

# QUAY

## Sorrento Quay Design Architect – James Christou

### PERSONAL NOTES

Born in Greece – Arrived in Australia 1961.  
Primary School: Highgate Primary.  
High School: Mt. Lawley.  
W.A.I.T.: Architecture 1970-1975.

### Work History

Colin Rule Asbill & Assoc.: Student 1974.  
Colin Rule & Assoc.: 1975-1979.  
Colin Rule Christou & Assoc.: 1979-1985.  
James Christou & Partners: 1985-Present.

### Committees

P.A.A.: 1979-1985.  
Information Committee: 1979-1987 (Chairman '83-'85).  
Competitions Committee: 1983-1986.  
Chapter Council: 1984-1986.

### Competitions

2nd place Timber Specialties: 1984.

### Awards

- (a) R.A.I.A. (W.A. Chapter Awards)  
Commercial Hotel: Commendation 1986.  
Rothnest Lodge Resort: Commendation 1987.
- (b) Sir David Brand Award: Sorrento Quay-1988  
For Best Tourist Attraction.

### Overseas Tours

1976 – Europe  
1982 – Greece & its Islands – Tourism Developments.

### JURY REPORT

THE majority of entries under this category were office buildings of one sort or another.

The current crop of offices is disappointing, not only those entered for the award, but, lets face it, everywhere else. What **can** you do with an office development to make it either new and progressive, or seemly but interesting?

The answer is of course nothing. Oh! you can do a bit to make it stand out from the rack. For example you can ponce up the interior finishes (or as much as the market can bear, poncewise) or you can dig a dam' big 'ole in the middle, and advertise it as "Unique atrium space". Or, if you have a low rise project you can spread a bit of the old bullnose iron around and kid yourself you're being contextual, if not downright Orstralian.

The jury had to look further afield for award fodder, and found it in the shape of four commercial developments promising a lot more satisfaction.

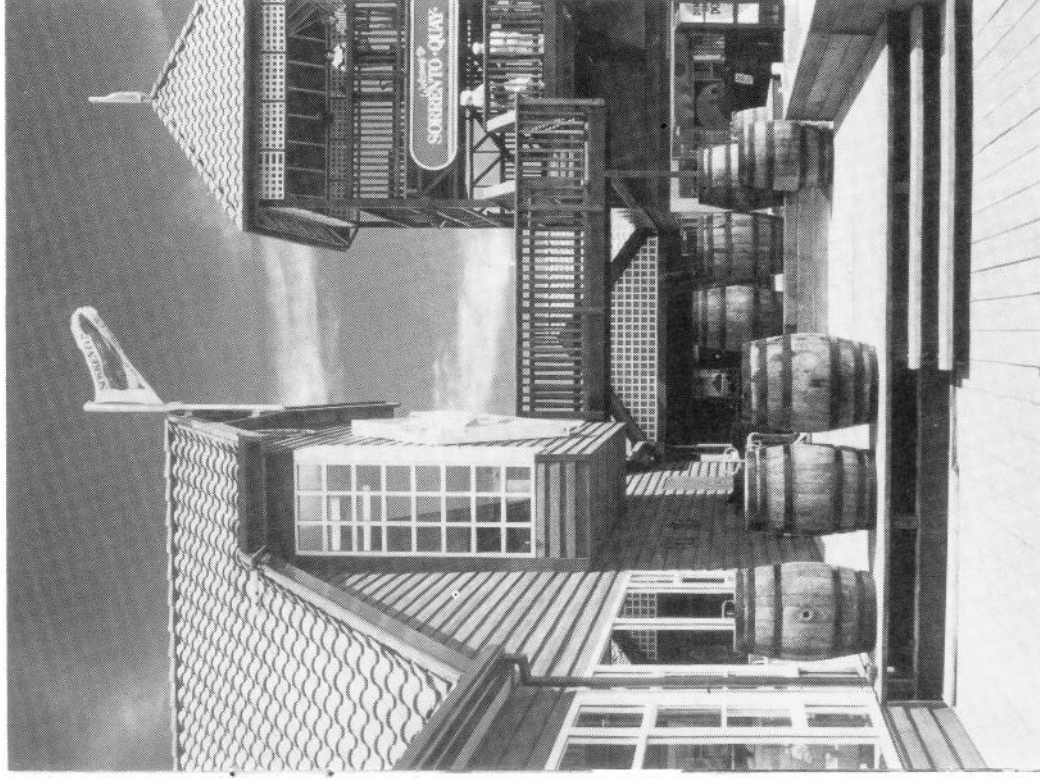
All were connected with the tourist trade, and all of them in their own way addressed the visitor problem.

**Sorrento Quay**  
**Hillarys Boat Harbour**  
**West Coast Highway, Hillarys**  
**Architects – James Christou and Partners**

**Royal Australian Institute of Architects**  
**Western Australian Chapter**  
**Architecture Design Awards 1988**  
• Bristle Award  
• Design Award, Category Five – Commercial



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One laid a nice little trap in the form of a function centre with historic overtones, the second housed summer visitors round an artificial lagoon near the coast. The third provided the best "let's get away for the weekend" sort of thing that the Jury had seen for a long time (one member, in fact, appeared to be booking for a weeks holiday there and then) but the fourth stood out.

Sorrento Quay at the end of the West Coast Highway has that really quite indefinable thing, a built in ambience of it's own tailored from whole cloth, owing nothing to contexture (how can you get into context with a sandhill?) but owing everything to a real feeling for the problem, and a sympathy with that generally ignored group, the Great Gp.

The jury saw it on a cold blustery day, a chill drizzle making it look like an old fashioned watercolour perspective, with the cluster of buildings reflecting in the wet paving and an apocalyptic sky above.

The purist could, no doubt, pick holes in the design details, all, by the way, refreshingly free of **too** much PoMography, and some of the furnishings were perhaps a little twee, but the ensemble was splendid. Even at 10 in the morning on an uninviting Friday some 70-80 punters were mooching happily round and manifestly enjoying the place. The various blocks and alleyways successfully evoke a cross between an English seaside pier, and something akin to San Francisco's Fishermans Wharf.

The predominantly timber detailing is simple and straightforward, and the maritime feeling ran into a lot of well chosen waterside tat, boats, lifebelts, shells etc.

The only thing that appeared to be missing was the Pier Pavilion. However, there **is** a convention/function centre on the upper floor of the major block, which includes a Theatre restaurant. Here the jury felt that the economics of commercialism has produced a very pedestrian "we've seen it all before" sort of thing that was at distinct odds to the rest of the complex.

But it **works!** That is to say, it makes money for the promoters without impinging unduly on the rest of the spaces, and you can't say fairer than that!

All interior design was by the architect. Surprisingly this was presented to us as if it were an unusual and highly significant factor in the overall concept. With the greatest respect to our many interior designer friends, this surely should be the norm? No architect worth his salt should let anyone loose on his interiors.

To sum up. The complex shows the mark of a strong client who knows his business, and that of a sympathetic and flexible architect, not afraid to speak his mind and fight when necessary. Which is as it should be, and a lesson to other projects of a similar kind.

There was a great deal of controversy about Sorrento Quay in its early stages, and the Rent-a-Grievance crowd were much in evidence, but even the sternest conservator must now admit to the success of this appropriate and exciting maritime development.



We recommend that Sorrento Quay, by James Christou and Associates, and their enlightened client, Mr Ric Lombardo be given an Architecture Award in category 5.

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### What do you see as the significance of Sorrento Quay for architects?

This is difficult to answer, we did not set out to make a statement to other architects, however we did set out to create a complex that responded to its environment and create human scale spaces. The spaces all interrelate, we have allowed for water, buildings, boats and people interaction.

#### What was the brief and the developer's philosophy for the project?

The Client initially, I believe, was testing the market, the initial brief was fairly open.

## Sorrento Quay Design Architect – James Christou

We had undertaken work previously for our Client so we knew his interest and expertise. We set about creating a complex that was suitable to his needs and appropriate for the location.

Our initial development submission changed the whole planning of the commercial aspect of the Marina. Once our plan was adopted the brief became more defined from our joint Clients.

### How did you come to the particular architectural solution of the Quay?

The solution, we believe, is simple and that is its basic appeal. No space or detail is over worked. Like all our work we set out to create spaces and buildings as one and not so as buildings continually dominate. The basic form was created to provide maximum protection from the prevailing winds whilst maintaining water views and human scale interactions. The buildings are really the backdrop to the environment we created.

### There are numerous precedents in Perth and overseas for marine complexes. Did you research other examples when embarking on this project?

Yes there are, and no we did not research them. As a firm we have considerable inhouse expertise when it comes to entertainment complexes, we understand all the components that are required, how they interrelate etc. That knowledge, combined with our design skills, has created Sorrento Quay. Our private client tested our design model on two different occasions overseas and we researched the retail-food aspect in the Eastern States.

### Did historical precedents of maritime and leisure buildings influence the project?

No. The materials selected and the Architectural Imagery formed by these materials were clearly defined at an early state of the design, to achieve the following:

- Create a warm inviting entertainment complex.
- Create a complex that was highly textured and did not reflect light but absorbed it to compensate for the glare created by the water.

Further, the complex is also viewed from a vast residential area and the roof profiles (whilst reflecting a boat house imagery – the boat house imagery is more evident from the mooring side of the marina) were undertaken to help scale down the large complex and provide a variety of facades.

### The marine environment along our coast is both seductive and severe. How did this influence the Quay's planning and construction?

Yes, these were the most critical aspects. I believe by the nature of its siting we were able to achieve:

- Protection from the S-W and N-W winds.
- Create a bay effect between the building, beach and the sand dunes.
- The buildings in fact turn their 'back' to the Boating Marina. This enabled us to create a more controlled human scale environment between buildings, water and the sand dunes.

The construction was dictated by a rigid structural system 5m x 5m determined by precast concrete jetty panels and the maximum span for vibro floatation of the fill area. In essence the entire complex is built over water. We have intentionally with the method of construction

however, tried to reinforce a difference between land and over water construction by detailing and materials. This adds more drama.

### Do you retrospectively monitor the success of particular projects in terms of the users' response, the developer's return on his investment or the building fabric's performance?

Yes, we spent considerable time analysing buildings and also operational aspects – that is our learning curve. All members of the staff are involved in this process. We constantly have discussion in our open office situation about these issues as well as design matters. Our Clients interest is paramount in our endeavours, we listen carefully and act on our Clients interest and we involve our Clients on day to day issues throughout all stages. The building materials at Sorrento Quay were carefully selected for their durability as well as their aesthetic appeal, and further, our Clients are made aware of maintenance aspects of all the buildings we design as well as running costs.

### The Sorrento Quay has become a major focus for the northern suburbs. Have you observed resultant effects on other development in the corridor?

We believe Sorrento Quay has had enormous impact on this state, not only to the northern suburbs. We have been amazed at how well the project has been received by the public especially people who were initially against the development. The complex has also attracted interest from the Eastern States and Overseas.

### Your office has done other marine and leisure work. Do you make a conscious effort to develop skills in one type of building problem or does it happen as a matter of course?

Yes, we have been fortunate to work on these interesting projects. We make a conscious effort to develop skills in all aspects of the business of Architecture. The whole team is dedicated to improving their skills. It's a very exciting team because we work so well as a unit. The energy that exists within the team is electrifying and operates at its best when under extreme pressure. You have to be in it to believe it.

As a firm we are committed to expanding our expertise and naturally the nature of our work.

### Would you like to make any further comments about this project? About architecture generally?

Sorrento Quay has been a successful project. It was documented and built in 32 weeks on time and below budget. That alone was a major achievement. We also undertook all the Interior Design for the complex.

The project has been successful for our Client, however, I believe as a complex it still has a few years before it reaches its maturity and works as a total unit.

We were delighted to receive the Awards because it is not often that complexes of this nature win Architectural Awards. Maybe its an indication that the profession has come to terms with this type of development – buildings and spaces for the public are just as important as office buildings.

I believe Architecture is taking a new direction in this state. As a profession we are becoming more attuned to peoples requirements and the unique environment in which we live. ■

# QUEENS

## Queens Hotel Design Architect – Michael Patroni

### JURY REPORT

THIS building is both courageous and controversial and the judges believe it deserves the Interior Design Award in the non-residential category.

The Queen's Hotel is breaking all the normal building rules and principles, turning architecture upside down and inside out, literally flying in the face of convention. Everything seems to have been forgotten about tying things up and finishing them off – what's more architect, Michael Patroni gets away with it.

He called it reversionist, we thought it could be called de-storing, the reverse of restoring.

The cladding has been cleverly stripped away to reveal the structural elements of the old building in a very exciting, original and effective way, reminiscent of the style Frank Gehry is making so popular in California. We believe the details and apparent lack of them have been very thoughtfully and carefully handled with continuity throughout.

Voids have been cut through the floor of some of the upstairs rooms, leaving open spaces spanned by construction beams thrusting into nowhere, a fireplace suspended in space, door jams have been left standing in the middle of the rooms.

Walls are half chipped back revealing raw plaster and pieces of the original old bricks and the battens of the old lathing has also been revealed in rough irregular holes in the plaster walls.

As far as possible all the colours of the original rooms have been maintained and they work surprisingly well combining various tones of the dull cream, green and brown colour schemes remembered from old railway stations.

The Queens is an interesting social exercise too – the original locals will remember all the old bits that are still hanging about and the new trendies and business people from the city will enjoy the fact that this is the first place to be done up, or should we say un-done, in the style Frank Gehry is using in America.

The furniture and adornment show imagination with combinations that defy the normal conventions – things like kitsch sandwich display cases, serveries and fridges from the 1950's combined with teetering chrome and laminex cafe tables. The bars have been made from curved corrugated iron fronted by early-Aussie-Italian wrought iron and topped with hefty slabs of marble from the old Boans staircase.

The hotel is courageous, controversial and imaginative – it upsets the beaten path and does it so well – contrived mayhem, organised chaos or a romantic ruin? Take your pick, it's all of these and more.

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### What is the achievement of the Queens project?

The Queens converted a run-down building and business into a high turnover food and beverage venue at low cost. It has achieved an environment which

fosters a good social mix while maintaining the building's identity and self-respect.

The project has largely increased the public area within the building by converting the first floor from bedrooms to bar area and in addition developing a large external terrace adjacent to the street. Strong visual and spatial connections have been established between the street and all public areas within. Bars, kitchen, toilets and service areas have been rationalised, all within an extremely tight budget.

I considered the building to be culturally and architecturally important, so where possible building elements have been restored, otherwise changes have been such that the original detail and layout can be recalled by leaving evidence of elements that have been removed without confusing new elements with the original.

The result is a building that is quite obviously not original, but neither is the way in which it is used today. It does provide a sense of continued and varied usage from the past to the present. And, judging by the trade, it is a building that people enjoy using.

### With the Sail and Anchor you won a Design Award for a thorough restoration. The Queens is an anti-restoration project. Do you have sympathies one way or the other?

The Sail and Anchor and Queens projects do not represent such an opposite approach as you suggest. The Sail and Anchor required little structural change to enable its new role and it was done with a budget to permit complete restoration, whereas the Queens project involved great changes to the original layout and structure and had a very restrictive budget. In both cases the original elements of the building were all important. Either to be restored, or deleted but physically recorded on the remaining fabric so that the original presence of detail can be recalled.

At Queens if elements were newly exposed, it was considered of no consequence as they were seen as part of the original artefact. Equally of no consequence was the introduction of new and seemingly incongruent elements as long as they were consciously delineated as not being part of the original, existing for purely utilitarian purposes.

Budgets and circumstances permitting, I would prefer the complete restoration of buildings. However, it is of greater importance that buildings of all types are retained and either restored, recycled or rejuvenated with dignity so as to ensure that our city does not totally lose all sense of the past, and along with it a sense of continuity with which to look forward to the future.

### What role did the developers play in the Queens? Was research done to determine what type of hotel would work in the area?

Matilda Bay Brewing Company is a premium beer brewer and hotel operator. Both aspects have been

**Queens Hotel**  
**520 Beaufort Street, Highgate**  
**Architects – Michael Patroni Pty. Ltd.**

**Royal Australian Institute of Architects**  
**Western Australian Chapter**  
**Architecture Design Awards 1988**  
• Design Award – Category Six – Interiors