**Gaia**

A reflection of the past,

inflection of the present

and a suggestion to the future.

**Context**

The St Kilda triangle was swampland until the European settlement where it went under numerous developments to become a place for Melbournians to get away and lose themselves. The rich history of St Kilda has made the triangle extremely precious to the locals, which shows significant of the site. The value has caused many problems when the city council proposed a new vision for St Kilda. The crown land was proposed to have a 300 million dollar makeover, turning the site into a mega shopping centre in 2007. The residents were enraged by how absurd the design was and how betrayed they felt by the St Kilda city council. A series of protests were held around the community, led by Serge Thomann. The council’s poor choices at the time also led to the project being scraped leaving the triangle as a car park. The site has been left untouched ever since.

**Overlook**

Gaia pays homage to the old and references the present to design a new master plan focusing on connecting the St Kilda community, the city and the foreshore recognising the social and environmental impact of the site.

**The Esplanade Extension**

The extension of the Esplanade redefines the triangle separating it into two, treating the Palais theatre side as an urban condition and the other as the foreshore. The extension mimics all characteristics of the existing esplanade such as the brick pavement and its signature palm trees giving people a sense of familiarity. The extension lures people from the edge of the site leading them into the centre unnoticed and being exposed to the triangle as a whole. As an elevated walkway it also creates new views of the St Kilda Beach which both the locals and tourists will appreciate.

**Commercial**

Gaia includes two sections of commercial spaces, one next to the Esplanade which could be accessed from it to and the other behind the Palais theatre. A three level hotel is located behind the Palais theatre offering some of the best views for St Kilda. And the hotel rooftop is connected by the Esplanade extension and easily reached from the ground floor. It has a rooftop bar and an entry to the Rock and Roll museum.

**Community**

The community precinct is located right next to the Palais theatre as well including studio spaces, community library and meeting spaces. It is the part of the triangle that is focused on the locals and their opinions. The Rock ad roll museum can be accessed both from the Palais foyer and the hotel rooftop. It is a museum that celebrates the music culture that’s unique to St Kilda. Small art pavilions are also installed in the Palais forecourt to combine art with public spaces to influence anyone in or walking past the site.

**Lawn**

Landscape is a large portion of Gaia. All design is referenced from its surrounding environment in order to extend the St Kilda experience. One of the most recognisable design moves in the master plan is the lawn space starting from the edge of the Palais Theatre hovering over Jacka Boulevard merging into the existing grass area just above the Stoke House on the foreshore. The intention of connecting the two lawn areas is to further enhance the festival and march experiences eliminating traffic and roads. The three separate pieces of St Kilda, Luna Park, the triangle and the foreshore are all stitched into one, creating a new experience full of narrative. The walkways are specifically designed to connect the programs within and also outside the triangle together tightening the space. A void can also be experienced walking through the lawn. It reveals the underground car park as a reminder of what the site was for 10 years and suggests to people to notice their surrounding and think about the history of the site and St Kilda.

**Homelessness**

Homelessness is an extreme serious issue in the Melbourne CBD and its recent series of events involving the police has forced a lot of homeless people to St Kilda. The issue is still not solved and still very relevant and our design team understands its complicated nature and controversy. However, we do believe that providing shelters to the homeless definitely helps in order to provide safety for them but also for the community as well. Gaia proposes a space for the shelters that’s slightly isolated next to the Esplanade in the garden.

**Renewable energy**

Gaia focuses on the energy efficiency of the site implementing a renewable energy system that will produce electricity every hour of the day. The hotel façade and car park columns both collects rainwater which will be delivered to the bio gas chamber located underneath the hotel. The Chamber uses the waste produced by the site and converts the organic waste to bio gas and the heat of the chamber could also be utilised to warm up the hotel during winter. The biogas chamber converts the gas into electricity and fully supports the hotel, commercial and community precinct. A tubular system is also installed underneath all the gardens including the homeless shelter to convert the electrons around plant roots produced by bacteria. The vegetation releases organic matter into the soil and is broken down by bacteria which electrons are produced during that break down process. The tubular system within the soil harvests it using inert electrodes turning them into electricity. Batteries are also installed within the homeless shelter to store any energy that is not being used at the time and could be transferred across the site. The tubular system can generate roughly around 80 watts of electricity annually per square meter. 80% of the site is installed with the tubular system underneath the garden and lawn which means that the system could roughly support roughly 80 average Australian households and also all the homeless shelters.