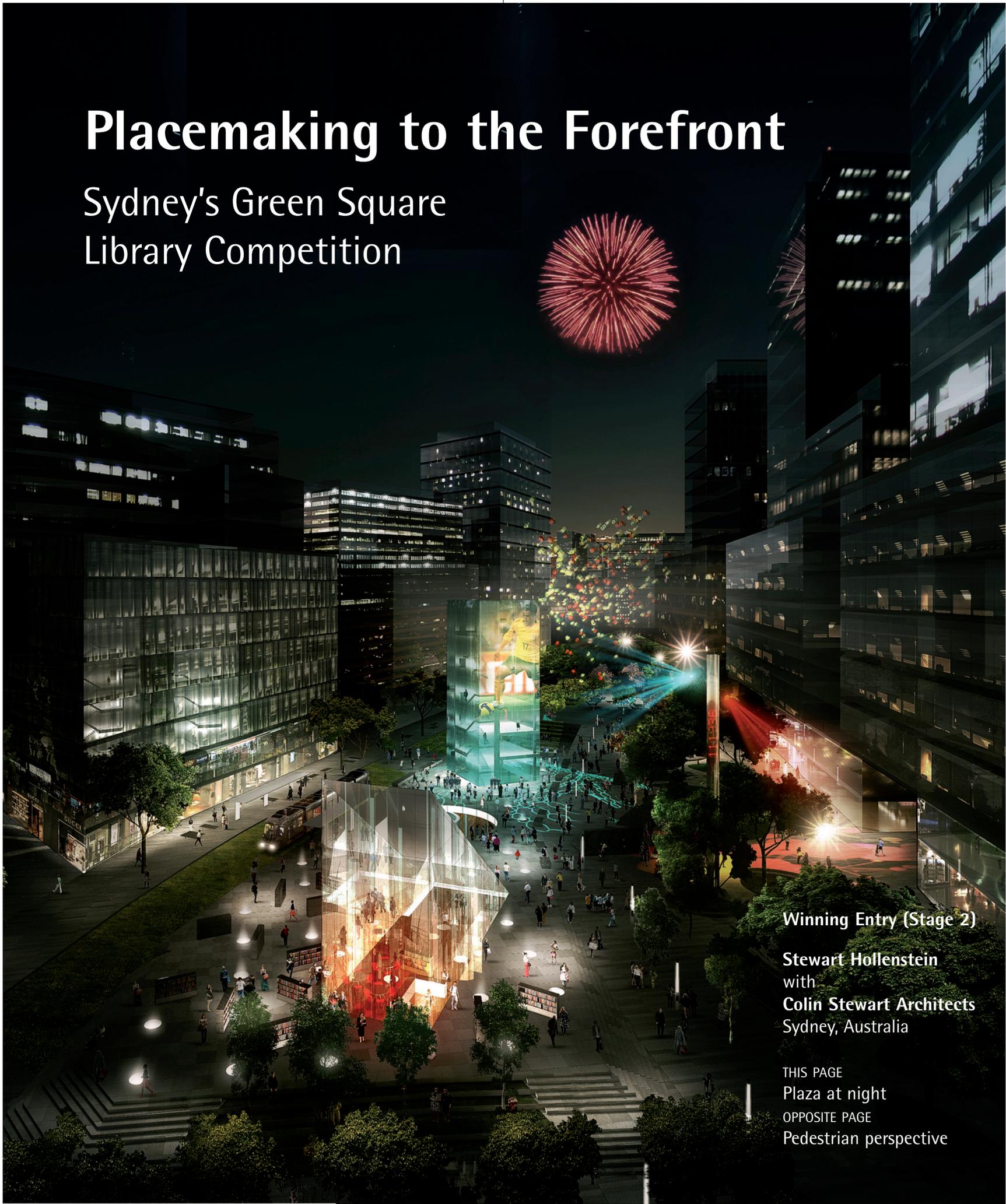


Placemaking to the Forefront

Sydney's Green Square Library Competition



Winning Entry (Stage 2)

**Stewart Hollenstein
with
Colin Stewart Architects
Sydney, Australia**

THIS PAGE
Plaza at night
OPPOSITE PAGE
Pedestrian perspective



When reaching a final decision on the winner of a design competition in Sydney, Australia, clients and jurors alike will invariably hark back to the controversy surrounding the Sydney Opera House competition. Because of the large cost overruns associated with that project, it has cast a long shadow over local projects, especially when design selection is the result of an open design competition. With this in mind, organizers of the more recent Green Square Library competition went to great lengths to address buildability and budget issues associated with the various designs. Their precautionary measures seemed to validate the selection of Stewart Hollenstein as the winner. As unconventional as that entry might have first appeared to some, it not only got the green light from a bevy of cost consultants who were brought on board; the feedback from the community turned out to be very positive.

The Site

The Green Square Development can be seen partially as the establishment of a neighborhood business and cultural center, much as we have seen in other large urban cities—with the library as focal point. The rationale surrounding the choice of this location is well documented in the competition brief:

- Green Square is an \$8 billion development project near Sydney's international gateways of Port Botany and Sydney Airport. At the heart of Green Square is 14 hectares of land to be developed as the Green Square Town Centre. The Town Centre is planned to include the Green Square Plaza and Library at its heart.
- The Green Square Library is an important project that will be the catalyst for residential and commercial development in the precinct and will establish the character of the future Town Centre.
- The Green Square Library and Plaza is to be located opposite the Green Square train station and future bus interchange. The future plaza is 7,800m² in area, framed by Botany Road to the west, future streets and projected mixed-use developments to the north, south and a future main street - Zetland Avenue - to the east. The library is to be located within the plaza boundary.

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When the two-stage competition for the library was launched in 2012, it attracted 167 entries from around the world. The members of the jury panel were:

- John Denton, Architect, Denton Corker Marshall (DCM), (jury chair)
- Glenn Murcutt AO, Architect, NSW (Pritzker Prize Winner)
- Rachel Neeson, Architect, NSW, University of Sydney
- George Hargreaves, Landscape Architect, San Francisco, California
- Sharan Harvey (Brisbane City Council Library services manager)
- Stuart McCreery (engineering and public building adviser)

The City of Sydney engaged Stephen Varady of DANNFINCH as Registrar and Competition Adviser to assist Council in the preparation and organization of the competition.

In the first round of judging, the jury reduced the number of contenders—all illustrated on 4 x A3 sheets—on the way to the final shortlist to 58 (See Annex for 1st round entry of winner). After the second round the number of schemes was reduced to 16. In the final round, the jury shortlisted five entries for the second stage of the competition for further development. They were:

- **Stewart Hollenstein with Colin Stewart Architects, Sydney**
- **JPE Design + Snøhetta, Adelaide**
- **John Wardle Architects, Melbourne**
- **Flannery & de la Pole, UK**
- **Felix Laboratories, Fremantle**

The finalists were invited to Sydney on 17 October 2012 for a site visit and briefing session. As part of a compensation package for Stage 2, all of the finalists were awarded AU\$50,000 to produce their submissions. After meeting with finalists separately, each was provided with a Stage 2 Brief addendum containing important general recommendations for all finalists along with specific feedback for each scheme. The addendum also included more detailed information about the Stage 2 Entry Requirements. Finalists were asked to lodge their 50% designs on 13 November 2012. These were assessed by quantity surveyor Gerry Heaton of WT Partnership who prepared a 50% Cost Assessment of each scheme. This assessment, along with a 45-minute teleconference feedback session with the QS and Registrar, was sent to each finalist to assist them in completing their design within budget.

Without being able to review the first-stage designs, we have to take the word of the jurors that only two of the finalists improved their schemes during stage two. Also, some of the teams added at the second stage, i.e., Snøhetta as a prime example, probably were brought in mainly to deal with landscape design. In any case, Stewart Hollenstein's strategy—placing much of the library under the plaza, thereby freeing up much of the space for other community programs—was the idea that won the day.

Before construction on Green Square begins, considerable removal of existing structures and the resolution of circulation patterns will have to be resolved. After that, the City anticipates major development around Green Square to take

Library = Green Square

Green Square is an urban living room...
It asks public space to do more.

The Library and the Plaza are fused into an urban terrain at the heart of Green Square, rejecting the model of the formalized institution and instead redistributing it into the fabric of the city. We imagine the site as a 'field' condition within which the library and a multitude of activities can occur. The site becomes a canvas for people to visit, gather and express themselves.

We don't believe the brief calls for an architectural 'full stop,' which seems too quick and too definitive for Green Square; a place still finding its own identity. It is safe to say that during the life of Green Square, the place will undergo constant change and adjustment. This approach of tactical urbanism fosters spontaneity, is suggestive not prescribed and can be actively shaped and remade by the community.

The contemporary library is a place for unrestricted access to information and has a broad and informal role in the community. This proposal is a salute to both spatial and non-spatial social networks. One does not need to enter the library to experience it. The library is marked physically but also through soft which blankets the site and draws the young and mobile.

Key volumes of the library and specific public amenities are placed strategically in the field, informing a range of ground level possibilities including a projection screen, outdoor amphitheatre, moveable seating and landscape elements, power and water outlets and a water play zone. The design is intentionally informal and highly flexible, providing a shared territory for all of the community.

In sync with the Sydney 2030 vision, this proposal is designed as a catalyst for Green Square to emerge as a place of distinct character and meaning within the broader fabric of Sydney.



VIEW OF GREEN SQUARE LIBRARY AND PLAZA FROM BOTANY ROAD





VIEW FROM UNDER TOWER BUILDING WITH OPEN AIR AMPITHEATRE BEYOND



VIEW OF LIBRARY GARDEN WITH PLAZA ABOVE

place, primarily mixed-use in nature, framing the new Library.

Winning Entry (Stage 2)

Stewart Hollenstein with Colin Stewart Architects

Sydney, Australia

LEFT, ABOVE

View from under tower building with amphitheater beyond

LEFT, BELOW

Library garden under plaza

The Stewart Hollenstein scheme was by far the most interesting and stimulating Stage 1 design, and was unanimously agreed that it was simply the most appropriate proposal for this site. The Jury was most excited by this scheme and convinced by the potential it held for the new Library and the Plaza at Green Square. It was the only scheme to challenge the notion of placing a building in the Plaza, managing to put forward a strong argument for placing the Plaza over the Library, thereby providing both a building and a suitably scaled urban plaza for the future developments around the site, becoming a beacon and an oasis for the whole Green Square community. The Jury responded positively to how this scheme would maximize the opportunity for sunlight into the entire Plaza area.

The Jury was impressed with the thoughtful, professional and succinct verbal presentation that addressed almost every point the Jury was interested in investigating. The Jury was also very impressed with the level of resolution of the Stage 2 scheme and the presentation of the A0 panels. The single level library creates an efficiency of planning, punctuated by 'pop-up' and 'cut-out' elements that express themselves at Plaza level. The single level, generally open-plan library and the 'field approach' for the Plaza with scattered elements across the site was found to be a robust strategy that would be able to accommodate rigorous design development without significant change to the substance of the idea. This was particularly relevant to the tower element that may need some re-programming. Council may also like to re-think the role of the library staff or add a 'programs' manager to curate the use of the public plaza. The Jury also suggested a subtle switch of emphasis of the public plaza from plaza with park, to park with plaza. The Jury was very excited by the possibilities contained within this design and believe that this team contains a good balance of confidence and wide-eyed enthusiasm and determination to be able to successfully realize this project and fulfill the promise that their scheme holds.

-Jury Comments

