



It's a park amenities block - but not as we know it.

Background

The humble suburban amenities block has come a long way from the rectangular brick and concrete 'boxes' of the 1960's and 70's, evidenced by the new community facility at Marsden Park, in Sydney's north-west.

AT A GLANCE

Project: Marsden Park Amenities Block

Architect: CHROFI

Main concrete elements:

- Concrete Pavements
- In-situ, exposed-concrete walls

Photography: Clinton Weaver

The Challenge

To create a functional amenities block that sits appropriately within the public space in which it is situated and can be something that is a source of local community pride.

Solution/Outcome

Designed by CHROFI, the Marsden Park Amenities block is both playful and sculptural. It consists of two distinct, curve-walled concrete structures that house a kiosk, toilets and change rooms, protected by a 'floating' canopy roof of polycarbonate and fibreglass.

The team at CHROFI worked closely with landscape architects JMD to integrate the amenities block into its surrounding public playing fields, the overarching driver being to create something of which the community could be rightly proud.

The wave-like in situ concrete walls were constructed using computer-cut, semi-circular foam formwork, with an internal liner used to impart corrugations into the concrete surface. Because of the radius of each curve was the same across the design, the forms and liners could be reused - minimising the number of panels required in total.

The walls themselves are punctuated by curved, sliding aluminium gates at the entries to the toilet and other internal spaces.

For the internal wall facades, conventional plywood formwork was used to deliver a flat surface, albeit with the form lines and bolt holes exposed.



CHROFI's Eoin Healy said the inherent plasticity of concrete made it the ideal construction medium for the curving, flowing walls.

“Concrete also gave us the raw quality we were looking for, as well as the durability that you want to see in any exposed, public structure of this type.”

The two concrete buildings have no ceilings, as such. Instead, a completely separate, continuous structure hovers over and above both buildings - an intricate pattern of steel-framed arches supporting a monoplane transparent fibreglass roof.

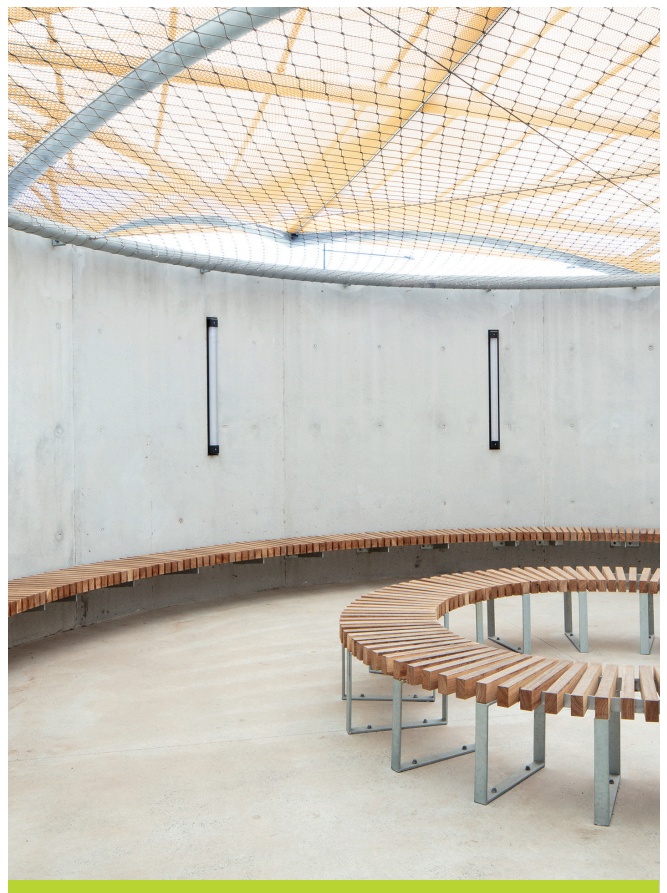
The steel arches are infilled with gold-coloured Kaynemaile polycarbonate mesh. (Some 64 triangular shaped pieces were fitted to the inner forms of the frame.)

Up close, the intricate weaves of the mesh triangles are obvious; from a distance, they appear as one complete, shimmering form.

Apart from giving the structure a unique aesthetic, the polycarbonate mesh also helps diffuse natural light in the internal spaces.

As with any public building located in a wide, open space, there's always a fear that it might be vandalised. In this case, the concrete walls have been treated with an anti-graffiti sealer, and seven months after completion it's yet to be tested.

And that, perhaps, is the ultimate tribute to this building - that its unique form and outstanding facilities evoke a sense of community pride that provides far better protection than any surface treatment ever could.



BENEFITS OF USING CONCRETE:

- Durability
- Formability
- Raw Aesthetics