



the public domain >

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Bourke St Mall scores a 10 for artistic merit >

Client: City of Melbourne

Developer: City of Melbourne

Landscape architect: Land Design Partnership

Precast manufacturer: Stonelife Pty Ltd

Project manager: Contractor for City of Melbourne

Principal contractor: Canteri Bros Construction

Concrete contractor: Schifer Constructions

Specialist consultant: Public Art Squad

Concrete supplier: Boral

Specialist contractor: Pro Grind

The 2005 Commonwealth Games provided a rare opportunity to give Melbourne's iconic Bourke Street Mall a major refurbishment. As part of the \$10 million transformation, the Tramway Zone between Elizabeth and Russell

Streets was torn up and replaced with a concrete paving that pushes the boundaries of creativity.

The City of Melbourne design team worked in collaboration with artist David Humphries to interpret the design for the new Tramway Zone. David's company, Public Art Squad, has extensive experience producing large-scale terrazzo and mosaic works for major public developments such as Sydney's Darling Harbour.

On this project, the artistic vision of David and the team was realised through an insitu exposed-aggregate pavement solution, created with a broadcast stone mosaic terrazzo technique that utilised some 20 tonnes of decorative stones.

Finish details with brass Southern Cross

Tim Cole ©Public Art Squad



David worked closely with Frank Schipano and his concreters from Schifer Constructions, who laid and screeded the 330 m³ of 70 MPa Boral premixed concrete.

The new pavement was laid under extremely testing conditions. Not only did the work have to be undertaken at weekends so as not to unduly disrupt tram services, but it was subject to the vagaries of Melbourne's winter weather.

To meet these challenges, the 300-m x 6.6-m project was undertaken in three stages over three weekends. Work would commence after the last tram service finished at 11.30 pm on Friday and continue until 4 am on Monday, when the completed section of new tracks and paving was ready for the trams to roll.





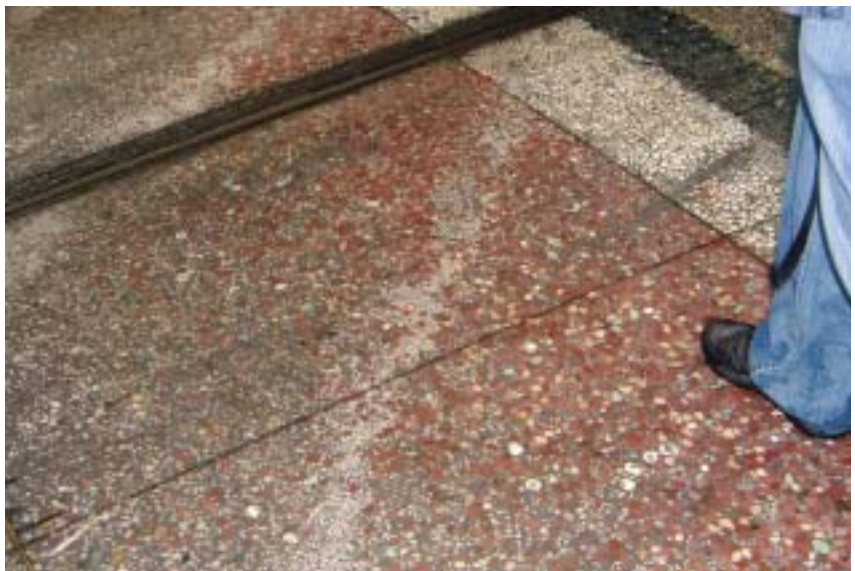
David Humphries and team placing stones
Tim Cole © Public Art Squad

Ironically, the installation became something of a performance art event that entertained and intrigued the many weekend visitors to the Mall.

The task of grinding back the road surface to expose the decorative aggregates was undertaken by Harry Van Der Veen from Pro Grind Melbourne. The 2000 m² of artwork was fully revealed after midnight-to-dawn grinding.

Because the surface also had to meet strict slip resistance and maintenance requirements many test panels were prepared. These included large-scale prototypes to test appearance and technique, as well as grinding and the suitability of contractors for specialised broadcasting and screeding work. Many tests were also undertaken to establish final colour and monitoring of every mix.

Variouly described as 'an integral piece of urban design' and 'an artwork to be walked



Detail of finish
David Humphries © Public Art Squad

Decorative stones
Tim Cole © Public Art Squad



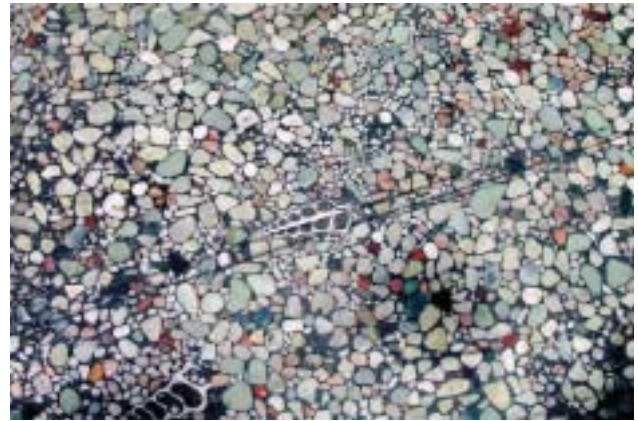


on by the public', the new Tramway Zone is visually subtle and variable in appearance according to lighting and weather.

Its predominantly grid-like pattern reflects Melbourne's design as a grid planned city. The focus areas are the tram stops, where people find time to contemplate the stones of various sizes and colours.

The western end references the rural edge of the city and features predominantly earthy tones. Conversely, the tram stops on the eastern end servicing the Chinatown precinct use jade stones and have a greener pallet. The overall inspiration has been described as 'cosmic', with references to starscapes and the Southern Cross.

David Humphries says he enjoys working with concrete on artworks that have a permanency. The inherent durability of concrete ensures longevity and low maintenance, while the use of pigments and decorative stones provides for great creative scope and flexibility.



A greener pallet was used in the Chinatown precinct
David Humphries © Public Art Squad

Precast concrete furniture

The Tramway Zone sits comfortably with the exposed-aggregate finish with similar patterning found in new precast concrete furniture in the Mall itself.

The selection of precast concrete with a honed finish for the furniture bases, tree surrounds and retaining walls was driven primarily by the need to provide a durable, robust surface that would sit comfortably with the existing bluestone pavement and provide some life of its own via subtle colour mix and patterning.

Using off white cement combined with a mix of bluestone and granite aggregate, the precast concrete furniture features enough visual and textural interest to provide a contrast with the generally simple but dominant ground plane.

The honed finish was sealed to ensure both a graffiti-free surface and one that remains as a welcoming option for casual seating in peak times, when other more conventional seats are all occupied.

The form and location of the various precast concrete elements also reinforces the functions of the activity areas within the Mall. For example, the central open space is flanked by four precast concrete tree planter surrounds. These in turn form the corners to smaller, more-intimate seating nodes, located in areas where less cross traffic occurs.



Precast concrete furniture with a honed exposed aggregate finish

David Humphries has produced a 9 minute DVD on the transformation of Bourke Street Mall. To obtain a copy contact Public Art Squad details on www.publicartsquad.com