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Paris architect Manuelle Gautrand will design 5 Parramatta Square

Kylie Stevens

June 8, 2016, 8:57 a.m.



Parramatta's new landmark civic and community building will have a Parisian influence.

French architect Manuelle Gautrand was in town on Monday to discuss her design for 5 Parramatta Square.

There will be a library, public roof garden, the council customer contact centre, a visitor experience centre, community meeting rooms and technology hub.

Her cutting-edge glass construction with a wave-shaped façade of crystalline blocks won an international design competition earlier this year in a consortium with Australian firms DesignInc and Lacoste + Stevenson.

It was an unanimous decision for the design jury, which described it as an "exemplary architectural masterpiece that delivers a 21st century solution within council's modern smart-city metropolis".

Manuelle Gautrand Architecture's diverse portfolio ranges from theatres and museums to office buildings, housing, commercial buildings and leisure facilities.

"Walking through this city, I get the feeling that it's dynamic with a lot of people," Ms Gautrand told the *Sun*.

"The design reflects Parramatta's ambition. I wanted to create a unique shape as it will be a significant Parramatta building. I want to put this building and Parramatta on the world map."

Ms Gautrand's recent projects include the "Origami" office building on Friedland Avenue in Paris and La Gaité Lyrique, an old Parisian theatre transformed into a centre for contemporary and digital arts and music.

Core to the design is a stack of transparent glass that gradually rises to the north-east with a large LED screen for public art projections.

"The design will allow sun on Parramatta Square in the middle of the day," she said.

"The aim of LED screens is for it to be interactive and create stories by giving the building to artists."

Ms Gautrand is aware of design concerns.

"Some people are anxious with the shape of the building and don't understand what we're doing," she said.



Visionary: French architect Manuelle Gautrand is proud to design Parramatta's new civic building. "I love working abroad and discovering new countries." Picture: Geoff Jones



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"But that's normal. We want to create more dialogue with the inhabitants and I hope that in time they'll appreciate the project and be confident in the building."

This is the first building she has designed for Australia, which she fell in love with on her first trip as a 20-year-old.

"I'm fascinated by the size of the country because France is very small," Ms Gautrand said.

"Here, the landscape is huge. Being so far away from a lot of countries, you have your own personality, which is open and welcoming."

The next step is the development application.

"My wish is that the building will be as great as it has been in our minds for the people who will work, live and play here," she said.