

New pergolas for two Brisbane attractions

**Projects**

Latest schemes and buildings

**Headlines**

Architectural news flashes

**FEATURES**

The Domestic Ideal

Arthur's Metaphor

Arrivista

Civic Dynamics

Local Connections

**COMMENT**

Foreword

Letters

**PRINTER FRIENDLY  
VERSION**
**CURRENT ISSUE**

BACK ISSUES

SUBSCRIBE

ADVERTISE

**ADVANCED SEARCH**






[Click here to remove search term highlighting](#)

## Urbanity



**Brisbane's Queen Street Mall and South Bank cultural precinct are being reconfigured with architect-designed pergolas. Antony Moulis investigates these sun responsive civic improvements.**

Two of Brisbane's key civic spaces are getting substantial architectural makeovers ...

One project is QSM 2000, a millennium refurbishment of the Queen Street Mall, being coordinated by the Brisbane City Council with mall traders. The other is a 'Grand Arbour' being built along the South Bank Parklands to link disparate cultural facilities in a one kilometre promenade. Both schemes are important contributions to Brisbane's fledgling urbanity.

The Queen Street Mall redesign began last year with a one-week charette involving Sunshine Coast architect John Mainwaring (now the design team leader), Sydney architect Lawrence Nield with colleagues from Bligh Voller Nield's Brisbane office, and Michael Keniger and John Hockings of the University of Queensland. One proposal discussed at the charette was the precedent of Barcelona's Las Ramblas: a tree-lined urban canyon embellished with lightweight kiosks. Also debated was a layering strategy adapted from George Hargreaves' masterplan for the Olympics site: a 'red move' of light pavilions, a 'blue move' of pergolas and skyroofs and a 'green move' of vines growing across the pergolas and alternating with trees planted in clusters.

The developed scheme entirely refigures Queen Street through its two major shopping blocks: stripping the mall of what Mainwaring calls its "space junk". Current retail concessions (a newsagent and three open-air restaurants) are repositioned 'off centre' to guide an undulating route which incorporates two new performances stages; replacing the 1980s heritage-style stage and rotunda. The mall will be paved with granite, incorporating patterns by indigenous artists.

The most arresting aspect of the redevelopment is its architectural language. The sky roof structures, which are generally shard-like in plan, rise up on steel sticks and finish in layers like tri-plane wings. The roofs are to be laid with Lexan and shade-making slatted timber gradually woven with subtropical plantings. The strategy to employ skeletal and layered structures is aimed at opening up previously blocked views to the mall facades. It will be interesting to see how these very animated elements sit within the eclectic context.

At South Bank, the Grand Arbour proposed in Denton Corker Marshall's masterplan is now under construction. This sinuous steel pergola is made as an oscillating array of

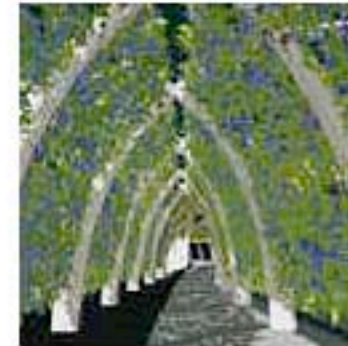
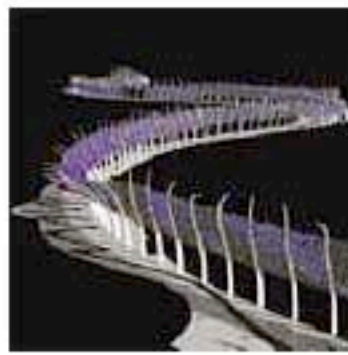
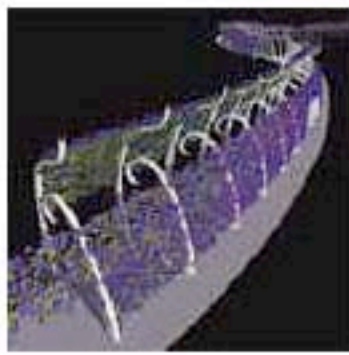
impressively scaled arching columns with tendril-like tops. The arbour enclosure is variable along its length; forming spaces that are wide and opened out or tight and vertical. According to DCM, this variation will adapt the arbour to different user and contextual conditions at points along the promenade.

The living skin of the arbour is a magenta bougainvillea that will provide colour and enclosure as well as manage views out from the promenade route.

In formal terms, the organic geometries are a surprising break from the kinds of axial and angular arrangements that have come to characterise DCM—and yet the scheme conforms with the firm's successful strategy of working a grand gesture. Overall, the arbour's scale and its 'Jurassic Park' expressiveness promise unique sights.

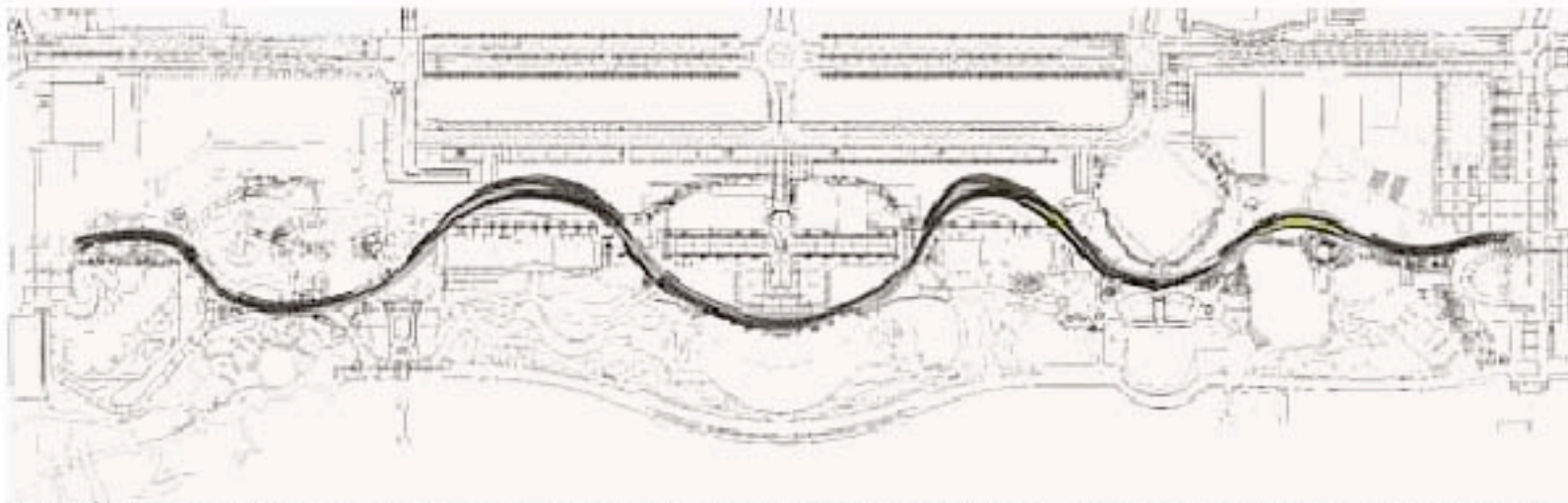
On paper at least, both these projects are confident initiatives which mark out a new urban identity for Brisbane with remarkably playful architectural forms. It will be intriguing to see how these audacious public scale works are received. Both are due for completion late this year.

*Antony Moulis is a lecturer in architecture at the University of Queensland*



Top of the page and left  
Two Bligh Voller Nield models for sky roofs and kiosks  
being installed by the Brisbane City Council along Queen  
Street Mall.

*Computer perspectives*  
Various views of the arbour, with foliage that DCM assures  
us is magenta bougainvillea.



Above Site plan of South Bank, showing the path of Denton Corker Marshall's Grand Arbour past existing cultural facilities.