



Stanic Handling Woollanra Residence

A traditional facade disguises this bold but harmonious reinvention of a Sydney home, where the entry experience initiates a journey that ultimately melds the interior design with the exterior environment.

TEXT LEANNE AMODEO PHOTOGRAPHY STEVE BACK



he interior journey of Stanic Harding's Woollahra Residence is determined by the design; it gently prods and pushes, leads and suggests without overwhelming the occupant or overstepping its mark. Rooms and passages flow from one in to another and the logic of the plan gives this domestic space a sense of calm.

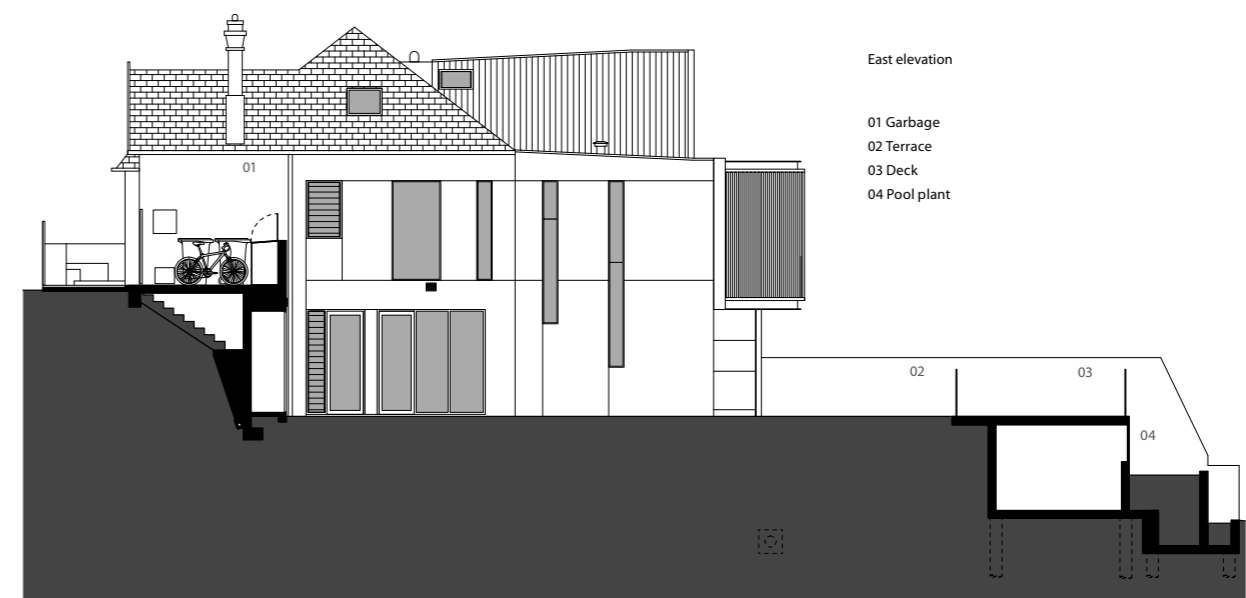
What could have been forced and contrived is instead welcoming and relaxed. That's not to say, however, that there aren't any surprises in store, because what can always be expected from Stanic Harding is an exquisitely refined attention to detail that results in clever joinery, or an unabashed use of colour or light. The clients are lucky, because the Woollahra Residence has all three.

From the outside, the street-level Federation facade gives nothing away – and rightly so. The house comes under the Woollahra Council's strict heritage area regulations and so the facade and the study were both faithfully restored. It sets the scene for the first part of a narrative that is quite possibly the home's most 'felt' experience, and most certainly its most memorable. As Design Architect Andrew Stanic states, "The

entry sequence is a big deal". It begins the "architectural promenade" that finds its most valid expression in the interior's transition spaces.

The additions and alterations that have transformed the Woollahra Residence are not apparent from the front and so stepping into this newly renovated home is akin to entering another world: the contemporary interior is in strong contrast to its exterior. But rather than jar, it engages. The entry sequence is the grand finale of a Broadway show and the point in a good suspense novel when all the seemingly unrelated leads and clues finally come together. There's a sense of resolve here, and it owes much to Stanic Harding's continual exploration and refinement of the practice's own particular type of architectural language, which was articulated so well in its multi-awarded Darling Point 2 apartment.

Having the desire to linger in a transitional space says a great deal about its treatment. Stanic has rounded the entry's corners to both extend and soften the space and what results is a pared back aesthetic. The eye is drawn to the textural mosaic created by the different materials and finishes and the play of light off those different elements. The idea of extending the space is also best represented here because it has been undertaken vertically as well as horizontally. A step down into the dining room adds impact to the living areas but also allows those rooms to 'breathe'.



East elevation

- 01 Garbage
- 02 Terrace
- 03 Deck
- 04 Pool plant

p98 Polished metal rods provide a transparent screen edge to the stairs which lead to the courtyard level and pool
 01 Joinery elements combined with ceiling and floor level treatments define entry circulation on the main level
 02 The only space kept intact for heritage purposes is the refurbished front study, providing a link to the restored street facade



This page The extent of the transformation is apparent in the north elevation. This contrasting transition space frames views to the park and the pool and provides a backdrop to the courtyard

The timber stair – accentuated by its unmissable orange slot-windowed eastern wall – leads down to the newly excavated level. The deck opens out to a pool and the view across the overlooking park is simply breathtaking. Stanic has taken advantage of this northern aspect so that the house's site seems to literally reach out and touch this huge expanse of nature. It doesn't, of course, but the architect's treatment of the rear balcony, the use of glass for the rear facade and the build's clean structural lines makes the cross-over of interior and exterior spaces seamless.

Stanic is interested in the work of US architect Rick Joy – who has mastered the art of meshing interior and exterior spaces – and in this respect Woollahra Residence conceptually resonates with Joy's homes.

The constraints of the project were considerable but Stanic makes it clear that it's important "to bounce off what you already have". So the steep site and sandy soil, small footprint and heritage restrictions, although presenting a formidable set of challenges, did nothing to deter the construction's journey to a cohesive outcome.

The promenade may very well end at the rear balcony but, looking back at the house, it is clear that, at the end of the day, this is a family home and what's important is that the design functionally caters to the needs of the people who use it – and this it does very well. **M**

ARCHITECT STATEMENT "My approach was to totally transform the house spatially and develop a considered entry sequence involving level changes to both floor and ceiling planes. I instigated this to provide a more interesting journey through the house. The project involved the removal of all structure except for the existing study and the street facade, and the excavation of a complete new floor level including a pool. The street frontage had to be restored so I endeavoured to create a contrasting contemporary rear facade that addressed the overlooking park and the northern aspect. I wanted the edge treatment of the new rear balcony to frame these views and provide a sense of enclosure when all the doors are slid away. I always employ careful spatial connections, both horizontally and vertically, to extend the available space, particularly when dealing with a small footprint." Andrew Stanic

ARCHITECT Stanic Harding DESIGN ARCHITECT Andrew Stanic
PROJECT COORDINATOR Hugo Harpley PROJECT TEAM Binghi Lamerton,
Joe Murray, Peter Christensen BUILDER Yuncken Construction Group P/L
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER Patridge Partners HYDRAULIC ENGINEER
Steve Paul & Partners LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT Spirit Level Designs
HERITAGE UrbisJHD
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