

5 Rounds with Paul Evans: Global Village School Architect



What is one of your proudest achievements as an architect?

One that stands out is the construction of the Department of Human Services building at 50 Lonsdale Street in Melbourne, undertaken while I was working with John Wardle Architects. I was one of the first people in the office to work on this project, and saw it through to its completion; this involved navigating the project through the planning process, the building tender process and the building construction.

What is the most inspirational architectural project you've been involved with?

I have worked on a number of architecture competitions throughout my career. These are great little design exercises where you have a limited amount of time to put an architectural presentation together in response to a particular design brief. I

particularly enjoyed the Hanover Welfare Ideas Competition, which was aimed at exploring prototypes for integrating commercial and public housing for city developments. Our competition entry was awarded first prize.

How can architecture contribute to social justice?

Our cities are designed to exclude and segregate; social justice is an urban design problem. Architects play an essential role in envisioning and realising a more equitable future. A successful, enduring project involves a mission-driven end point, a cross-disciplinary approach, and significant involvement with end-users. One of the design features at our 50 Lonsdale Street building is the inclusion of the Urban Table, a large area with tables and chairs which can be used by any member of the public. There is a café nearby, but the Urban Table allows people to sit in peace for as long as they like without feeling that they need to buy something.



50 Lonsdale Street. John Wardle Architects

At what point did you decide that Global Village School was something you wanted to contribute to?

I first heard of Global Village School through family connections, and thought that this is a project I can definitely contribute to. I have worked on a number of schools in my career, and have developed a number of personal contacts that I think will be useful in the development of the school.

Both my wife and daughter have extensive social work experience, so fairness and equality were often discussed in our family. In addition to this, my son had behavioural difficulties

in his first few years at primary school, so I have a heightened awareness of the problems facing some students who don't necessarily fit into regular schools. It seemed clear to me that Global Village School was proposing a genuine and innovative solution to this issue.

How might the right spaces make a difference to the success of young people in Education?

Classroom design has a significant impact on student outcomes. The traditional layout of desks in rows and industrial furniture is being superseded by flexible arrangements specifically to empower students. Classrooms should be welcoming and warm to boost student morale. Classroom design can facilitate the learning of students with special needs, including ADD, ADHD and specific learning difficulties. Rearranging the rows of desks into grouped configurations is thought to improve aspects of learning. Air quality, lighting and the students' sense of ownership of their classroom are all important in the students' learning.

There should be a feeling of comfort from the time of arrival at the building as this can be a stressful time. Soft furnishings, plenty of plants and natural light, and timber finishes can all be used to create a calm, open and warm space for young people suffering from heightened trauma and anxiety about entering. There should be lots of lines of sight so there are no surprises; people know what is around as they step in.



Connecting Elements