

Arc's cave-like pool replicating the ribbed theme used on the towers' roofs. The pool was built by Crystal Pools

Photo Credit: Martin Segner

Welcoming water in residential highrise



Koichi Takada, principal of Sydney firm Koichi Takada Architects

Koichi Takada, the principal of Sydney firm Koichi Takada Architects, is celebrated for his impact on Sydney's skyline, having introduced organic nature-inspired forms into the highrise cityscape.

Water plays an important part in his highrise residential designs, often making spectacular use of location and available views. One of the most recognisable of his designs is Skye in North Sydney, with its wet edge pool sitting atop the residential tower.

His latest, also completed by Crown Group, is the Arc building in Kent Street. It is an impressive new 25-storey centrepiece in the CBD, with a curved rib-cage rooftop contrasting a cityscape of otherwise box shaped buildings, and a cave-like swimming pool in a similarly ribbed lower floor.

"Water brings everyone together and creates an emotional response and an emotional experience."

Both pools were built by Crystal Pools.

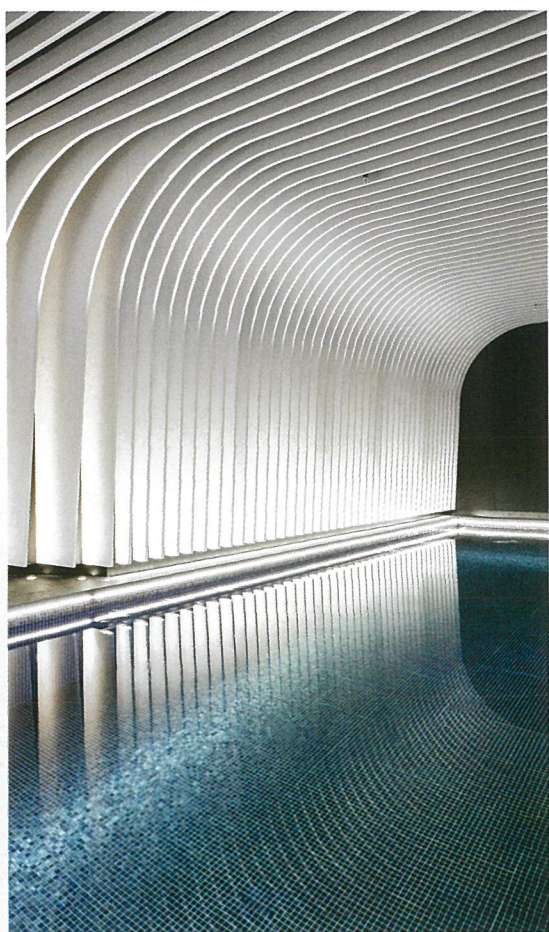
His Arc design draws inspiration from the natural world, juxtaposing the masonry of early Sydney with the art deco forms of the 1930s.

SPLASH! spoke with Takada and asked him about the importance of water in his highrise residential



The Arc pool is designed to be a cosy, intimate meeting place, while exhibiting a modern style

Photo Credit: Tom Fergusson



designs, and about the evolution of architecture in our changing cityscapes.

Incorporating water elements

"We've done water everywhere," says Koichi Takada. "Whether it's a water feature or a pool, whether it's underground or on top of the building.

"For instance in North Sydney, on the project called Skye, we put the infinity pool on top of the building, so when you go to the rooftop, you see the water almost disappearing and floating on top of the skyline over North Sydney," he says.

Takada says this creates the illusion of the water cascading off the edge of the building.

"And the water gives you very much a breathing space in the busy lifestyle we have in city living. And in this project, everybody comes up to the sky, the daylight, and then has their entertainment around the water. And if you're up for it you can swim laps, or go into the water on hot days. So water brings everyone together and, in particular with the Skye project, creates an emotional response and an emotional experience."

The pool cave

In the Arc project, Takada and his team approached the idea of the pool differently.

"Normally we'd put the pool on the best location, to bring people up onto the rooftop or the podium, but in this instance we put it underneath the building," he says.

"This was very conscious decision-making because we wanted to draw people into the cave-like space

that was available to us. And we had different options of course, but we concluded it was good to have this intimate, cosy experience. Whether you're exercising in the gym or you've just arrived and you just want to chill out. So bringing the element of water into this type of space really helps you to transition from a busy lifestyle in the city as you come home, or if you've just arrived from the airport and are checking into the hotel – there's Skye Suites here – and the water just instantly calms you down.

"And of course you can jump in and enjoy the pool in the morning or anytime, have a splash of water and it cools you down. Water has a great effect on people."

Creating character

When asked about his favourite project, he says he doesn't have one.

"I don't actually have a favourite project," he says. "My next project is always my favourite project. We constantly try to improve. When we design a big project like this – we designed it four or five years ago. Today finally it is accomplished and has given birth to the architecture in the city – but to me this was very much designed five years ago. Today we are already more progressive in the way we are designing or thinking. So for us, we learn the lessons and try to keep constantly improving."

This building has won a number of awards, including winning the City of Sydney's Design Excellence Competition.

Takada says that when he started designing the building for the competition, he looked around at the existing buildings in the neighbourhood and found a series of boxes.

LEFT: The Arc pool is designed to be a cosy, intimate meeting place, while exhibiting a modern style

Photo Credit: Tom Ferguson

MIDDLE: The roof also features water in the form of reflection ponds, helping calm residents as they relax on the rooftop and take in the views of Sydney

Photo Credit: Tom Ferguson

BOTTOM: The Skye infinity pool has the illusion of the water cascading over the North Sydney skyline

Photo Credit: Tom Ferguson





The boxiness of the buildings, he says, was because they had to fit the box of restrictive regulations.

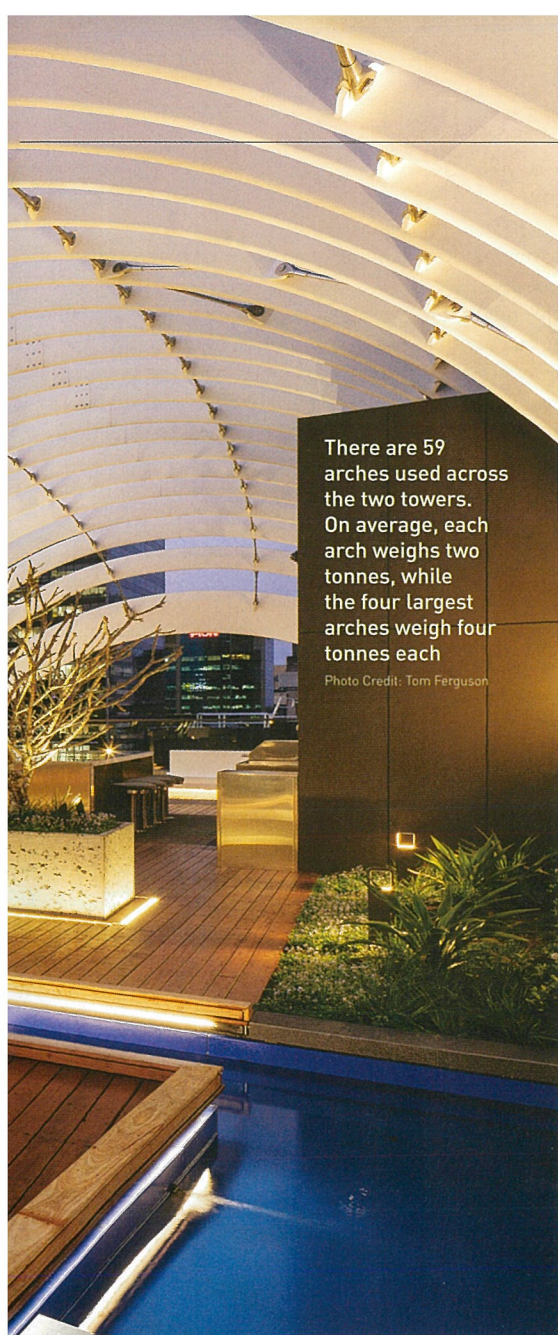
"Today, regulations are so prescriptive," he says. "So we don't have a sense of freedom of expression. So we

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challenged that, we challenged that status quo of what other commercialised buildings would have done, to create something that becomes a point of difference; something that becomes a character.

"Some people said this would change the face of Sydney – and maybe in a small way this can be the beginning of other big things to follow," he says.

"We want to create more character, we want to bring back traditional materiality, something that we've forgotten, the techniques of construction – anything that can celebrate the idea of humanising architecture, humanising spaces."



There are 59 arches used across the two towers. On average, each arch weighs two tonnes, while the four largest arches weigh four tonnes each

Photo Credit: Tom Ferguson



He says he is trying to bring it back down to relate to human experience.

"And I think the element of water – doing this cave-like pool – is part of that."

Going out of the box

SPLASH! asked him about the importance of the city's architectural history, and how best to preserve it in the face of its accelerating growth.

He points out that, in urban developments, architects face the pressure of commercialisation. That in turn can lead to a cloning of similar urban landscapes.

"It becomes a repetition of copy and paste boxes, and even the façade has that glass and metal look, and no character. Whether you go to Sydney or Tokyo or London or Paris, you look at the highrise and they all look the same.

"So we looked at it and said, okay, how can we relate it to something that is more culturally specific, how can we make it site-specific. We looked to a traditional materiality in bricks – while also using some modern techniques – to express the intricate brick façade on the podium – and then the tower has a contrast of old and new. We used state-of-art technology to make it as thin as possible and as open as possible. So this is a great contrast, between the old way of looking at it versus the new futuristic architecture.

"And also the new way of using the computer to facilitate the cutting edge technology, to express in architectural language. So this building celebrates a bit of both," he says.

"And today I think we question – and I question personally – the effect of the past ten or twenty years of globalisation – we've forgotten the essence of where we belong.

"So that's something that we wanted to discover through architectural design, and just express it. We want to voice it, we don't want to be hesitant. We want to think outside the box and push the boundaries of design and hopefully this will influence others and create a much bigger interactive society as a whole – and architecture will still be very much a part of the cultural proposition." ■

ABOVE: The metal arch fins were fabricated in Adelaide and transported to Sydney

Photo Credit: Martin Siegner

LEFT: The infinity edge pool on top of Skye in North Sydney

Photo Credit: Tom Ferguson

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