

# BROWN FALCONER

AUSTRALIAN TECHNICAL COLLEGE, NORTHERN ADELAIDE

architectural-interior review

# 298

## PROJECT

Australian Technical College, Northern Adelaide

## ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE

Brown Falconer

## AWARDS

2009 AIA Public Architecture Award, SA  
2009 AIA Collaborative Design Commendation, SA  
2009 AIA Colorbond Award for Steel Architecture, SA

## PRACTICE PROFILE

Brown Falconer is one of the most dynamic and innovative multidisciplinary architectural, interior design and services engineering practices in South Australia, with a very broad and diverse base of project experience. The firm has been in continuous operation for 63 years.

## PROJECT ARCHITECT

Peter Woolman

## DESIGN ARCHITECT

Peter Moeck

## PROJECT TEAM

Ian MacDonald, Carl Reeves,  
Katherine McGarrigan

## BUILDER

Mossop Group

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Don Brice



Australian Technical Colleges provide education opportunities in regions with a large youth population, a strong industry base and a high need for skilled labour. The Northern Adelaide college campus, designed by Brown Falconer and completed in 2008, provides for 360 Year 11 and 12 students and 40 staff, teaching commercial cookery, metals engineering, building and construction, electro-technology and automotive industry skills. Halfway between school and the adult world of work, the campus is an interesting hybrid, a boldly

expressed industrial artifact that also incorporates public art, flexible teaching space, natural ventilation and simple, high-quality materials. Built while the construction market was still overheated, Brown Falconer secured a maximum building footprint while rigorously controlling the budget.

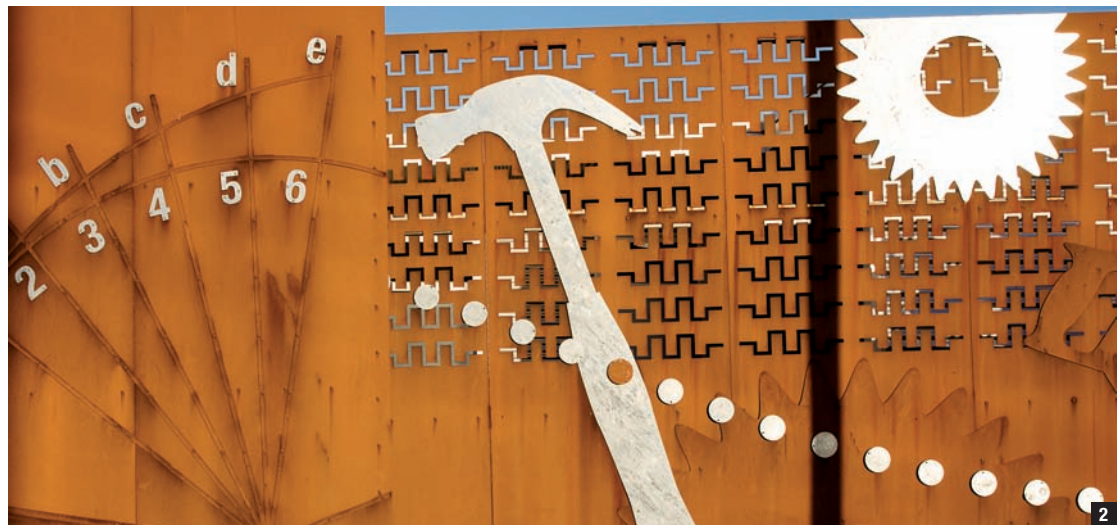
On a vacant, 2.3-hectare lot at the gateway to the industrial precinct of Elizabeth West, the site was unforgiving. But the design doesn't seek to cocoon the school. Both in outlook and architectural style, it intentionally connects with the industrial context. The buildings are

steel framed with concrete floors. Prefinished corrugated profile Zinalume® and Colorbond® steel cladding predominantly lines the external walls and roof areas, providing robust, low-maintenance surfaces. A series of low pitched skillion and butterfly roof forms define the buildings' form. They are set at an angle across the site, orientating all spaces directly north and south.

Expansive floor-to-ceiling glazing, shaded by roof forms and large projecting wall fins, floods the learning and workshop spaces with natural



1. The metal graphic panels at the entrance to the new Australian Technical College, Northern Adelaide.
2. Produced by metalwork artisan Greg Healey and graphic designer Gregg Mitchell from Groundplay, the panels simply represent the trades taught within. They're a rare piece of public art in an austere industrial zone.





daylight. The glazing opens out onto a central courtyard, which effectively becomes an extension of the classroom spaces. High-level windows are controlled with electric winders, providing ready access to natural cross ventilation. Aluminium framing for the doors and windows adds to the robust nature of the design.

The campus is defined along its western elevation by nine large graphic screens produced by metalwork artisan Greg Healey and graphic designer Gregg Mitchell from Groundplay. The structural steel and core-ten steel panels, the integration of which was present in Brown Falconer's earliest

sketch designs and survived multiple cost-cutting exercises, present both abstract and literal interpretations of the skill bases provided by the College. Formally, the screens successfully respond to and enhance the architectural language of the building; graphically, they inform the visitor and users of the core functions of the facility.

Careful attention was paid to the fixing and detailing of interior finishes. Spaces are simply and flexibly organised, and classrooms are visually connected across the shared central space of the College. Students were part of the collaborative design process, and student work is generously included

within the building fabric.

With laboratories, workshops and computing hubs, as well as seminar and breakout spaces, the College required an array of electrical, communication, mechanical, fire and hydraulic services. Using Brown Falconer's in-house expertise ensured a coordinated response. The firm also drew up meticulous maintenance protocols for the management of the building.

The College makes a positive design contribution to an otherwise banal context, suggesting the potential of industrial buildings to enrich the visual environment. +

**3. Detail of the metal panels.**

**4. Simple everyday materials define the interiors.**

**5. In-house expertise helped manage the complex electrical, communication, mechanical, fire and hydraulic services required for the different labs and workshops.**

**6. A central courtyard visually connecting the various pieces of the campus.**

**7. Classrooms, finished with highly textured, heavy-wear carpet tiles.**

**8. The labs.**

**9. At work in the large and flexible workshop space.**



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**PRODUCTS**

**Walls** Corrugated profile in Zinalume® and Colorbond® Deep Ocean® **Roof** KingKlip® 700 profile in Zinalume® and Colorbond® Surfmist® **Windows** 400 Narrowline aluminium windows from Capral **Doors** 275 Series aluminum frame doors from Capral **Floor Finishes** Design Equilibrium carpet tiles from InterfaceFLOR **Wall Linings** Gyprock, CSR **Ceiling Linings** Corrugated profile in Zinalume® **Paint** Dulux **Joinery** Natural and Flint Finishes by Laminex **Insulation** Polyester Insuloft from Tontine; Anticon R3.0 from Bradford Insulation **Furniture** Essastone hob tops from Laminex **Lighting** Moonlighting and Pierlite **Artwork** Metal feature screens by Groundplay