



Case Study 02

Eastern Institute of TAFE

Lilydale VIC

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TAFE

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A celebration of polychrome brickwork ... or a Ren & Stimpy cartoon? Derham Groves* reviews the Eastern Institute of TAFE's Lilydale campus.

The bricklayer's art may be viewed at its best in Melbourne, which has so many fine, polychrome brick buildings, including houses, churches and even factories, that it can justly claim to be the 'polychrome brick capital of the world. Splendid polychrome brick buildings have been designed by celebrated architects such as Reed and Barnes last century and Edmond and Corrigan this century, not forgetting the contribution of countless 'anonymous' bricklayers.



The quantity and quality of polychrome brick buildings is one aspect of Melbourne's architecture that is often overlooked by locals. But the US-based public artist, Andrew Leicester, was so impressed with Melbourne's polychrome brick buildings when he first visited in 1984, that polychrome brickwork has featured heavily in most of his subsequent projects such as the award-winning Cincinnati Gateway (1988). In capable hands, otherwise drab walls can be transformed into canvases for 'public art' without significantly adding to the cost of the structure.

The multipurpose training and resource centre at the picturesque Lillydale Lake Campus of the Eastern Institute of TAFE, designed by Perrott Lyon Mathieson with Carey Lyon, is possibly the most daring

The building seems to express itself from the hillside of its semi-rural setting. The facade's seemingly random texture mimics the earth's strata. Cream brickwork around entrances has been likened to patterns of erosion.



of Melbourne's polychrome brick buildings to date. Two irregularly shaped areas of polychrome brickwork made up of bands of black, brown or red bricks which vary in length and width, almost cover the two most visible sides of the building (the rear and far sides are mostly metal clad). Here and there coloured bricks protrude from the wall in either rows or panels. At first glance the arrangement of bricks appears to be random, but there is a definite pattern to them.

The two large polychrome sections are separated (or are they linked?) by a diagonal swath of grey bricks with individual bricks protruding in a 'blackberry-stitch' pattern, which also visually connects the main entrance and the balcony on the third level of the building. A round patch of grey bricks in the midst of the polychrome brickwork on the front facade looks like someone has thrown a giant handful of mud at the wall - 'splat'. It also looks as though someone has 'splashed' grey bricks on the polychrome brickwork on the building's near side.

Above the rear entrance of the building, a large arc of black and grey bricks 'slides' from behind metal cladding. A pygmy-sized 'skateboard ramp' of grey bricks makes an interesting transition between the (horizontal) brick paving and the (vertical) rear wall.

The polychrome brickwork of this building can be viewed in different ways. One is that it has a 'textile' quality. In my book, *Feng-Shui and Western Building Ceremonies* (1992), I suggested that laying brick after brick row upon row is like



(Left) Paving makes a gentle transition to walling at the main entrance. The cream brickwork is surmounted by an arc of darker bricks. (Below) The controversial 'splat' panel: a 'point of erosion' or is this where that wily coyote met yet another untimely end? (Bottom) Despite their apparent complexity the patterns were cleverly designed to allow rapid laying.

knitting stitch after stitch row upon row, and different types of bonds in bricklaying are like different types of stitches in knitting. Unlikely as this idea might seem to some people, the designer of the Eastern Institute of TAFE building, Carey Lyon, said that the system used to lay the bricks was like following 'a knitting pattern' and the pattern formed by the bricks is 'almost tweed-like'.

Another way of viewing the polychrome brickwork is like the earth's strata. The building looks like a weather-beaten cliff growing out of the gently sloping site. Coincidentally, perhaps, the site is adjacent to a lime quarry. If Lyon's aim was to design a building which was 'a fragment of the landscape', then he succeeded. Finally, the polychrome brickwork also resembles the pixels of a giant TV screen. While the bricks do not combine to make a complete picture, as I mentioned earlier, there are strong suggestions of mud being thrown and water being splashed. This 'cartoon-like' quality is also reflected inside the building. The style and colour of the central staircase, for example, is right out of a *Ren & Stimpy* cartoon.



CLIENT:	Eastern Institute of TAFE
ARCHITECT:	Perrott Lyon Mathieson with Carey Lyon
BUILDER:	LU Simon
BRICKLAYER:	Bradreer (Australia)
PAVING CONTRACTOR:	LU Simon Builders
PROJECT COST:	\$7 million (including fitout)
PHOTOGRAPHY:	Derham Groves

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