

only place where one can feel surrounded by the building, as well as admire the wonderful detailing of the sails (the pattern of tiles), see the glow of the light, look at the sky, and enjoy the breathtaking view over Sydney Harbor. It is also quite an isolated space, a cul-de-sac with views that are framed by the architecture which can only be discovered by ascending to the top of the steps of the Opera House (most tourists tend to stay at the base).

## 5 THEMES

One theme that cannot be avoided is the conundrum of the Opera House as a cultural cliché: it is iconic as a photograph, but the millions of nearly identical pictures that are taken of the side view of the building from across Sydney Cove do not do justice to its intentions and complex reality. The steps up to the platform were meant as a spiritual, meaningful journey—to leave the city and everyday life and to enter a hallowed space where one can experience great art. This original aim, with its sense of intimacy and subtlety, is crushed completely by the sheer number of people around the building at any moment of the day. The deeper sense of being a special and significant place has gone, as well as (for most people) the building's connection to the arts. These values and intentions are overwhelmed by the strength of the building as a pure architectural sculpture. But that sculptural quality is largely visual and very static; the building has become a museum piece in its own right—the theme which emerges is that life needs to be restored to the Opera House on a subtle and human level, in line with its original aspiration. This could be achieved by exploring the notion of the podium space as a landscape in itself, where the elements of nature (wind, water, earth, and the sails as mountains on either side) come together in an abstract and impressive way. The abstraction and universalism of the architecture creates an ecstatic, uplifting, and rejuvenating feeling. The podium space also conveys a sense of refuge, an escape from the bustle of the city. This is the space where the spiritual intent of the Opera House can be most clearly experienced. The visitor experience could be one of the culmination of a journey, coming to a stop, and marveling about being there, in Australia, in Sydney. Engendering this sense of arrival on an existential level is another potential of the podium space. Yet at the same time, the Sydney Opera House is so well known that it is a member of a select group of international icons that are considered to be the universal heritage of humanity. Grouped with the Pyramids and Angkor Wat, the Opera House has become an international