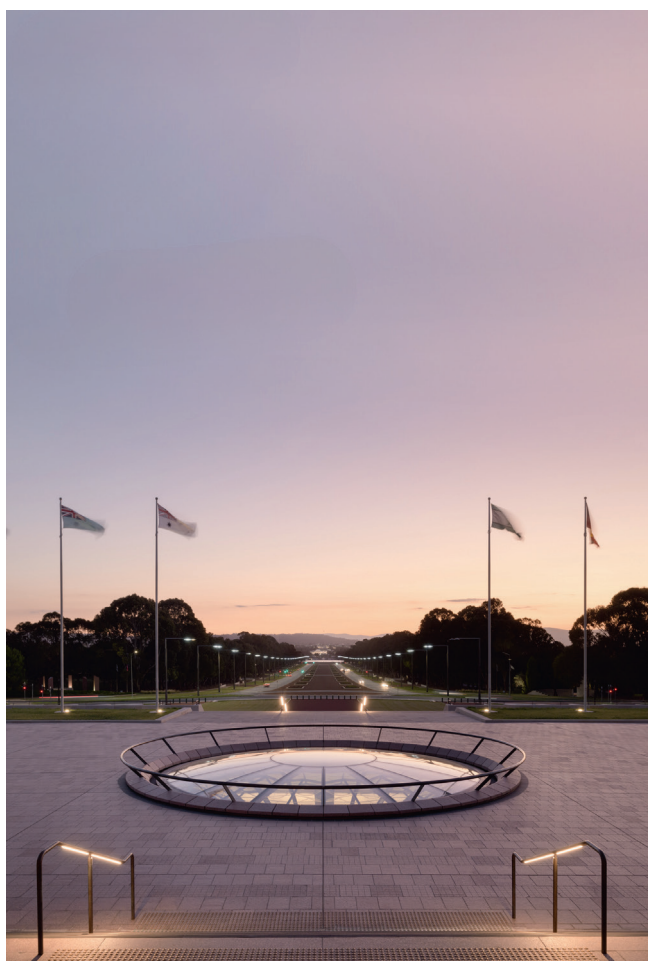


CREATE

135



By Design:

Story by Julie Lee
Photography by Thurston Empson

Australian War Memorial entrance
and parade ground, Canberra, ACT

A reinvigorated entranceway recognises the past while inviting in a new generation of visitors.

THE PROJECT

The past, present and future come together in the redevelopment of the Australian War Memorial’s entryway and parade ground. The project draws on authentic materials, modern design techniques and Walter Burley Griffin’s original 1912 vision for the nation’s capital on Ngunnawal Country.

THE CONCEPT

The Sydney-based architecture firm that led the project, Studio.SC, had a mission to reimagine the visitor experience at one of Australia’s most significant cultural institutions. The firm worked with Kane Constructions and the Australian War Memorial team to build an entrance that is functional and emotive, encouraging moments of quiet contemplation.

THE RESULT

Few sites are as embedded in our country’s history as the War Memorial so undertaking a project of this importance came with opportunities and challenges. Preserving the facade was critical to maintaining Walter Burley Griffith’s concept for the city, with the War Memorial sitting on the same axis as Parliament House to serve as an inescapable reminder to lawmakers

of the consequences of war. “The brief was to keep that vista untouched so we had to prop up the existing building and excavate under it to build a new structure,” says Studio.SC director Edward Salib. The exterior design also included upgrading the parade ground to improve accessibility and accommodate more visitors for ceremonial events.

The centrepiece of the new entrance is the Oculus, an inverted dome that gives visitors a view of the Hall of Memory and the main building. A steel frame fitted with glass inserts or “petals” weighing 350 kilograms each, the Oculus acts as a wayfinder while also using the shifting patterns of light and shadow to encourage reflection. “It works not only from a physical perspective but an emotional perspective, too,” says Nicholas Bandounas, a Studio.SC director, who calls this redesign a “once-in-a-lifetime project”.

The materials used throughout the project, including concrete, sandstone and bronze, also took on special connotations. “Even decisions like exposing the concrete structure had meaning,” says Salib. “It’s about permanence and reflecting the strength and resilience of our heroes.”

But the transformation’s true legacy, he says, will be connection. “This was always about creating the opportunity for people to connect and reflect on what they’re about to see. If even one person stops and feels something meaningful then we’ve done our job.”

