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ARCHITECTURE

Arts West
University of Melbourne

Contents

"The focus of Arts West on immersive, interactive and collaborative learning is unsurpassed in the Asia Pacific region. This is the new force in humanities and social sciences teaching and research. It's an innovative, amazing and fun place that opens our minds to the rich possibilities of an Arts education."

— Professor Mark Considine Provost,
   University of Melbourne

1. Executive Summary

Arts West's striking façade features images of objects from the University's 23 cultural collections. The Faculty of Arts needed the building because their existing teaching and learning spaces no longer suited their contemporary pedagogical methods. ARM Architecture + Architectus worked with the Faculty to design an educational facility that would reflect the latest thinking in their curricula.

Prior to the redevelopment of Arts West, teaching of the Faculty's Bachelor of Arts was dispersed across the University, with students travelling between buildings and across campus (in some instances, long distances) between classes. It was difficult to generate a sense of connection to their student body or a sense of faculty.

The Faculty needed the new building to accommodate and represent the concept of object-based learning (OBL). Academic staff use pieces from the cultural collections in their teaching, so the new building includes two OBL laboratories specifically tailored for exhibiting and studying collection pieces.

In an era when campuses must offer something beyond online study, Arts West's spaces are tailored to project-based collaborative, interactive, seminar, discursive and didactic modes of teaching and learning. They incorporate a range of interactive technologies. These include audio-visual, film projection and document cameras. There is a 150-seat lecture theatre and a range of specialist teaching spaces that can be formatted for 30 or 60 students.

Arts West's many breakout spaces are designed for informal learning: they encourage students and staff to meet, discuss, collaborate, listen, compare and share. The circulation spaces are filled with enticing and comfortable places for group and individual study, charging devices, and learning efficiently outside contact hours. These in-between places are for serendipitous encounters with academic staff and fellow students.

The University aspired to a landmark building that would help position it as a leading institution for arts studies—a competitive drawcard to attract staff and local and international students. For the façade, we pioneered the 3D virtual modelling techniques used to design the fin array and images and communicate them to the fabricators. We were involved in consultations with staff from several University faculties to choose images that would communicate the appropriate messaging, be legible, and be universally liked.

Arts West's space planning is designed to facilitate good eye contact between students and teaching staff. The spaces are generously proportioned to allow staff and students to move around easily, making meaningful one-on-one exchanges possible.

The glass reinforced concrete (GRC) is a playful reinterpretation of the time-honoured university cloister. This is both a nod to the architectural university typology and an echo of the immediate site context. The saturated gold colour gestures a connection with the University's sandstone past and the enclosed formation blurs the line between inside and out.

2. Scope of Work & Budget

The Arts West $65 million redevelopment provides infrastructure to support innovative teaching and learning models. The building enables teaching staff to provide enriched, campus-based, face-to-face experiences, supported by digital and online technologies. Enhanced in-class connectivity enables students to share content with each-other and with the group to create new opportunities for collaborative learning. Arts West also provides a series of specialised teaching spaces to support object-based and digital media-based learning.

Specifications
Each teaching space includes a teaching point with touch-screen control panel, PC and laptop, as well as at least three DDA height adjustable desks. These are provided with an easy adjustment mechanism to ensure quick and easy height adjustment. Spaces with fixed furniture include dedicated spaces for DDA access.

1. 150 Capacity Lecture Theatre
Modelled on the successful 'Theatre-in-the-round' in the Old Arts Building, this new 150 capacity lecture theatre provides the Arts Precinct on Parkville with an additional mid-sized lecture theatre.
A teaching point located at the back provides:
– A PC with camera and conferencing software;
– Touch panel control;
– A Laptop;
– A Blu Ray Player.
The AV provides three possible projection modes:
– Two projectors display same content on outer edges
– Single Image displayed at centre of screen
– Single widescreen image for watching wide screen content achieved by edge blending the image across all three projectors on the front wall;
– Echo lecture capture capability.
– There is an LCD panel visible to presenter and floor box to support a mobile lectern.
– Audio capabilities include:
– Ceiling speakers for program and vocal audio;
– Hearing Augmentation System;
– Microphones located at teaching point.

The space supports both traditional and discursive lecture modes as well as the possibility of hosting a panel or presentation from the front of the theatre space. There are two DDA spaces provided at the ends of the front rows.

2. 30 Person Collaborative Space (x9)
Collaborative learning spaces follow the success of collaborative spaces in the Old Arts building.
A teaching point provides:
– Control for two high-definition projectors for playback of content from;
– Touch panel control;
– A PC with camera and conferencing software;
– A Laptop (connected at the Teacher's Desk).
Projectors will display the same content on each screen. There is power and data provided around the outsides edges of the room in where the symbol L appears in the diagram above.
Audio reinforcement comprising:
– Ceiling speakers for program audio;
– Hearing Augmentation System.

3. 30 Person Project Space (x4)
Project learning spaces provide multiple student desks with:
– A dedicated display screen;
– Touch panel control;
– A single laptop connection point; and,
– Ability to share teacher or student content throughout the room.
A teaching point provides:
– Control for two high-definition projectors for playback of content from;
– Touch panel control;
– A PC with camera and conferencing software;
– A Laptop (connected at the Teacher's Desk).
Audio reinforcement comprising:
– Ceiling speakers for program audio;
– Hearing Augmentation System.

4. 60 Person Collaborative Space (x4)
Collaborative learning spaces follow the success of collaborative spaces in the Old Arts building.
A teaching point provides:
– Control for four high-definition projectors for playback of content from;
– Touch panel control;
– A PC with camera and conferencing software;
– A Laptop (connected at the Teacher's Desk).
Projectors will display the same content on each screen. There are 10 power and data points provided around the edges of the room in where the symbol L appears in the diagram above.
Audio reinforcement comprising:
– Ceiling speakers for program audio;
– Hearing Augmentation System.

5. 60 Person Project Space
Project learning spaces provide multiple student desks with:
– A dedicated display screen;
– Touch panel control;
– A single laptop connection point; and,
– Ability to share teacher or student content throughout the room.
A teaching point provides:
– Control for two high-definition projectors for playback of content from;

– Touch panel control;
– A PC with camera and conferencing software;
– A Laptop (connected at the Teacher's Desk).
Audio reinforcement comprising:
– Ceiling speakers for program audio;
– Hearing Augmentation System.

6. Object-Based learning laboratory (x2)
Object-Based learning spaces provide dedicated facilities to support object-based learning. This includes two spaces joined by sliding doors, enabling the space to operate either as a single or two discrete teaching spaces.
The two spaces offer different modes to support object-based learning. OBL-Lab 1 provide an open flexible space, with the ability to pull out mobile cabinets into the room. Under bench seating is provided however this room is more likely to support an interactive OBL mode. OBL-Lab 2 provides curved rows of seating to enable a discursive forum. There is additional space provided at the front and around the back of the fixed seating to enable students to gather at different points around the room.
Each space provides a range of cabinet display space for storage and access to objects. The rooms are individually climate controlled.
Each teaching space provides a teaching with:
– Control for a high-definition projectors for playback of content from;
– Touch panel control;
– A PC with camera and conferencing software;
– A Laptop (connected at the Teacher's Desk).
Projectors will display the same content on each screen. There is power and data provided around the outsides edges of the room in where the symbol L appears in the diagram above.
Audio reinforcement comprising:
– Ceiling speakers for program audio;
– Hearing Augmentation System.

7. Media Laboratory (x1)
The media lab provides a flexible use teaching space including a video wall to support the use of interactive media. The video wall (3 x 2) provides six high-definition 55" LCD panels for display of:
– Two PCs;
– Touch panel control;
– Laptops connected at the Presenter's Desk;
– Laptops connected at the wall plates;
– Blu Ray player
A dedicated video wall processor allows individual or multiple inputs to be displayed in predefined layouts.
Audio reinforcement comprising:
– Front speakers for program sound
– Ability to play any audio source associated with video wall content
– Hearing Augmentation System. Touch panel for control.

8. 60 Person Interactive Theatre (x2) including (1x) Screening Capacity
Interactive theatres provide students with the capacity to interact with each other. Every second row in these spaces is deeper than the one in front to provide a platform for collaborative work. The two models of interactive theatres each provide full swivel seating to enable this collaboration.
Interactive Theatre 1 provides two high-definition projectors (same content) for display of content from:
– A PC with camera and conferencing software;
– Touch panel control;
– A Laptop;
– Touch panel for control from the Teacher's Desk.
Audio reinforcement comprising:
– Front speakers for program sound;
– Ceiling speakers for vocal audio;
– Hearing Augmentation System; wireless and teacher's desk fixed microphones. 2nd microphone connection point in floor box.
Interactive Theatre 2 (Cinema) provides a high-definition projector and motorised anamorphic lens for playback of content from:
– A PC with camera and conferencing software;
– A laptop;
– A Blu Ray Player;
– Touch panel control.
Playback of films will be in native widescreen aspect ratios (16:9 or Cinemascope).
Audio reinforcement comprising:
– Surround Sound System (front speakers, rear and side speakers);
– Ceiling speakers for vocal audio;
– Hearing Augmentation System; wireless and teacher's desk fixed microphones.

9. Discursive Theatre
The Discursive Lecture theatre enables students to engage across the theatre as a result of the curved seating configuration. This space provides two high-definition projectors for display of content from:
– A PC with camera and conferencing software;
– Touch panel control;
– A laptop;
– Option to connect to a floor box centred between the two screens.
The projectors display the same content.
Audio reinforcement comprising:
– Front speakers for program sound
– Ceiling speakers for vocal audio
– Hearing Augmentation System; wireless and teacher's desk fixed microphones. 2nd microphone connection point in floor box.

Informal Learning Spaces
In addition to the 25 formal learning spaces provided by the building, the new design substantially increases the amount of informal learning space in the Arts Precinct. Each floor includes at least one informal learning area, ranging from individual study spaces to group discussion and project spaces. These spaces include power and charging points located throughout the building.

Arts West has excellent environmental performance and is Five Star Green Star accredited. There is chilled-beam air conditioning in the teaching and staff spaces and the central atrium is naturally ventilated. Besides creating a striking landmark, the fins on the façade provides passive solar control. Rainwater is stored in two 20,000-litre underground tanks, then reticulated through the building for toilets and irrigation. Arts West is a happy, healthy building with a focus on wellbeing, social support, equal access and environmental responsibility.

3. School and Community Engagement

Establishing the Vision

The Faculty of Arts developed a strong vision for this project – it was to herald new ways of teaching by the Faculty and create more memorable and meaningful student experiences. Architectus with ARM Architecture were engaged to translate this vision into architecture, known as the Arts West Redevelopment. A series of preliminary workshops distilled three key principles. These became project touchstones enabling the design team to ensure that each decision embodied the faculty's vision. The principles worked as 'yard sticks' against which to regularly measure the project and assisted in the decision making process.

The principals are:

– to create a new home for the Bachelor of Arts. To unite a previously dispersed learning community and create a collegial sense of belonging.

– to develop learning space types that embodied that Faculty's visions for the future of teaching and learning on campus.

– to create informal learning spaces that supports and engages the diverse academic cohort.

We understood that while we wanted to maximise the knowledge and visionary input of the participants in our user groups their time was precious. Therefore we broke the users into area-specific groups (Teaching and learning, Workplace, Back of house, Artefacts) and created an executive user group that reviewed at high level the collective outcomes. A series of user group workshops were established to understand how the new and engaging curriculum would be taught within the Bachelor of Arts. The Faculty had aspirations beyond the current teaching methods therefore the new learning spaces would be used to lead the change.

Guiding Principles

During an extended consultation period the Faculty, with the project team, developed a series of principles and objectives to guide the spatial design and capability of the new Arts West teaching spaces. These stakeholders were asked to consider current and future trends in higher education, pedagogic theory and practice, and student learning experiences from a range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. The principles and objectives developed from this consultation align the needs and strategic aims of the Faculty of Arts with the broad educational objects of the University of Melbourne outlined in *Growing Esteem 2014. The broad principles and aims that emerged from consultation are outlined in the table below:

1	Facilitate effective seminar, tutorial and workshop teaching for small groups;
2	Accommodate both whole group and project-based teaching and learning modes in every classroom (including, to the greatest practical extent, furnishings and equipment that can be easily reconfigured to accommodate a diverse range of pedagogies and learning styles);
4	Provide a consistent and high quality experience for all students and teachers in each classroom in regard to workspace, sight-lines, acoustics, access to technology, circulation within the space, and comfort;
5	Maximise potential for communication and interaction among students and teachers, both individually and in groups;
6	Ensure that teaching spaces are outfitted with appropriate audio-visual equipment which is up-to-date (and, wherever possible, future-proofed), reliable and fit for purpose;
7	Optimise potential use of teaching spaces by students and staff during and after formal teaching hours and periods;
8	Promote student engagement and maximize opportunities for experiential learning in all teaching spaces by utilizing existing University collections and exploiting digital technologies in a manner aligned with the undergraduate teaching programs in the Faculty.

Workshop outcomes

Consultation team
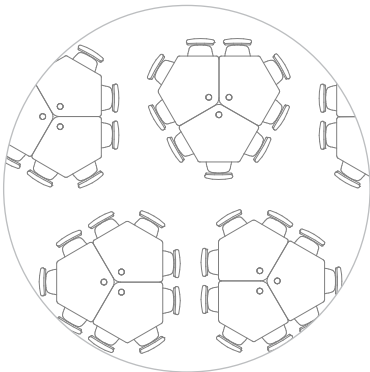
Collaborative protoype floorplan

3. School and Community Engagement

Planning Process and Stakeholders

ARM Architecture + Architectus were inspired by the Faculty's pedagogical framework and this is reflected in the architecture. The hands on, collaborative learning style was also mirrored in the design process.

A broad range of future users were adopted as our in-the-field experts and, through a series of meetings, workshops and presentations we were able to realise their inspirational pedagogy in physical form.

Throughout the design, documentation and construction period there was engagement with leading experts such as New Learning Environments for the Educational Specification and educational overlays and Cunningham Martyn Design for exhibition expertise.

Our version of object based learning took place in the form of physical models, real size templates, digital models and full size prototypes

In late 2013 the consultant team and the Faculty commenced the first iteration of stakeholder engagement with the establishment of a range of usergroups designed to obtain feedback from key academic and professional staff on aspects of the design assumptions.

As part of this process, a survey of the Faculty was conducted using the NLE | RR Learning Environments Analysis Tool (LEAT) which was adapted by the University to suit more specifically the Arts West context. The aim of the survey was to offer staff an opportunity to comment on matters affecting the physical environment and via these answers, identify any areas that are not aligned with the Arts West vision to determine any required cultural shifts and associated professional learning activity.

Early in the consultation phase, user groups were established and extensive face to face consultation was conducted over a period of 12-18 months depending on the stakeholder. Workshops were facilitated by the design team and the Educational Space Planner. Participants represented the Faculty and its associated Schools, faculty curator/librarian, museum specialist etc.

The Learning Environments Analysis Tool was also used. The findings, shaped by the University's strategic documents, were summarised in a series of Educational Planning Principles

The user group consultation was highly iterative process including site visits of relevant facilities, design presentations, spatial mock ups, 3D physical models, digital walk throughs and physical prototypes. Each session provided an opportunity to test the Faculty of Arts' vision for learning against the design and continually adjust and refine. It was a two-way exchange. The vision for learning was informed by questions and ideas that grew from the consultant process and the architecture is a manifestation of this vision.

In addition to the spatial planning and interiors concept a comprehensive process explored how Faculty's learning philosophy could be reflected in the architecture. Over an 18-month period the façade was developed with feedback from the University and broader community. The finned façade, while attenuating light into the learning spaces, is embossed with artefacts from the University's cultural collection, thus the building supports and represents active, hands on object based learning.

Challenges

Students of the BA will have increased access to a variety of informal learning and study spaces which are integrated with formal learning zones to create a community of learners. A key challenge for a faculty as large and diverse as the Faculty of Arts is the capacity to provide spaces where students can mix and work with fellow Arts students outside of formal class time. The dispersed nature of teaching spaces to date has restricted the ability of the Faculty to engender a community atmosphere and an enriched cohort experience around identifiable teaching and learning zones. Arts West provides substantial informal learning space for students to utilise between and outside of class time, enhancing a sense of connection and belonging.

Several different learning space types were developed. The methodology for developing and testing each of these space types is outlined. Ideas, feedback and changes were incorporated back into the design at each stage.

3D Models

For each learning space type a virtual 3D model was created. This enabled the qualities of each space to be interrogated. This process answered questions such as; What learning modes are afforded in each space? How can it be reconfigured? Are the sight lines achieved?

Rough Mock-ups

The next step was to create large scale mock-ups enabling the stakeholders to physically experience some of the spatial qualities. This exercise included mapping out the room dimensions and furniture sizes. This process answered questions such as; Can students and academics move easily around the space to interact and engage with each other? Do the table sizes provide a large enough working surface while still enabling strong collaboration?

Furniture Samples

The next step commissioned real furniture samples. This exercise included developing and building a suite of the proposed furniture. This process answered questions such as; How easily can the furniture be reconfigured? Does it support the needs of students for power, data, bag storage and ergonomics?

Full Prototype

The last stage was to build a full scale learning space. An existing space on campus was fitted out to meet the design and specifications of the proposed new learning spaces. The space was used by students and staff in order to answer questions such as; Are the spaces robust and durable? Do staff need training in how to use the spaces?

Informal Learning Spaces

The methodology for developing the informal learning spaces is outlined below. Ideas, feedback and changes were incorporated back into the design at each stage. Through the consultation process a series of informal learning behaviours were identified.

Space Planning

The informal learning spaces were mapped throughout the building. The relationship with circulation spaces, formal learning spaces and amenities was critical to ensuring the University's student experience aspirations. For example, co-location next to formal spaces would enable students and staff to continue fostering connections immediately after class. Co-location of informal space next to circulation spaces would promote serendipitous encounters among staff and students.
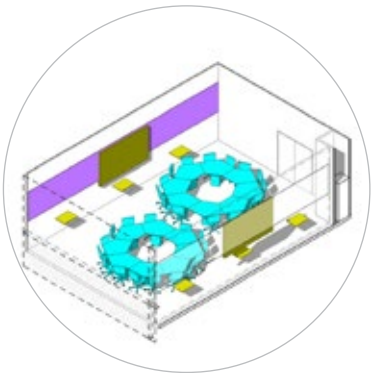
Learning Behaviours

A suite of informal learning behaviours were developed and distributed throughout the informal learning spaces. This was workshopped with the stakeholders via icons of the base behaviour and 3D views of the space types. This teased out questions about what types of learning would be expected of students outside of class. Are these spaces supporting that learning?

Curation Mapping

To integrate the object display into the everyday experience of the students a variety of different display types were developed and mapped throughout the building. This was workshopped via planning that highlighted the opportunities for exhibition and 3D views of the display types.

Quality of Space

A concept was developed for the building that enabled a diverse range of spatial qualities. This was workshopped via a series of abstract concept images, artistic renders and finishes samples. This answered questions such as, what are the spaces going to feel like?
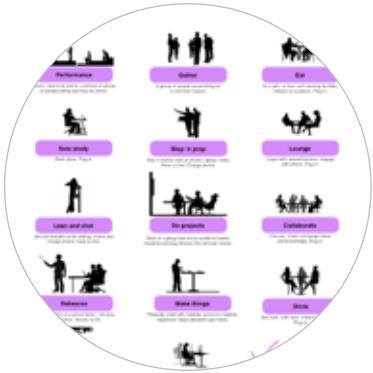

3D Models

Full prototype

Rough mock-ups

Learning behaviours

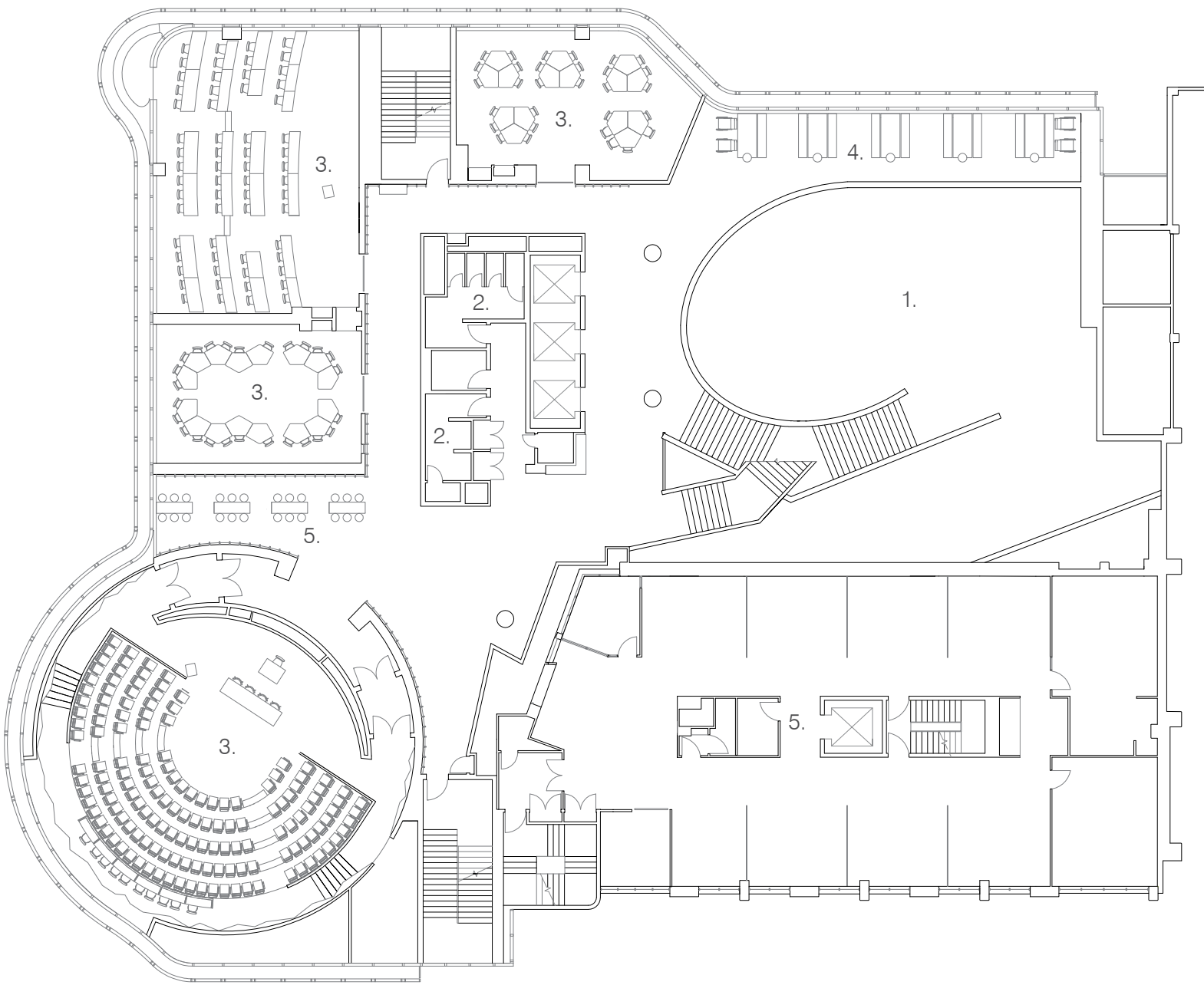Furniture samples

Quality of space renders

The Arts West Redevelopment will provide the Faculty of Arts and the University's Arts Precinct on Parkville with an additional 24 quality teaching and learning spaces and an additional lecture theatre, capable of supporting new teaching and learning modes. The infrastructure and facilities provided by the new development will support the next generation of teaching in the BA and advance the ambition outlined in Growing Esteem 2014 of providing a transformative student experience through enriched class-based education supported by innovative online capability and an engaging campus experience.

The new facilities will support teaching in traditional modes as well as new collaborative and project-based teaching, enhancing the interaction between staff and students and creating new opportunities for team teaching. The provision of small and large collaborative teaching spaces will give programs the option of increasing their utilisation of team-based teaching. The design of the teaching spaces includes the capacity to reconfigure spaces to create collaborative, seminar and small group formats. This flexibility will ensure that all disciplines and programs are able to engage with the new learning spaces.

The diversity of cultures and history aesthetics is paralleled in the range of learning space types. The new spaces support teaching in traditional modes as well as more progressive active based learning, enhancing the interaction between staff and students, and creating new opportunities for team teaching. The design of the teaching spaces includes the capacity to reconfigure spaces to create collaborative, seminar and small group formats. This flexibility ensures that all disciplines and programs are able to engage with the new learning spaces. The space planning is designed to achieve good eye contact between the students. Spaces are generously proportioned to enable easy movement of staff and students, making meaningful one-on-one exchanges possible. Theses spaces are the product of highly iterative user consultations and a rigorous prototyping process.
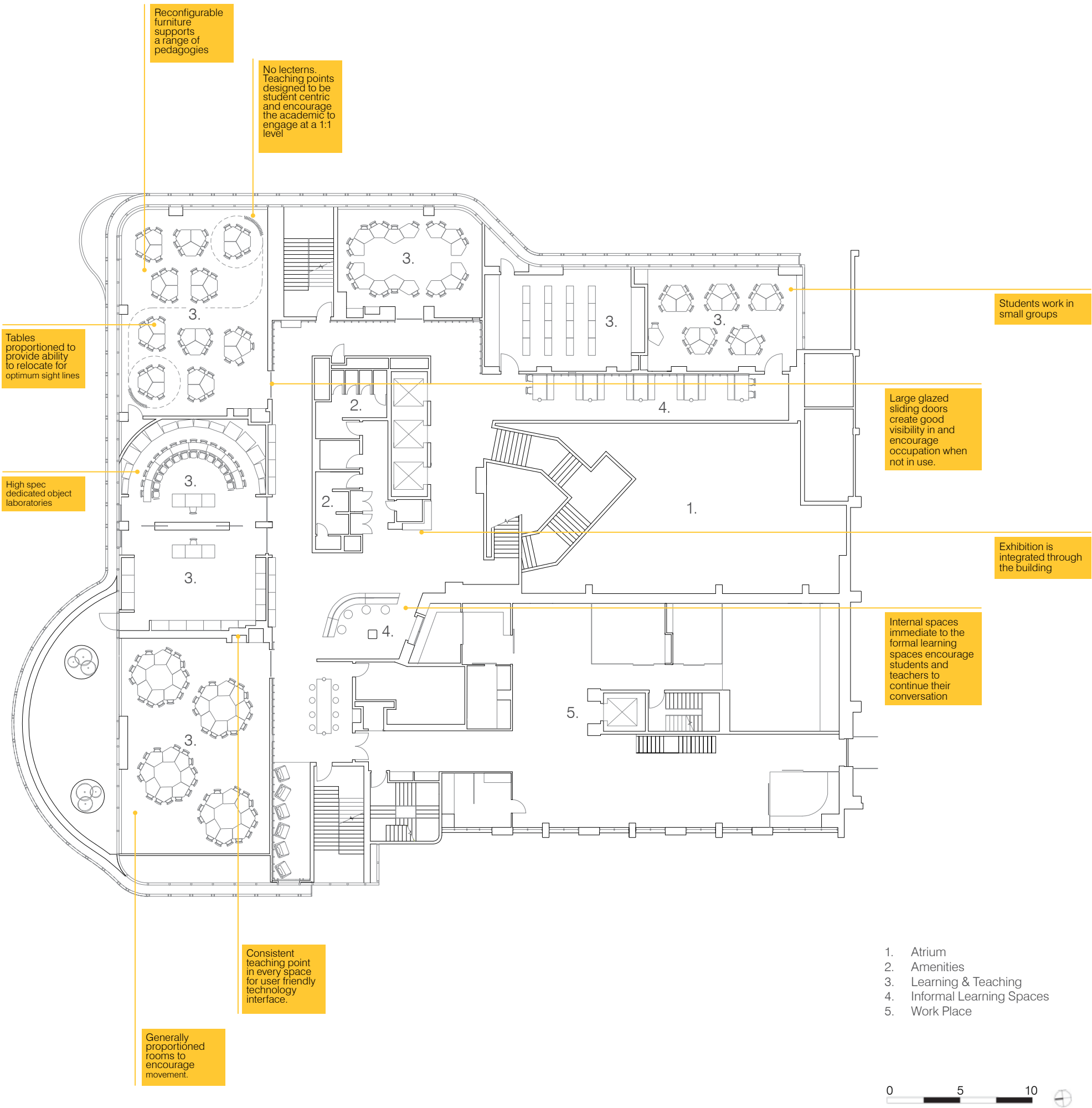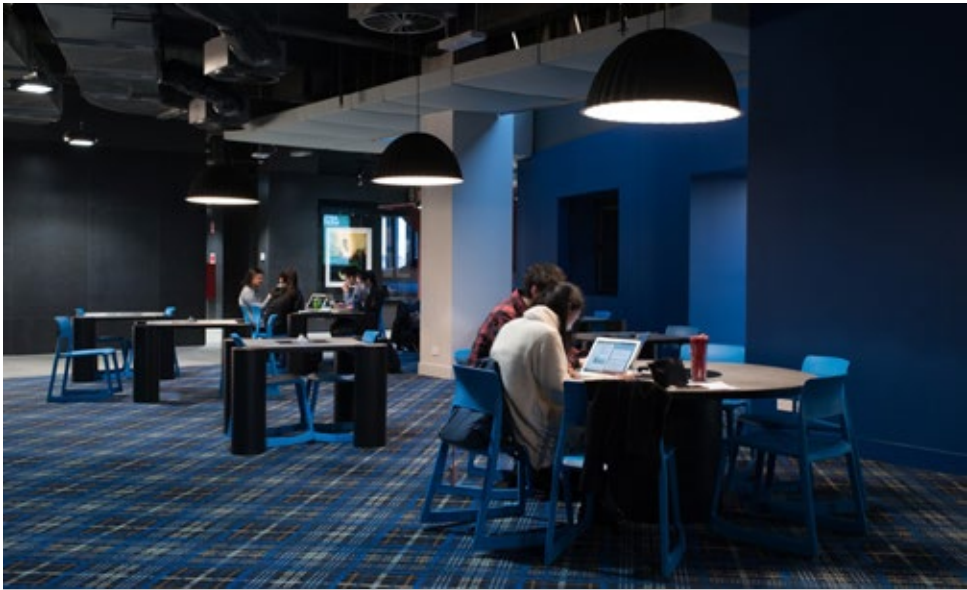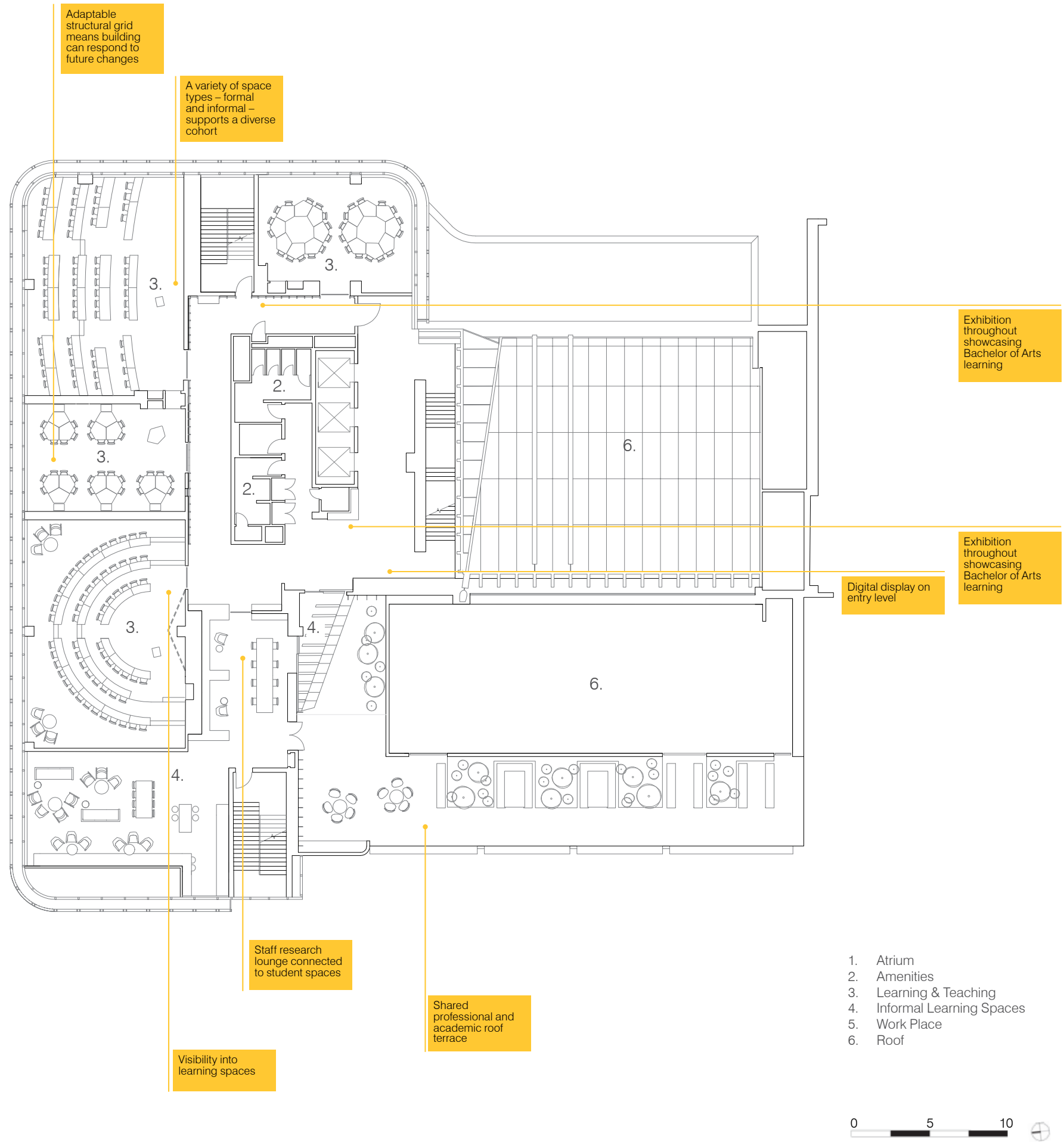
1. Atrium
2. Amenities
3. Learning & Teaching
4. Informal Learning Spaces
5. Work Place

0   5   10

4. Educational Environment_ Level 2

Reconfigurable furniture supports a range of pedagogies

No lecterns. Teaching points designed to be student centric and encourage the academic to engage at a 1:1 level

Tables proportioned to provide ability to relocate for optimum sight lines

High spec dedicated object laboratories

Students work in small groups

Large glazed sliding doors create good visibility in and encourage occupation when not in use.

Exhibition is integrated through the building

Internal spaces immediate to the formal learning spaces encourage students and teachers to continue their conversation

Consistent teaching point in every space for user friendly technology interface.

Generally proportioned rooms to encourage movement.

1.   Atrium
2.   Amenities
3.   Learning & Teaching
4.   Informal Learning Spaces
5.   Work Place

0   5   10

Adaptable structural grid means building can respond to future changes

A variety of space types – formal and informal – supports a diverse cohort

Exhibition throughout showcasing Bachelor of Arts learning

Exhibition throughout showcasing Bachelor of Arts learning

Digital display on entry level

Staff research lounge connected to student spaces

Shared professional and academic roof terrace

Visibility into learning spaces

1. Atrium
2. Amenities
3. Learning & Teaching
4. Informal Learning Spaces
5. Work Place
6. Roof

0   5   10

You enter at ground level into the six-storey atrium, designed to feel like being outside but in an urban setting.
The upholstered stair twists up the building, connecting the informal learning spaces and attenuating the acoustics.

Signature Learning Hub

The Faculty of Art's undergraduate coursework curriculum focuses on giving students a deep and rich experience through active learning, discussion and debate. The Faculty of Arts' programs aim to transform shared knowledge into collective wisdom in an active intellectual community.

The new Arts West is the primary learning and teaching Hub for the under graduate students. The building is reborn to be a comfortable, enjoyable and informal Third space, accessible and safe for students to use and access all the appropriate support services and learning facilities. The Hub function is a connector, a place where cross-discipline exchanges happen. The impact of a Hub environment is additionally important for international students, where a "home away from home" quietly encourages participation and socialising while also allowing quiet study.

Collocations and Collections

There is clear benefit to the Faculty in the collocation of staff and students. In his book "Where Good Ideas Come From" Steven Johnson describes 7 "patterns of innovation". Two of these, "Serendipity" and "Liquid Networks", describe physical and intellectual environments that generate new ideas and creative thinking through contexts of collocation and "immersion". Careful and informed planning of the rejuvenated building maximises the benefits of this active interplay, catalysing the already active student and researcher activities.

The integration of the Collections into the design is an exciting innovation that generates a remarkable atmosphere for the learning environment, both in terms of directed research and in informal interaction of the items from the storehouse.

This idea is manifested in the architecture, both inside and out. The entire building can be curated, the learning spaces support object based learning and the façade embodies this concept through its iconographic relief.

The building's skin is a panelised system of horizontal fins with impressions of carefully selected objects from the University's collection. These impressions reflect the output of human endeavour from around the world and allude to the concept of object based learning which takes place within the skin.

New Teaching Spaces

The University is dedicated to the physical campus as its primary learning environment. The new teaching spaces allow 80% of all undergraduate teaching to occur within the Arts Precinct and support a range of pedagogical settings that are carefully located, zoned and via a range of learning modalities. With the move to flipped classrooms and blended learning, the spaces are designed to support longer duration classes and a broader range of activities in a single session. Class size was debated and tested against timetabling, growth forecasting and pedagogy.

The circulation spaces, while obviously linking the main programmed areas, act as serendipitous pathways for chance encounters and link the informal learning spaces. The lack of delineation between informal learning areas and generous corridors are designed to foster fluid places to meet, discuss and exchange perspectives in the ebb and flow of university life. This contributes the sense of activity and collegial atmosphere and encourages flexible and simultaneous use of both the formal and informal.

The spaces are designed to support both limited transmissive learning teaching and active collaborative learning. The rooms can be easily reconfigured from teacher-centric to student centric spaces.

In addition to this the building is future proofed – the structural grid is designed to enable easy renovation from small to large class sizes, or vice versa as the educational needs of the faculty changes. The generous floor areas provide for new space types and incorporation of new technology.

5. Physical Environment_ The Façade

Arts West is specifically designed to facilitate object-based learning. The striking façade features images of selected objects from the University's 23 cultural collections. The building has a two skins: a glass wall behind a structure of parallel horizontal steel fins, resembling deep exterior Venetian blinds, into which the images are profile cut. Hence, the façade is both a passive solar-control element and an architectural manifestation of the Faculty of Arts' pedagogical aspirations.

Indian village art, date unknown, purchased in the 1970s by Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Arts Collection

Two bronze standard finials, Luristan (Iran), C.1250-650 BCE, UoM Art Collection, Keith and Zara Joseph Collection

Red-figured krater attributed to the Amykos painter with pursuit or departure scene with four figures. c.420BCE
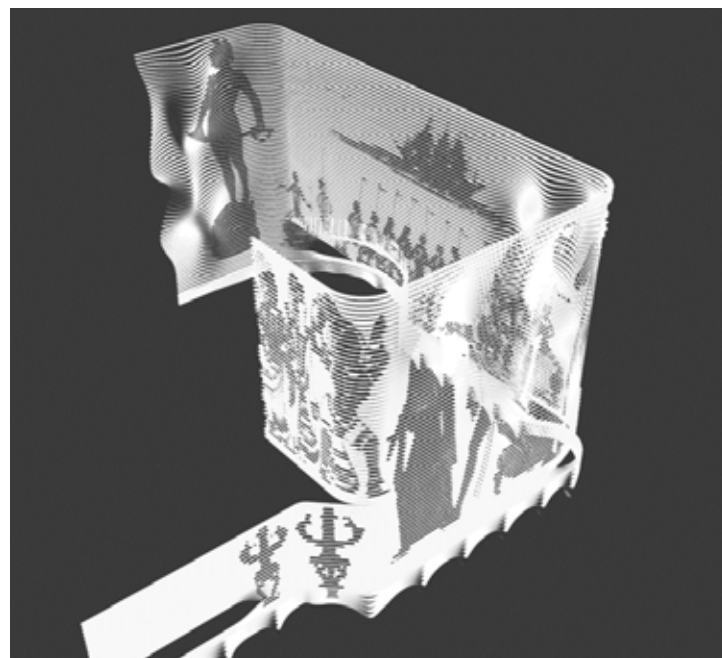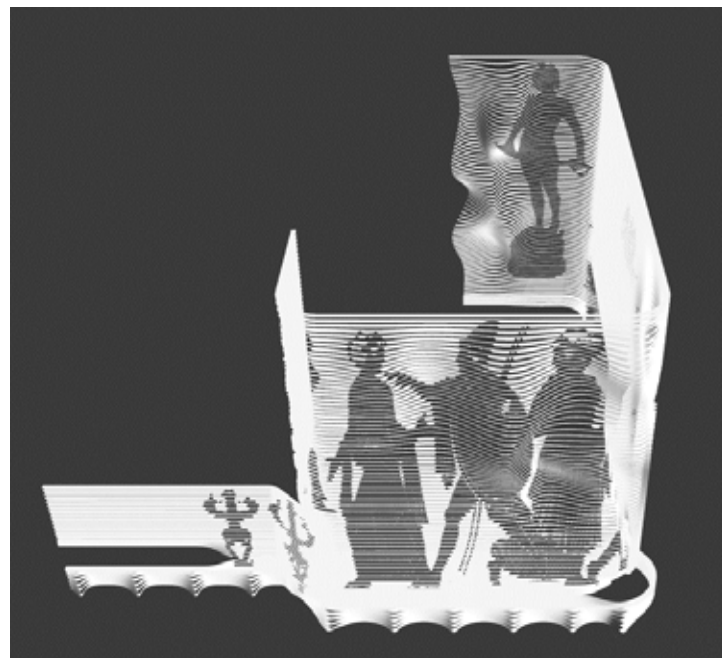University of Melbourne Art Collection, David and Marion Adams Collection

Tommy McRae – 'Corroboree' c.1890, Ink on Paper, Foord Family Collection

Bertram Mackennal – 'Salome' c.1900 – Bronze Sculpture, UoM Art Collection, Gift of Dr Joseph Brown
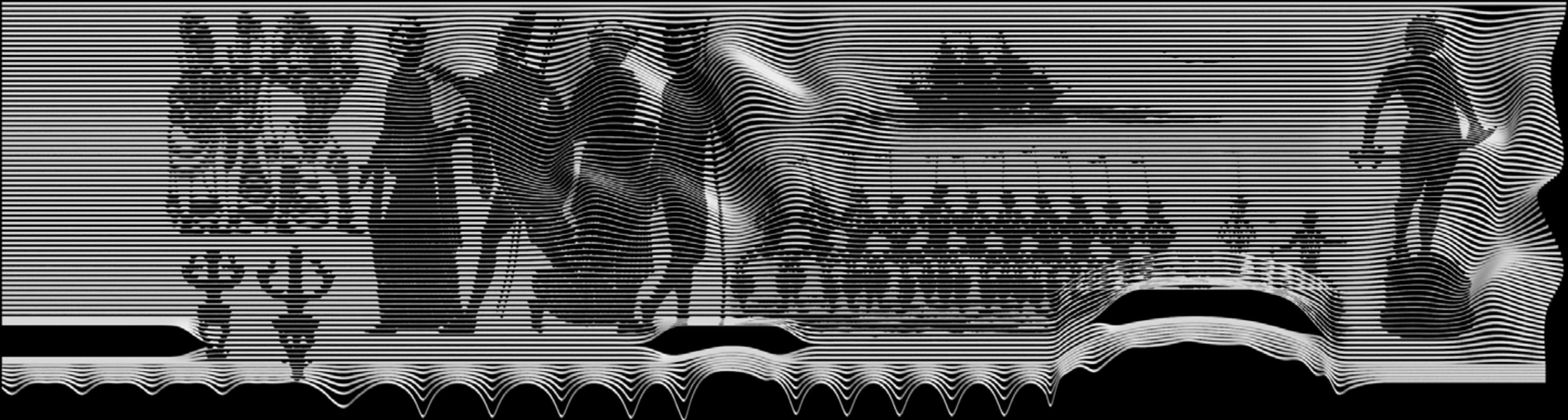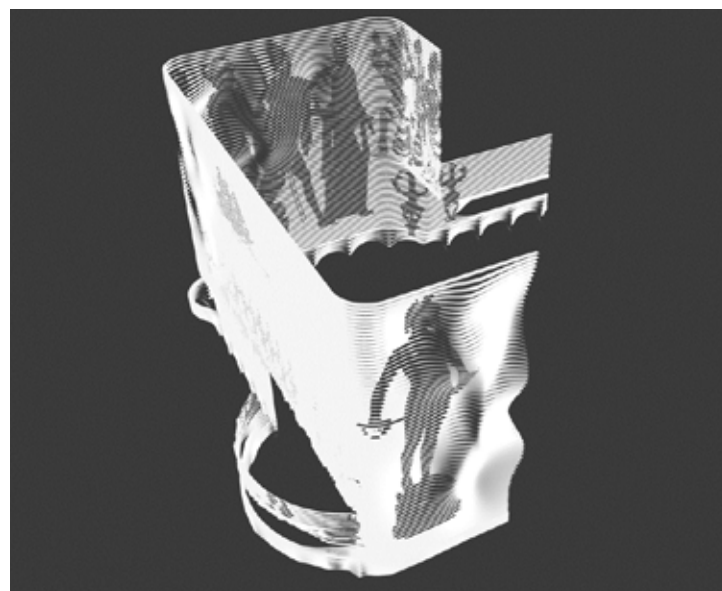
We pioneered the 3D virtual modelling techniques used to design the façade by adapting gaming software. We used these techniques to design the steel fin array and images and communicate them to the fabricators.

Arts West, University of Melbourne | ARM + Architectus

5. Physical Environment_
The Wunderkammer

The building is conceived as a Wunderkammer, or a cabinet of curiosities. There is a collection and diversity of space types and the wonder comes from the juxtapositions of one space sitting next to another. The entire building can be curated, the learning spaces support object based learning, a range of exhibition and display spaces are dispersed throughout the building while the façade embodies the concept with impressions of artefacts from the University's collection, alluding to the concept of object based learning which takes place within.
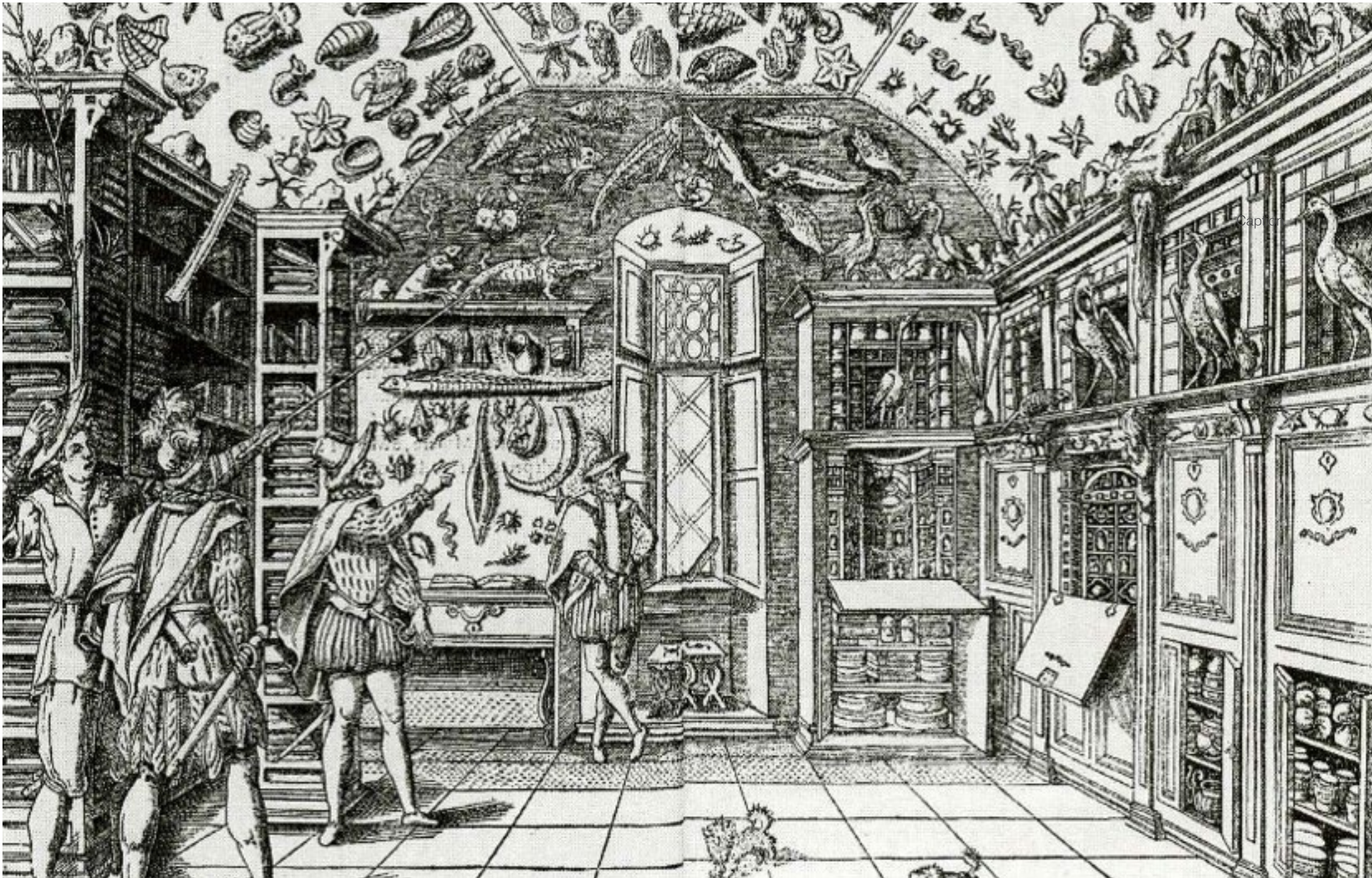
Object based learning laboratories

Learning spaces as wonders within the cabinet

Artefacts manifested on the façade

In the informal learning spaces of Arts West, 41% of interviewed groups indicated that their meeting was unplanned. Sometimes this is a result of meeting after or before class and other times they bumped into each other in the informal learning space and chose to study together.

Formal Learning Spaces

The 26 new spaces support teaching in traditional modes as well as more active based learning, enhancing the interaction between staff and students and creating new opportunities for team teaching. The provision of small and large collaborative teaching spaces give programs the option of increasing their utilisation of team-based teaching. The design of the teaching spaces includes the capacity to reconfigure spaces to create collaborative, seminar and small group formats. This flexibility ensures that all disciplines and programs are able to engage with the new learning spaces. The space planning is designed achieve good eye contact between the student body. Spaces are generously proportioned to enable easy movement of staff and students, making meaningful one-on-one exchanges possible. The success of this spatial strategy is evidenced by student feedback via a survey completed after one semester of occupation.

Overall, 64% of respondents were positive about the impact of Arts West teaching spaces on their ability to collaborate, work independently, communicate, analyse and problem solve.

Overall, 80% of respondents were positive about the impact of teaching spaces on their ability to engage with classmates in various forms. Students were positive regarding their impact on engagement in small group discussions (80%), small group work (79%) and whole class discussions (73%).

Overall, 66% of respondents were positive about the impact of teaching spaces on their ability to engage with teaching staff.
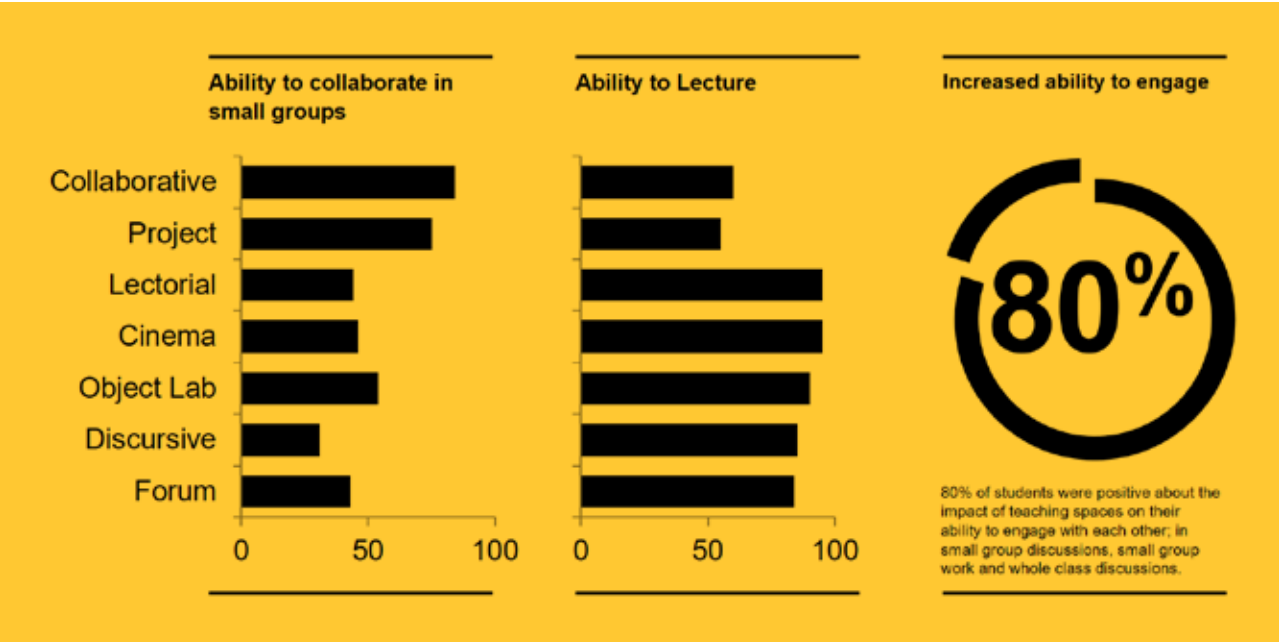
Informal Spaces

The circulation spaces, while linking the main functional areas of Arts West, blur into informal learning spaces and provide serendipitous pathways for chance encounters. The lack of delineation between informal learning areas and generous corridors are designed to foster fluid places to meet, discuss and exchange perspectives in the ebb and flow of university life. A number of 'stop and prop' areas cultivate this behaviour. This spatial result is supported by student feedback.

41% of interviewed groups indicated that their meeting was unplanned. Sometimes this is a result of meeting after or before class and other times they bumped into each other in the informal learning space and chose to study together.

By providing fluid connections to the formal teaching spaces via large glass sliding doors, idle spaces become more accessible and contribute a sense of activity and collegial atmosphere. Conversation is encouraged while quiet spaces are also provided, as well as zones for great minds to collide. These 'in-between' spaces enable students to meet, work, and discuss. A diversity of informal learning spaces types ensures that there is a spot to suit every learner. Survey results found that 82% of students use the Arts West informal learning spaces. An unexpected finding was the engagement and interaction between faculties. For group study, the informal learning spaces are predominately used by first and second year Arts students but then followed by students from Science and Commerce faculties.

The Faculty had aspirations beyond the current teaching methods; therefore, the new learning spaces were developed to lead the change.

Formal Spaces
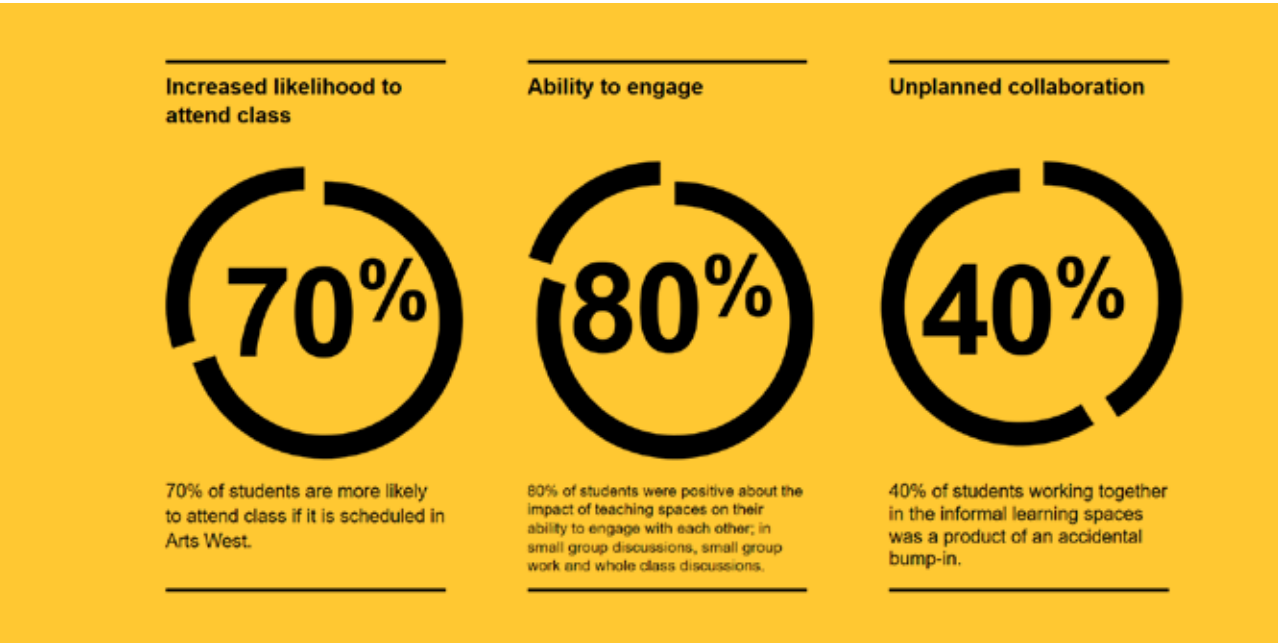
Informal Spaces

# 6. Results of the Process & Project_ Student Feedback

Ultimately the result of design process is the living breathing new home the for Bachelor of Arts. Below are descriptions of the built outcome and results of a survey completed after the first semester of occupation.

Arts West has increased the Faculty's teaching capacity immensely– with Arts West becoming the main teaching hub fo the Bachelor of Arts and providing students with a place to work, study, meet and socialise between classes. This shared space dedicated to Arts students has created a sense of cohort and a shared experience amongst students. The student survey found that respondents were more likely to attend classes if they were scheduled in Arts West. Overall, 71% are more inclined to attend and as a proportion of year level cohort, first year students are most likely to attend classes more often if they are scheduled in Arts West, followed by second and third year students.

Overall, 64% of respondents were positive about the impact of Arts West teaching spaces on their ability to collaborate, work independently, communicate, analyse and problem solve. The top two areas were collaboration (77%) and communication (75%).

80% of respondents were positive about the impact of teaching spaces on their ability to engage with classmates, in group discussion, small group work and whole class discussion.

Overall, 66% of respondents were positive about the impact of teaching spaces on their ability to engage with teaching staff.
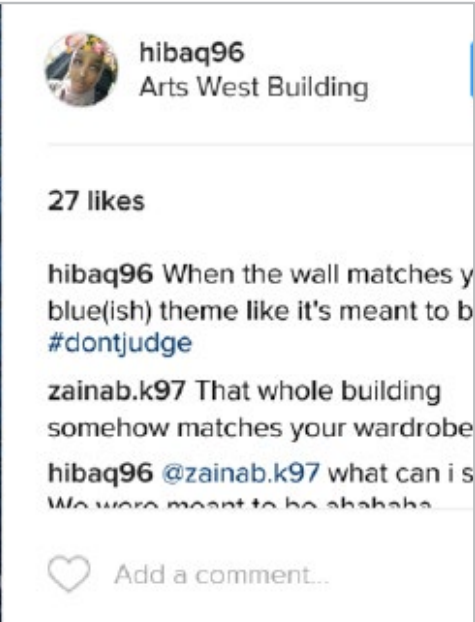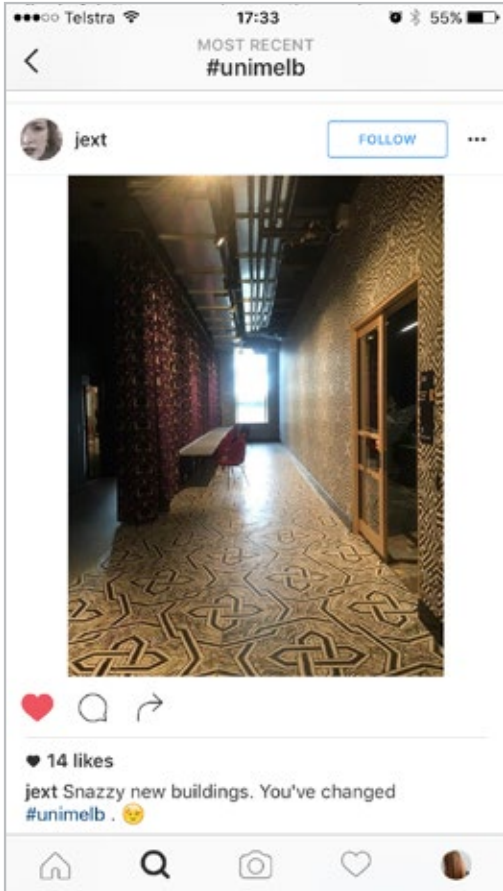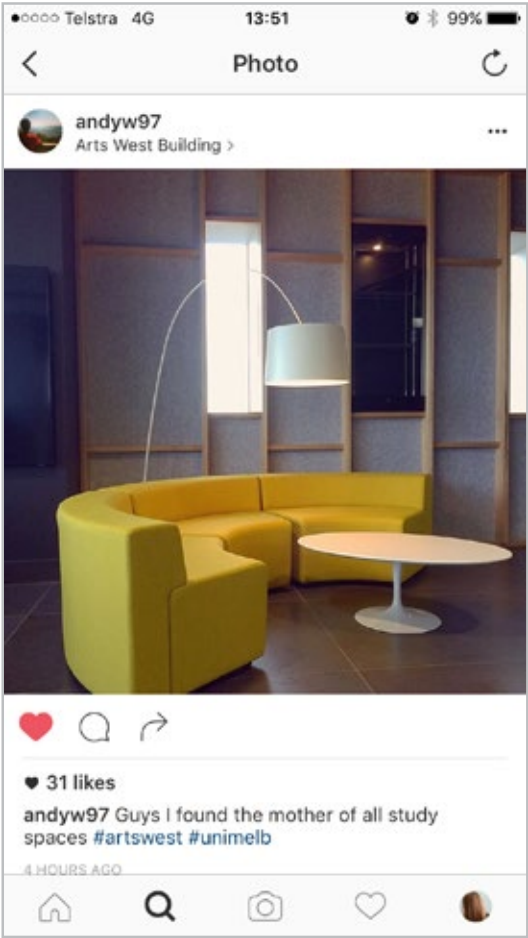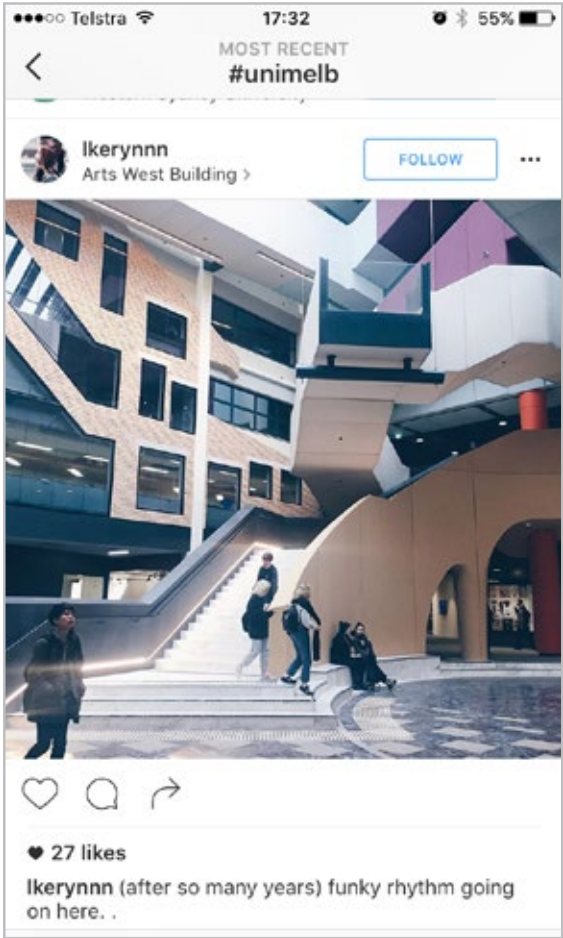
"We have been overwhelmed by how our students and the university community have embraced the building and by the number of requests to use the spaces in Arts West…
It's also an innovative, creative and fun place that opens people's minds to the rich possibilities of an Arts education."

—Joanne Ligouris, Executive Director, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne