

five minutes with...

Mark Grigsby

THAT WIMMERA UNITING CARE'S 'SENSORY GALLERY' IN HORSHAM (VIC.) IS A SANCTUARY FOR THOSE SEARCHING FOR HEALING IS NO ACCIDENT, SAYS SMITH+TRACEY'S MARK GRIGSBY, THE ARCHITECT BEHIND THE GALLERY'S RECENT RENOVATION.

Tell me about the mission behind smith+tracey. Why are you passionate about benefiting the community through your architectural work?

Our mission is to capture the full potential of each project for the benefit of our clients and, through the built form, leave a lasting legacy to the communities we serve.

You have worked with quite a few religious and charitable institutions as architects. Why has smith+tracey chosen to do this?

smith+tracey was founded in 1948 and from that time have been involved in working on community sector projects which involves the design of educational facilities, retirement accommodation, residential aged care, churches and emergency services.

We value the lasting relationships that form in the development of these projects and what they bring to each of the communities we engage with. Our architecture covers 'whole of life', and touches the lives of many, from the youngest to the oldest members of society.

What was the inspiration behind the sensory gallery at Wimmera Care?

The sensory gallery was conceptualised in response to our client's need for an assessable space that creates a sanctuary for people in emotional turmoil. The interior was designed using sensory stimulation to create visual, audio, aromatic and tactile experiences that assist the counselling process, aid in emotional healing and reposition the visitor's state of mind.

Most people seeking assistance are emotionally fragile, angry or upset and the gallery provides a harmonising threshold

and acts in diffusing/settling some of their emotional turmoil.

Can you explain the design elements in the gallery? What makes it so distinctive yet functional?

The space is designed to evoke and promote each of the senses and provide a stimulating place for clients prior to seeking the assistance on offer at Wimmera Uniting Care.

Elements within the space are interactive, visually engaging and tactile, allowing visitors to be a part of the intergenerational space. Visitors are encouraged to experience all areas and installations, by sitting on, walking through, climbing into, pushing, listening and viewing.

Senses are stimulated upon arrival via the light-filled lobby where 'green wall' planting grows through the double-height atrium. This accentuates the perceptions of scale, enriches the air, layers the textures, colours and floral aroma.

The gallery provides an opportunity for local artists to exhibit their work. Technology plays an important role with feature lighting, interactive exhibits and audio transmissions, such as the interactive floor providing games and activities that respond to visitors' movements.

How does architecture facilitate community?

As a not-for-profit organisation, a restrained execution of the interior design was critical. The result is an honest, connected and exposed living interior, characteristics that materialise WUC's vision and mission.

Additionally the arrival of a new building project within the rural township generated a lot of local interest, jobs and a forum for local artisans to exhibit their work.



MARK GRIGSBY



PHOTOS: CHRIS MATTERSON PHOTOGRAPHY