



AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM'S CRYSTAL HALL WINS MAJOR PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE AWARD

One of Australia's leading architect firms **Neeson Murcutt** has won a major award for the Australian Museum's striking new glass entrance.

(Monday 4 July 2016, Sydney): The Australian Museum's (AM) new Crystal Hall entrance has been recognised for its simple and elegant combination of glass, steel and colour, taking home the Award for Public Architecture at this year's NSW Architecture Awards.

The Neeson Murcutt and Joseph Grech designed carbon-neutral entrance features a bespoke crystalline curtain and zig-zagging glass pleats that take full advantage of the AM's north facing façade. The design casts a glimmering display of refracted light against the AM building at different times throughout the day.

Crystal Hall also received commendations in the Lord Mayor's Prize category and the COLORBOND® Award for Steel Architecture category.

Kim McKay AO, Director and CEO of the AM, said that Crystal Hall had successfully shifted the orientation of the AM to William Street, opening the building to increased foot traffic and greater visibility.

"Crystal Hall has made the museum more accessible by providing a modern, purpose built entrance for visitors, while demonstrating the potential of our historic site," she said.

"This award is well deserved and acknowledges the incredible work of Rachel Neeson and Joseph Grech in seamlessly integrating a contemporary design with heritage architecture."

Neeson Murcutt received a total of three awards and two commendations at the Australian Institute of Architects awards ceremony on Friday night – more than any of the 2016 nominees.

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Architect **Rachel Neeson** of Neeson Murcutt said that in approaching the brief for Crystal Hall, her firm had embraced a tailor-made approach that was appropriate for a public building with the prominence of the AM.

“Joe Grech and I are thrilled with this award and incredibly proud to be associated with the Australian Museum,” Neeson said.

“It’s very humbling to play a part in contributing to the creation of a small piece of the city in such an important location.”

Built by Kane Constructions for the AM, Crystal Hall was opened by Premier Mike Baird and Deputy Premier Troy Grant in September 2015, receiving acclaim for its environmental design and the increased access it provided to the AM building.

“From day one we enjoyed the full support of the State Government, in particular NSW Government Architect Peter Poulet and his team, who gave us the confidence to embark on this exciting development,” McKay said of Crystal Hall.

Key architectural features of Crystal Hall include:

- A defining glass-pleated north-facing façade. This bespoke, zig-zagged crystalline screen balances transparency through to the existing heritage building with leading environmental management. The state-of-the-art, triple-low-E, double-glazed façade selectively allows daylight in while reflecting short wave and infrared heat. Extended vertically and horizontally beyond the floorplate, the screen features 24 stainless steel-framed, 8.5 metre high panels formed into 12 dramatic vertical ‘pleats’.
- A slim-line ‘crystalline and skeletal’ form reflecting the AM’s natural history focus. Designed as a simple, open plan elongated space, 20 metres by eight metres, with a 5.5 metre high ceiling and ‘feathered’ northern edge. Operable glass walls frame the southern elevation and heritage façade while providing ventilation. Zinc cladding wraps the eastern elevation externally, with a wall of AV screens internally for functions and showcasing exhibitions, while providing a sense of shelter.
- An Australian-first environmental management system addressing solar glare and heat. Developed for the first time by Neeson Murcutt Architects, Joseph Grech Architects and engineers Arup collaboratively to manage solar glare and heat in a uniquely innovative way. Forty-eight unique crystalline diamond-shaped, coloured glass ‘blades’ are positioned internally along the northern façade, angled and pivot-hung in each pleat (four per pleat) to refract and diffuse light, manage solar glare and capture heat, allowing it to be vented up and out through the ceiling.

The AM is currently in the process of master planning for the continued transformation of its historic site.

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