: $1.7 million

Acknowledgements

Project Partners' Acknowledgements

WALTER Construction Group acknowledges the efforts of the entire Art Built-In Team and extends its thanks to the individual artists for their patience and perseverance during the construction period, particularly in the last few weeks of the project.

Michael Rayner would like to acknowledge the Project Architects, Jeff Bennett and Tim Morgan, who led the consultant teams from inception to completion. He would also like to acknowledge the artists for their professional collaboration, Steve Hunter of Cox Rayner for his artist liaison, and WALTER Construction Group for their commitment to integrating the artwork into the building.

Jay Younger would like to acknowledge Beth Jackson, Gia Mitchell, Jacky Owens and Matt Dabrowski.

Brecknock Consulting would like to acknowledge Peter Maxwell of Maxim Consulting Services and Caroline O'Rorke of Conservation Art Consultants for conservation advice during the artwork design development phases.

The Public Art Agency would like to acknowledge Kendall Battley, Celestine Doyle and Kate Eltham for publication production management and Joey Dillon for her excellent catalogue design.

Artists' Acknowledgements

Eugene Carchesio

Eugene Carchesio is represented by Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

Sebastian Di Mauro

The artist would like to thank Thomas Justice for the fabrication of the artwork. Sebastian Di Mauro is represented by Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne.

Marian Drew

Marian Drew wishes to thank Maurice Ortega, Camilla Birkeland, Shane Gaston, Deb Mansfield, Bruce Reynolds and Simon Laws for their invaluable assistance in the production of this work. She also wishes to thank her daughters, Genevieve and Isabella, for their patience in trawling for tadpoles, shrimps and tiny fish in local streams and ponds. Marian Drew is represented by Gallery 482, Brisbane.

Fiona Foley

Nona Cameron; Urban Art Projects. Fiona Foley is represented by Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane.

Barbara Heath

Handles: Design—Barbara Heath and Malcolm Enright
Digital Realisation—Barbara Heath, Malcolm Enright and Peter Pegg
Manufacture—John Van Koeverden and G & B Stainless; Rob Newton and Laser Central

Lift Plates: Design—Barbara Heath and Malcolm Enright
Digital Realisation—Barbara Heath, Malcolm Enright and Peter Pegg
Manufacture—Brad Parker and Master Cut Technologies

Judith Kentish

Judith Kentish is represented by Esa Jaske Gallery, Sydney.

Guy Parmenter

Jeff Bennett and Steve Hunter from Cox Rayner; Colin Ginger from Pre-cast Concrete; Grant Holbeck from Wood N You for the Unimould fabrication; Adam Hughes from Taringa Steel for the stainless fabrication.