



Case Study

St James the Great, East St Kilda

ARCHITECT: Atelier Wagner **BUILDER:** DNA Construction **PRODUCTS:** Warema E100AF cable guided external venetian blinds with perforated flat blades, finished in DB 703 Anthrazit-Metallic

Background

“St James the Great has been a bedrock of East St. Kilda for over a century now – accumulating historic elements and artefacts over the years, and reinventing itself every few decades to keep up with the ever-changing character of its community,” explains David Wagner, a Partner at Atelier Wagner.

This worship space was originally defined by the traditional tones and textures of red brick and terracotta, and in the 60s it was expanded through an addition of a split-faced concrete block narthex. However, it is the latest project by Atelier Wagner that sees the temple transformed into a modern, integrated and inclusive sanctuary that honours the cues of religious architecture, but looks right at home in one of Melbourne’s most multicultural suburbs.

“Locating the parish centre on the thin piece of land between the church and the bulk of the neighbouring multi-residential block was a formal and spatial challenge but enabled the proximate positioning of amenity to the church and an opportunity to promulgate a clear sense of welcome to the street,” explains David. In response to the parish’s ambitions, the architectural practice also proposed a translucent glazed lightbox surmounted on a tower which – coupled with a galvanised steel cross – serves as a landmark signifier that is visible from some distance away.

Challenge

David explains that a giant eucalyptus shaded the street frontage concealing the church with old style vertical blinds inside the three large arched windows. While these were intended to provide protection from the summer sun, they also unconsciously created an undesirable opacity to the worship and fellowship activities. Creating a welcoming sense of openness was an essential part of the project, which is why the atelier suggested the removal of the eucalyptus, and a new solution for sun shading.

“We proposed for the tree to be removed so that the ground would be allowed to settle over a period of time to stabilise the foundations and protect the footings to avoid further cracking of the walling,” he explains. “The sun shading device of external operable louvres was then proposed as a solution to provide much needed protection from the sun while promoting a transparency to the street.”

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Solution

Having specified Shade Factor products on various projects in the past, the architect decided to select their sun shading solutions in this instance again. The project team specified the Warema E100AF cable guided external flat blade external venetian blinds with 6% perforation and no rolled edges, finished in DB 703 Anthrazit-Metallic.

“A stainless steel cable guide system was specified to provide discrete, effective guidance of the motorised louvres,” David explains. “The Anthrazit-Metallic finish presents as a shadow against the split face grey concrete block façade of the narthex. An anemometer has been installed to the roof to provide protection against strong winds.”

Fitted neatly in-between the steel shrouds that frame the 4.3m high north facing windows, the external venetian louvres provide the much needed respite from the unyielding Victorian sun in the hotter months, while fostering a sense of visual connection from both inside and outside.

“Shade Factor were able to provide a sun protection system that complimented the design strategy of creating a church that is welcoming and open to the community,” David sums up. “The metallic finished external venetian louvres fit neatly within painted plate steel shrouds, visually balanced against the craggy texture of the split face concrete block facade, and provide sun protection to the large north facing windows while facilitating their intended transparency.”



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