

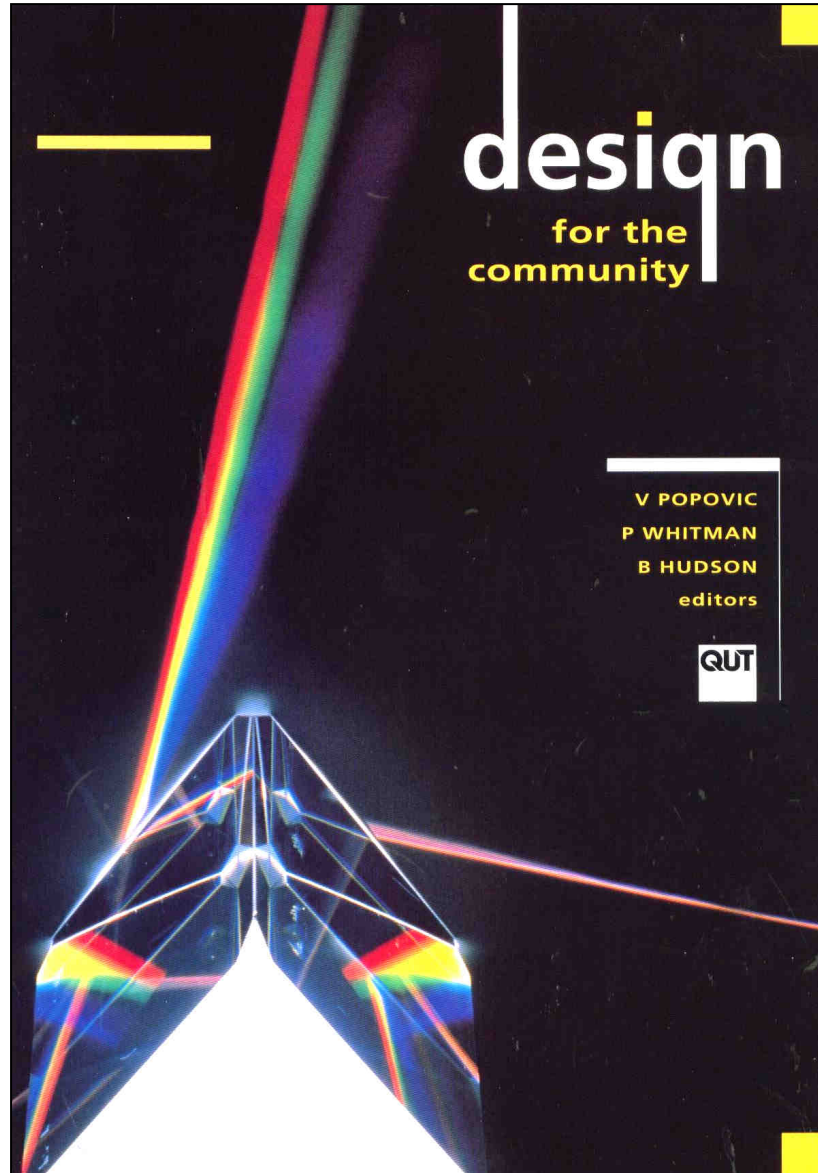
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A multi-disciplinary group of design students propose a redevelopment of individual and group camping facilities at Springbrook National Park. A romantic and fairyland atmosphere is developed to enhance the natural educational potential of the site and heighten the experience of the transient community, the campers.

Keywords: design, community, environment, nature

H'ANI NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE FACILITIES AT SPRINGBROOK

Introduction

The National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for managing a number of facilities at the site of the Springbrook National Park. Adjoining the national park proper are a visitor information centre and lookout, a camping ground, and a day visitor picnic area. The information centre is housed in an old school house near the lookout, but the camping ground and the picnic facilities are some kilometres further along the road at Purlingbrook Falls. The conflict of interest between the day visitors and the campers, and the remoteness of the information centre had caused the National Parks and Wildlife Service to consider alternative arrangements for the Springbrook facilities. In particular it was proposed to relocate the camping ground to a small unused site adjacent to the present information centre, sited between the road and the national park.

Students of architecture, planning, and landscape architecture formed multi-disciplinary groups to develop and propose solutions to these problems. One such group of seven students, calling themselves Nien Design, developed a solution that eventually won a National Award for Excellence in Planning by Tertiary Students from the Royal Australian Planning Institute.

Nien Design: Philip Crowther, Ben Gepp, Raymond Franke, Robyn Liley, Bronwyn Presland, Raquel Bitá, Gavin Taylor

The process

The first stage of the project involved gathering information on the site from as many sources as possible. This required consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and with numerous local community groups. The local historical society, environmental action groups, and local developers all had opinions about the best way to develop the national park facilities and adjoining areas. These ranged from removing camping facilities altogether, to developing a large conference centre. Overriding all of these concerns however were the requirements of the client organisation.

All geographical, environmental, historic, and community information gathered was carefully studied and broad guidelines for sustainable future developments were established. These guidelines were presented to the National Parks and Wildlife Service and then used to help form the brief for the second part of the project, the design of the facilities.

The solution

"H'ANI is a haven from a busy world where one can be at peace with the beauty of nature. Escape to the magic of a midsummer night's dream where the everyday world becomes a distant memory, and what is real dissolves into a personal experience of living. Experience the serenity of being alone within nature's womb. Forgotten curiosity will be rekindled as the earth reveals endless treasures and each turn in the path brings a new surprise. The mysteries of nature are revealed and a new awareness of its intricacies brought forward."
(Excerpt from Nien Design vision statement.)

The solution proposed by Nien Design is heavily concerned with the creation of a total experience. A romantic, fairyland flavour is sought to enhance the visitor's appreciation and to add a little fun to the educational uses of the wilderness site. The vision statement of the group is as much concerned with the creation of atmosphere as with the creation of a built environment.

The built intrusions into the natural environment consist of three main parts; the administration centre, the individual camp sites, and the group camp site. The existing information centre, housed in the old school building at the northern end of the site, is relocated to a new facility at

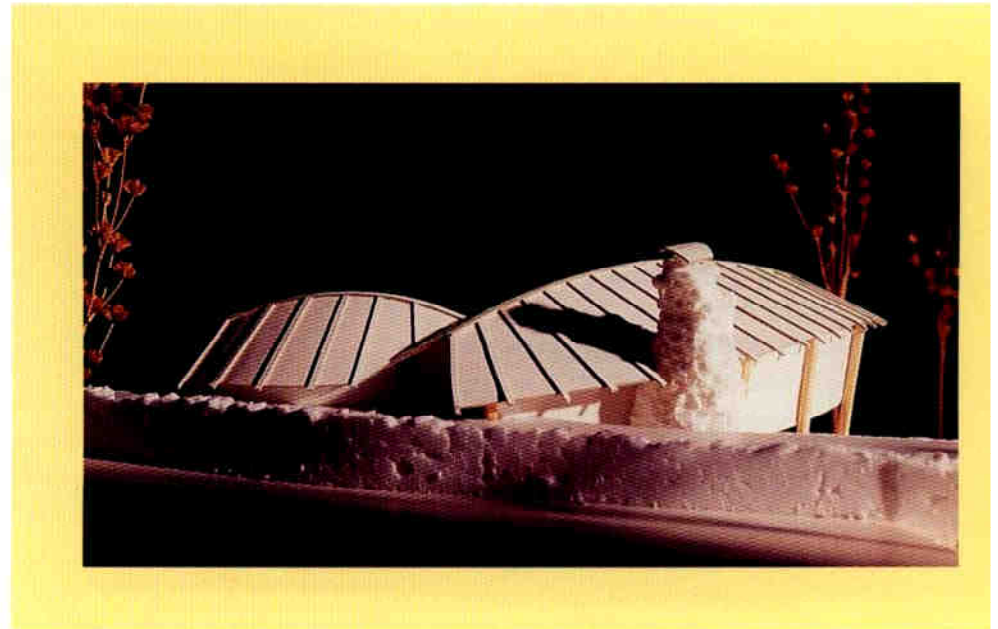


Figure 1
Model of group camping facility, view from west

nearby Purlingbrook Falls where it will better serve day visitors at the adjoining picnic grounds. The school building is then used as an administration centre for the new camping facilities. A proposed extension will house maintenance equipment.

Fifteen individual camp sites, each designed to accommodate up to six people, are spread throughout the forest at the northern end of the site. These camp sites vary in the degree of protection they offer to the camper. They range from simple timber platforms elevated above the undergrowth, to semi-enclosed, roofed structures. All camp sites have adjoining camp fire spaces. The platforms of the most primitive camp sites allow tents to

be pitched clear of wet, uneven ground. This facilitates camper comfort, and minimises long-term disturbance to the natural environment. The roofed and more enclosed camp sites allow campers a little more privacy and protection from the environment. Campers may choose the site that best suits their individual needs.

Each individual camp site is further characterised by its own natural totem. Monolithic boulders and hollow tree trunks give each camp site an individual sense of place. These personal touches promote H'ANI as a unique and individual experience for each camper.

The major architectural component of the proposal is the group camping facility. Designed to accommodate groups of up to 40 people, this facility has been sited at the southern end of the site, away from the individual camp sites. The camp consists of four cabins, a washhouse, and dining hall with adjoining kitchen. These separate buildings are set along a connecting, roofed boardwalk with an integral outdoor gathering area and fire pit. This boardwalk is set into the natural slope of the site with a coursed rubble retaining wall along one side, and views into the wilderness on the other. The boardwalk becomes the spine of the camp as it twists and bends

with the natural contours of the site. The dining hall and cabins branch off the boardwalk making sheltered porches at each entrance.

Three of the cabins are designed to sleep 12 each, while the fourth sleeps four and is designed for staff or differently abled people. In all the cabins each bunk has its own little window offering private views into the forest. The washhouse, like all of the buildings, is elevated above the ground and has composting toilets which are serviced from below. Advantage is taken of the natural changes in elevation by placing the washhouse at the lowest point along the boardwalk. This allows

rainwater, collected from the roof of the dining hall at the highest point in the camp, to be gravity fed, via storage tanks, to the showers in the washhouse without the use of pumps.

The dining hall also serves as a general meeting and multi-function room. It has an adjoining furniture store and kitchen which is serviced by bottled gas and water pumped from the rainwater collection tanks.

All new buildings follow the same construction system which is a unique adaptation of the pole frame building system. Timber poles are set into the ground and lean out at an angle to support the floor and roof. A curved laminated ridge beam spans from one end of the oval floor plan to the other. Rafters then span from the ridge beam to the top of the walls giving the roof an undulating form with a varying pitch. Walls are a mixture of glass and single skin plywood panels, many of which are hinged to open the buildings up to the environment. The roof is built up of plywood panels covered by a waterproofing membrane which is in turn trimmed with copper ridge caps. This casual building system and detailing help the buildings to blend with their natural setting.

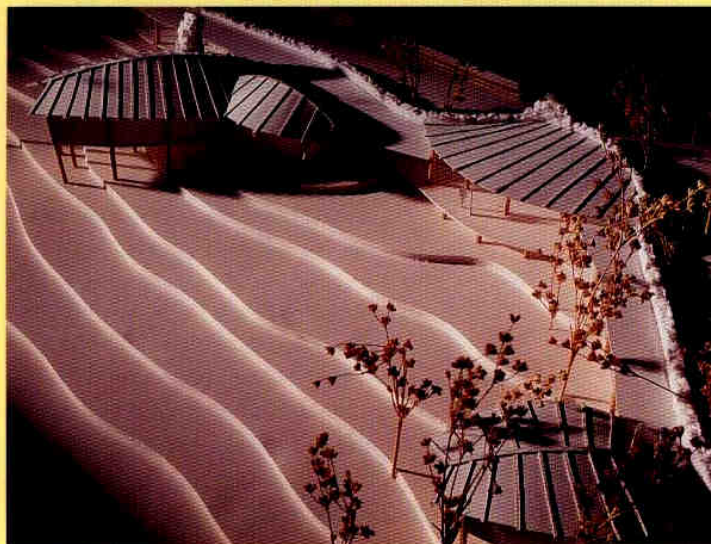


Figure 2
Model of group camping facility, view from north

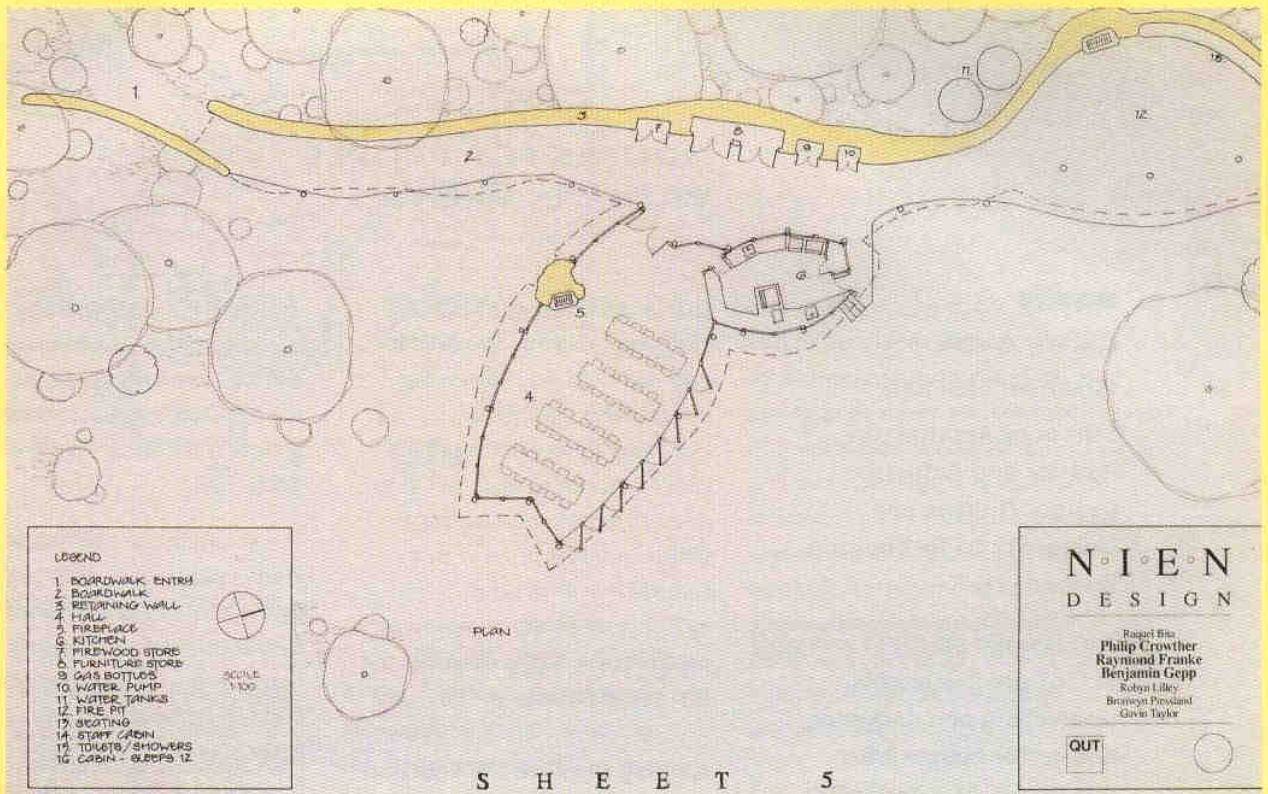


Figure 3
Floor plan of group camping facility

The boardwalk and fire pit area serve as an outdoor gathering place and general focal point to the camp which helps to prevent the sensitive environment of the nearby creek from becoming overused. The boardwalk is an all-weather walkway, casual meeting point, and de-leaching station. As well as this, it is an ever-changing viewing platform offering different views into the forest at every turn and making a memorable statement at the point of entry to the camp.

The far end of the boardwalk connects into the path system that links H'ANI with the adjoining national park. This circulation system is designed to support the different character relevant to each area, foster elements of surprise and mystery, provide areas for gathering and discussion, provide an educational experience, and have a clear order of hierarchy. The provision of adequate pathways at points of interest ensures that campers are not likely to forge tracks of their own through sensitive areas. Suitable signage and an obvious path hierarchy will help to prevent day visitors from disturbing campers.

H'ANI has been devised to provide the camper with an individual and personal experience of the wilderness. Requirements of the National Parks and Wildlife Service have been combined with the wishes of the local community and with the needs of the transient community, the campers. H'ANI's strong sense of place and its ability to communicate with people on an individual level make it a unique experience for all its users.