Award-winning Brisbane architect Richard Kirk links sites to their past without compromising the future, writes Virginia Laugenson.

Since establishing his practice in 1995, Brisbane architect Richard Kirk and his team have won numerous industry awards, nominations and commendations. That recognition has brought the practice rewards, and more work. However, it has always been the aim of this ambitious young architect to treat every design, regardless of scale or purpose, as a landmark building. Perhaps that’s why Kirk is hailed as one of Brisbane’s best ‘next wave’ talents. In 2004 his Cutting Edge film and TV post-production house on the Brisbane River won the RAIA Regional Commercial Building of the Year and Interior Architecture awards.

The striking four-level building constructed in white concrete delivers on the clients’ brief for lots of open space, height and heavy-duty surfaces. ‘Media organisations are very industrial, but instead of moving pallets around, they move large chunks of data and that has implications for the way the interior works,’ says Kirk. ‘It’s the first building we did where the technology budget was two or three times the construction budget. So these buildings become a facilitator to the technology which is an unusual phenomenon.’

The Cutting Edge project considered the environment before Green Star Ratings and environmentally sustainable design became popular in the commercial realm. It sports one of Brisbane’s first ‘green’ roofs; has active facades (cool rotating fans that follow the sun); and natural ventilation.

Higher learning
Kirk’s next challenge was winning the design competition to build the $54m General Purpose North 4 (GPN4), the first new building at the University of Queensland (UQ) in 30 years. The brief for the English language school was to create a building with a competitive and openly business purpose. Kirk met the brief, and its V-shaped GPN4 opened its doors mid-July.

‘The commercial aspect meant we had to look at it very differently,’ says Kirk. ‘A lot of the buildings at UQ are very defensive, closed and internalised; GPN4 had to be more inherently welcoming, open and transparent so people would be encouraged to enter.’

The mountain-range backdrop ignored by many other contenders for the project actually gave Kirk a major clue on how to direct the design. ‘Every project you try to let the site influence what the design is about. The views and a point of entry were very obvious things to us. Simply by orientating the building right and keeping the facade very transparent we were able to offer Mount Coot-tha to the University.’

The five-storey, V-shaped, glazed public frontage opens wide and welcoming for those entering, and affords grand views for occupants. Solar panels, underground rainwater tanks, movement sensor lighting, air conditioning and the utilisation of natural light are just some of the building’s sustainability features. As with Cutting Edge, new technologies complete GPN4’s functional operations, with students and teachers able to plug in to electronic learning facilities throughout the building.

Vintage advantage
Recently approved for mixed use development, ROPs The Mill at Albion will be Kirk’s largest scale design and greatest heritage challenge, but he insists the new urban village will “feel as if it has always been there”.

Built in 1930 and operational until 2004, the heritage-listed mill building will be central to the future residential community. The iconic floor silos, built in the 1960s, were not required to stay. However public reaction to Kirk’s concept, which kept the structures, changed all that.

“We felt the silos were very important,” Kirk adds, “and the scheme got a lot of public support through the DA (development approval) process. We also had a plan where the silos were filled with apartments, but unfortunately they’re too small to occupy.” Instead, the ground floor will be retail premises.

The silos not only retain the strong physical presence of the Mill, which saw Brisbane’s workers through the depression and WWII, they also bookend the property’s construction story. The Mill and the silos represent the 40-year development of that site and, for Kirk, the silos are “most profound, because they clearly demonstrate what the site was used for.”

Since establishing his practice in 1995, Brisbane architect Richard Kirk and his team have won numerous industry awards, nominations and commendations. That recognition has brought the practice rewards, and more work. However, it has always been the aim of this ambitious young architect to treat every design, regardless of scale or purpose, as a landmark building. Perhaps that’s why Kirk is hailed as one of Brisbane’s best ‘next wave’ talents. In 2004 his Cutting Edge film and TV post-production house on the Brisbane River won the RAIA Regional Commercial Building of the Year and Interior Architecture awards.

The striking four-level building constructed in white concrete delivers on the clients’ brief for lots of open space, height and heavy-duty surfaces. ‘Media organisations are very industrial, but instead of moving pallets around, they move large chunks of data and that has implications for the way the interior works,’ says Kirk. ‘It’s the first building we did where the technology budget was two or three times the construction budget. So these buildings become a facilitator to the technology which is an unusual phenomenon.’

The Cutting Edge project considered the environment before Green Star Ratings and environmentally sustainable design became popular in the commercial realm. It sports one of Brisbane’s first ‘green’ roofs; has active facades (cool rotating fans that follow the sun); and natural ventilation.

Higher learning
Kirk’s next challenge was winning the design competition to build the $54m General Purpose North 4 (GPN4), the first new building at the University of Queensland (UQ) in 30 years. The brief for the English language school was to create a building with a competitive and openly business purpose. Kirk met the brief, and its V-shaped GPN4 opened its doors mid-July.

‘The commercial aspect meant we had to look at it very differently,’ says Kirk. ‘A lot of the buildings at UQ are very defensive, closed and internalised; GPN4 had to be more inherently welcoming, open and transparent so people would be encouraged to enter.’

The mountain-range backdrop ignored by many other contenders for the project actually gave Kirk a major clue on how to direct the design. ‘Every project you try to let the site influence what the design is about. The views and a point of entry were very obvious things to us. Simply by orientating the building right and keeping the facade very transparent we were able to offer Mount Coot-tha to the University.’

The five-storey, V-shaped, glazed public frontage opens wide and welcoming for those entering, and affords grand views for occupants. Solar panels, underground rainwater tanks, movement sensor lighting, air conditioning and the utilisation of natural light are just some of the building’s sustainability features. As with Cutting Edge, new technologies complete GPN4’s functional operations, with students and teachers able to plug in to electronic learning facilities throughout the building.

Vintage advantage
Recently approved for mixed use development, ROPs The Mill at Albion will be Kirk’s largest scale design and greatest heritage challenge, but he insists the new urban village will “feel as if it has always been there”.

Built in 1930 and operational until 2004, the heritage-listed mill building will be central to the future residential community. The iconic floor silos, built in the 1960s, were not required to stay. However public reaction to Kirk’s concept, which kept the structures, changed all that.

“We felt the silos were very important,” Kirk adds, “and the scheme got a lot of public support through the DA (development approval) process. We also had a plan where the silos were filled with apartments, but unfortunately they’re too small to occupy.” Instead, the ground floor will be retail premises.

The silos not only retain the strong physical presence of the Mill, which saw Brisbane’s workers through the depression and WWII, they also bookend the property’s construction story. The Mill and the silos represent the 40-year development of that site and, for Kirk, the silos are “most profound, because they clearly demonstrate what the site was used for.”

Since establishing his practice in 1995, Brisbane architect Richard Kirk and his team have won numerous industry awards, nominations and commendations. That recognition has brought the practice rewards, and more work. However, it has always been the aim of this ambitious young architect to treat every design, regardless of scale or purpose, as a landmark building. Perhaps that’s why Kirk is hailed as one of Brisbane’s best ‘next wave’ talents. In 2004 his Cutting Edge film and TV post-production house on the Brisbane River won the RAIA Regional Commercial Building of the Year and Interior Architecture awards.

The striking four-level building constructed in white concrete delivers on the clients’ brief for lots of open space, height and heavy-duty surfaces. ‘Media organisations are very industrial, but instead of moving pallets around, they move large chunks of data and that has implications for the way the interior works,’ says Kirk. ‘It’s the first building we did where the technology budget was two or three times the construction budget. So these buildings become a facilitator to the technology which is an unusual phenomenon.’

The Cutting Edge project considered the environment before Green Star Ratings and environmentally sustainable design became popular in the commercial realm. It sports one of Brisbane’s first ‘green’ roofs; has active facades (cool rotating fans that follow the sun); and natural ventilation.

Higher learning
Kirk’s next challenge was winning the design competition to build the $54m General Purpose North 4 (GPN4), the first new building at the University of Queensland (UQ) in 30 years. The brief for the English language school was to create a building with a competitive and openly business purpose. Kirk met the brief, and its V-shaped GPN4 opened its doors mid-July.

‘The commercial aspect meant we had to look at it very differently,’ says Kirk. ‘A lot of the buildings at UQ are very defensive, closed and internalised; GPN4 had to be more inherently welcoming, open and transparent so people would be encouraged to enter.’

The mountain-range backdrop ignored by many other contenders for the project actually gave Kirk a major clue on how to direct the design. ‘Every project you try to let the site influence what the design is about. The views and a point of entry were very obvious things to us. Simply by orientating the building right and keeping the facade very transparent we were able to offer Mount Coot-tha to the University.’

The five-storey, V-shaped, glazed public frontage opens wide and welcoming for those entering, and affords grand views for occupants. Solar panels, underground rainwater tanks, movement sensor lighting, air conditioning and the utilisation of natural light are just some of the building’s sustainability features. As with Cutting Edge, new technologies complete GPN4’s functional operations, with students and teachers able to plug in to electronic learning facilities throughout the building.

Vintage advantage
Recently approved for mixed use development, ROPs The Mill at Albion will be Kirk’s largest scale design and greatest heritage challenge, but he insists the new urban village will “feel as if it has always been there”.

Built in 1930 and operational until 2004, the heritage-listed mill building will be central to the future residential community. The iconic floor silos, built in the 1960s, were not required to stay. However public reaction to Kirk’s concept, which kept the structures, changed all that.

“We felt the silos were very important,” Kirk adds, “and the scheme got a lot of public support through the DA (development approval) process. We also had a plan where the silos were filled with apartments, but unfortunately they’re too small to occupy.” Instead, the ground floor will be retail premises.

The silos not only retain the strong physical presence of the Mill, which saw Brisbane’s workers through the depression and WWII, they also bookend the property’s construction story. The Mill and the silos represent the 40-year development of that site and, for Kirk, the silos are “most profound, because they clearly demonstrate what the site was used for.”
Good foundations

The limitations of working within a design brief are part of the charm of the project. The brief called for all building requirements to be met, and the design to be as creative as possible. The brief also included the need for a large public transport hub and the need for a pedestrian-friendly environment.

The site was selected after months of research and planning. The design team worked closely with the local council to ensure that the final design met all the necessary regulations and requirements.

The foundation of the project was laid with careful consideration given to the layout and design of the building. The team worked closely with the client to ensure that the final design met all their requirements and expectations.

The team was able to successfully meet the brief and create a building that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing. The project was completed on time and within budget, and the client was extremely happy with the final result.

In conclusion, the project was a success and the team is proud to have been a part of it. The foundation of the project was laid with careful consideration given to the layout and design of the building. The team worked closely with the client to ensure that the final design met all their requirements and expectations. The project was completed on time and within budget, and the client was extremely happy with the final result.