

THE LOCAL PROJECT



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CENTRAL PARK ROAD RESIDENCE II

STUDIOFOUR

Words by Rose Onans • Photography by Shannon McGrath • Architecture, Landscape and Styling by Studiofour

Build by Holliburd Builders



With a calm palette, abundant fresh air and natural light, apposite spaces, and green outlooks, Central Park Road Residence II is a home that takes the wellbeing of its inhabitants to heart. Studiofour unites the stately Federation-era home with a contemporary new addition to create a subtle, fluid experience of old and new.

The home presents an unchanged façade to the streetscape, preserving the integrity of the heritage residence and the architectural fabric of Malvern East, a leafy enclave in Melbourne’s inner south-east predominantly characterised by Federation period homes. Hidden behind the original house sits the new addition, whose dramatic initial impression is balanced by the sensitivity with which it takes its cues from the older home. Annabelle Berryman and Sarah Henry, co-directors of Studiofour, explain that the project differed from other similar heritage renovations “in that our methodology was focused on a ‘fusion’ between old and new. In this project, it was consciously decided that our response would be one of constant synergy.”

Instead of sharply delineating between the old and the new, “the design bleeds both building fabrics so all spaces are fluid, permeable, and highly connective,” says Annabelle. “We wanted the experience between old and new to be based on a subtle and calm transition and not one of harsh contrast. The value of this renovation lies in the sustainable conservation and repurpose of a heritage building fabric

while creating a new addition that speaks honestly and uniquely of the existing home it stems from.” The approach was not, however, of mimicking the old, or of meticulously restoring every detail. Rather, there is a sense of give and take between the old and the new that brings the two together, both aesthetically and functionally.

Drawing on the craftsmanship and pattern language of the Federation home enabled the architects to capture and interpret the sensibility of the existing in the new design. “During our early studio workshops, a vision developed that was based around using these heritage elements, details and materials to inform the design response,” Sarah recalls. “Not only in the building form and proportions of the new addition but in the materiality and detailing used throughout.” Thus, where the form initially reads as starkly contemporary, closer inspection reveals it is a reductive expression of the pitched double-storey heritage volume. Similarly, while the interiors appear pared-back, even minimalist, their detail and the way in which they continue the legacy of the old becomes evident.



The sense of expansive volume in the new addition speaks to the high ceilings in the heritage part of the home, while the exposed beams that provide structural support and a concealed lighting element were inspired by the original period fretwork. The tessellated tiles of the original front verandah are a pattern that is repeated throughout, from the tiled kitchen splashback to the bathroom floors and even the joinery in the butler's pantry, whose timber-framed steel mesh doors also hark back to the 'meat safes' that predated refrigerators.

The new does not only reflect elements of the old – the reverse is also true, with the original home reinterpreted through the new design to create a subtle thread of continuity. The black zinc cladding of the new addition is captured in the black steel mantels and wood store to the period front rooms. Non-original detailing in the entry corridor was pared back and a framework of beams introduced, setting the rhythm continued by the exposed beams in the new addition. New lighting was also added that was chosen for its simplicity and understated elegance. Perhaps the most significant impact of the new on the old, however, is in how Studiofour sensitively adapted the original spaces to enhance the inhabitants' wellbeing.

"A synergy was to be developed between not only the design aesthetic but also the spaces and how they functioned," says Annabelle. The new addition embraces wide openings, with expanses of glazing that immerse the spaces in the green aspect beyond. Externally, the rear form is cut away in the central section to provide a sheltered outdoor dining area and widen the threshold, further blurring the distinction between interior and exterior. And, as Annabelle explains, "this cutaway section also provides effective control of views from the upstairs bedrooms into the private open space of the adjacent neighbours, avoiding screens so the views from these spaces into the rear garden are able to be fully appreciated."

With the clients' brief emphasising light, air and connection to the garden as fundamental to healthy living, which in turn informed the architects' approach to uniting the new and the old, it was clear that the design needed to open up the previously dark and disconnected heritage rooms. "Focus and energy were directed at helping integrate the existing heritage spaces, as these were uninviting, often forgotten," says Sarah. "It was important that the character and as much of the existing building fabric and structural envelope as possible were





retained,” Annabelle adds, “but that the spaces were adapted sensitively to ensure they enhanced our clients’ well-being, to the same extent as the new contemporary spaces.”

Small existing doorways were replaced with large portal openings to instill a sense of fluidity between spaces that was previously missing. Steel-framed glazed doors were added to ensure the originally dark entrance corridor was flooded with light, without compromising the acoustics of the spaces. And the once separate formal sitting room and spare bedroom were connected by removing walls to either side of the double-sided fireplace to create more appropriate and enjoyable sitting and dining spaces. To ensure this dining room did not become forgotten and unused, it is easily serviced due to the direct connection through to the new kitchen behind.

The master suite, situated in one of the original front rooms, was also reworked to create a connection with the outdoors while

embracing the beauty of the old windows. “Traditionally, the master ensuite would not be located within the front room of the house, but it was considered that the existing stained-glass windows provided much-needed privacy for the bathroom, due to the nature of their hand-blown glass,” Sarah says. “With the addition of a new courtyard adjacent the master bedroom, a wall of glazed sliding doors between these spaces ensures the master bedroom is now flooded with fresh air and aspect.”

Throughout the heritage spaces of the home, as they now stand, there is a sense that the new interventions have not so much been fundamentally transformative but have rather been clarifying – even purifying. Pared back to its essence, the old reveals its capacity to support the wellbeing and ever-changing dynamics of contemporary family life. Delicately yet decisively weaving together form, materiality and detail, Studiofour creates a cohesive, balanced and calm home, in which the old and the new work in concert with shared purpose.



Original stained-glass windows provided enough privacy for the ensuite to be located in the front of the home.



A sense of calm pervades the spaces, new and old alike.



