



The landscape architecture of the Tuscan town of Siena integrates nature with science.

Photo: VINCE CALIGIURI

# Landscapers in view

**T**he piazza in Siena, Italy, is sloped inwards, like a gentle amphitheatre. It took landscape architect Mark Fuller a spot of languid daydreaming one visit to appreciate that its unusual shape was for drainage purposes — a paving solution to deal with the water on-site.

In other words, it is landscape architecture at its most powerful. If the Piazza del Campo, as it's called, were being built today, Fuller says there's a good chance "we'd get a bulldozer and flatten it and put a concrete tank underneath because we can't have a sloping public space; people would fall over".

He says it's the Campo's integration of the natural landscape with the scientific approach, and the translation back to an artistic response, that is the essence of his profession.

He says his profession is — or should be — at the forefront of sustainability.

Unlike architects or engineers, landscape architects don't come with a dream of an iconic building, he says. "We try and integrate with a site's potential."

However this is not easily understood — either by the clients who employ his peers, or who should employ them, or the public.

## Agenda

Tina Perinotto

As president of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and principal of Brisbane-based architectural firm EDAW, it's Fuller's job to promote this understanding.

He hopes a conference this week in Sydney will assist with this task. The International Federation of Landscape

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Architects Eastern Regional Conference 2006 brings together an international forum of speakers and guests.

They include Astrid Haryati, assistant to the Mayor of Chicago for green initiatives, and Kongjian Yu, dean and professor at Peking University, who is trying to inject sustainability into China's massive development boom. He will showcase the growing relevance of his profession.

Not that the public seems to have much idea, Fuller says, as most think the profession involves hauling lumps of rock

and wheelbarrows around a backyard.

"We're not trumpeted or parlayed very well in the media. It's almost a hidden profession."

But while the profession struggles with the need for qualitative appreciation, the boom in infrastructure and development work worldwide has given the profession some additional challenges.

Landscape architects, as with engineers and other development professionals, are in increasingly short supply.

Of the 2000 or so in Australia, many are lured to well-paid overseas work and the industry is concerned about how to ensure the quality of new recruits maintains the historically high standards as educators scramble to meet demand.

Fuller does his job on the run, travelling frequently between Brisbane and overseas. He recently led a review of the master plan for the \$4 billion development of the Mina al Arab project in the United Arab Emirates.

He hopes that with the increased demand for his profession's skills and the growing appreciation of sustainability, the tide for his profession is turning and can take its place in the spotlight.