





Building Blocks for Quay Quarter

Sydney

Building Blocks was a temporary urban experiment and mobile public art sculpture, animating streetscapes around Circular Quay, Sydney, between 7 and 11 April 2014. The mobile public art sculpture was constructed, dismantled, moved and re-formed each day between 7am to 2pm, inviting workers, residents and visitors to stop, take a seat, play a game and start a conversation around the Quay Quarter Sydney precinct bounded by Bridge, Alfred, Loftus and Philip Streets. The event offered a taste of how under-used public spaces will soon be revitalised into a vibrant urban neighbourhood, to be known as Quay Quarter Sydney.

While Circular Quay is home to thousands of workers and plays host to many visitors and tourists every day, its street life is less than active - there are few places for people to linger, to connect, to enjoy the city and claim the streets as their own.

Commissioned by AMP Capital, the collaborative work brought together one of Australia's most distinctive street artists,

Jumbo, colour masters Lymesmith and local architecture firm Fearn Studio. The team delivered a fresh new structure each day, enhancing the original streetscape and bringing life to the streets through design, colour and amenity. The boxes have since been reused by AMP Capital to enliven some of their commercial office spaces.

AMP Capital is currently working with the City of Sydney to transform its holdings in Circular Quay into a new vibrant mixed use destination at the gateway to Sydney and on the city's cultural ribbon, to be known as Quay Quarter Sydney.

Building Blocks was the first in a series of public art events planned by AMP Capital, as 'gifts' to the residents and workers of Sydney, to publicise and develop dialogue around the vision for Quay Quarter Sydney.

The artistic director Jess Scully was conscious of the need for high impact colour to draw people to interact with Building Blocks. She invited Lymesmith to develop a colour strategy and the rest of the team, architect Matt Fearn

and street artist Andy (Jumbo) were enthusiastic collaborators. Due to budget and time constraints, the box forms were kept extremely simple and adaptable and the colour palette created the visual excitement on the street. The large number of boxes allowed the display to change and adapt to each installation location and the colour system gave a cohesive identity to the event.

The colour palette sought to demonstrate a strong relationship between the iconic AMP tower on Alfred Street and the Building Blocks themselves.

Colour theorist Joseph Albers spoke about parent and child colour relationships - two or more 'Parent' colours which, when mixed in various proportions, would form a number of 'Children' colours - all unique, but visibly related.

In order that the Building Blocks could demonstrate their 'parentage', four colours were chosen to represent the 1950s AMP tower - **Resene Gold Dust metallic**, **Resene Half Spanish White**,

Resene Emerald Green and Resene Crowshead.

The rich materiality of this building led to the decision to use three finishes in the blocks - wood stain, metallic paint and waterborne enamel.

The second group of colours were chosen more intuitively. The aim was to make the 'old parent' colours of AMP break into a smile, as if a bright and cheeky grandchild had climbed onto its lap and created a bit of chaos. In order to explain the palette to the client the two colour groups were described as 'serious' and 'engaging'. In combination, it was hoped they would become 'seriously engaging' and draw the public to interact with them.

As Lymessmith had agreed to oversee the painting of the boxes and paint at least half of them, there were no conversations with professional painters about the fact that each box required six or seven colours in three different finishes. In addition, sanding, undercoats and sealers meant that each of the 56 boxes needed at least 21 steps to complete. Some colours needed undercoat, some didn't and the order of which colour to paint first had to be carefully worked out. Keeping track of which face was to be painted with which colours was also challenging and a good lesson for future projects.

Each box was first undercoated in **Resene Quick Dry** waterborne primer undercoat except for the sections that required a wood stain finish before finishing in solid colours of **Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen** in Resene Half Spanish White, **Resene Downy**, **Resene Mona Lisa** and **Resene Enamacryl Metallic** in Resene Gold Dust. The stained areas were coloured using **Resene Colorwood** stains of **Resene Evergreen**, Resene Crowshead, **Resene Candlelight** and **Resene Clementine** finished in **Resene Aquaclear** waterborne urethane.

Despite the challenges, the complex colouring created a vibrant and eye-catching display, which attracted a great deal of attention and enabled AMP to promote its development proposal for Quay Quarter to a broad range of people.

A frequent comment from passersby to the promotions team was "I have no idea what this is or why you are here, but I love these colours!" The team then filled in the blanks and disseminated the information required. It was like catching fish with a shimmering lure.





Architectural specifier: Lymesmith www.lymesmith.com.au
Building contractor: Matt Watson, Winchester Interiors www.winchesterinteriors.com.au
Client: AMP Capital www.ampcapital.com.au, www.quayquarter.com.au
Design and conceptual collaboration: Matt Fearn www.fearnstudio.com.au
Photographer: Stuart Miller, Sonia van de Haar www.lymesmith.com.au
Project manager: Jess Scully www.jessscully.com
Quay Quarter web design, marketing: Frost www.frostcollective.com.au
Tape graphics, assistant box painter: Andrew Boddam Whetham aka Jumbo