

# HOUSES<sup>®</sup>

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## COOL CITY SPACES

beach retreats



sleek lines furniture update

## interview with luigi rosselli

smart spaces AIGP, Brannigan, Carroll + Carroll, Crawford, Boyle, Terro

coastal homes Jones, Gionfriddo, Weir + Phillips, JCB, Middap Ditchfield

interiors McBride Charles Ryan, F2, Stanic Harding, Withers Miller, Limin





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# BUILDING SOCIETY

A 1970s credit union office building in the heart of Hobart, deemed well worth saving, has been reconfigured as 18 apartments by local architecture firm Terroir.











**MUCH OF CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN** building is about imposing new structures on sites that were previously unfilled space. Perhaps this says something about the psyche of a culture that once declared a continent *terra nullius*, and set about forming it anew. Not so the architecture of Hobart-based firm Terroir. As the practice's literature explains: "Terroir is a French term that describes the 'soul' of a particular site as resulting from the interplay between natural or existing elements at that site, and from the role played by human occupation in its transformation over time." In short, capturing the soul of a space – whether man-made or natural – is what these architects constantly strive to achieve.

The remodelling of a building in Patrick Street, North Hobart, is Terroir's latest contribution to architecture and to the notion of creating a sense of place. The architects have taken a 1970s structure, which was once the business-like home of a credit union, and turned it into 14 very smart apartments that are a welcome addition to Hobart's inner-city accommodation. Located between North Hobart's buzzing restaurant strip and the city centre, the apartments are close to the best on offer in this thriving city and they make a positive statement as an integral part of Hobart's late-twentieth-century architecture.

"The original building was typical of the 1970s, coming out of Sydney's 'nuts and berries' school," says Terroir architect Richard Blythe. "It made use of natural materials and exposed brickwork, and there was a little bit of a Brutalist edge to it with expressed concrete and massive exposed concrete columns that form an exoskeleton." During the 1990s, the architects watched as, one by one, similar Hobart buildings had been demolished. "People here were arguing

that it wasn't viable to transform existing buildings into apartments and we lost several excellent pieces of architecture," says Richard. "But every city in the world remodels existing structures, so we weren't going to accept that argument. We knew that through a process of accentuating the assets of the existing space, we could create something worthwhile here." With this in mind, the architects set about reconfiguring, manipulating and transforming, ever mindful of retaining the building's original "soul".

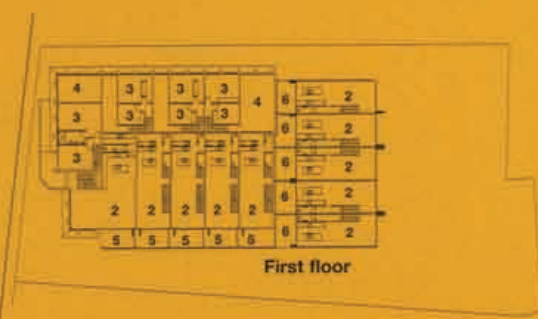
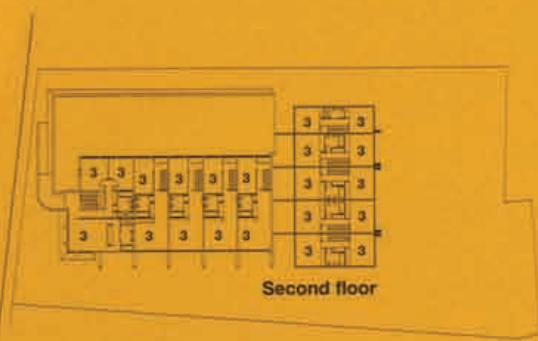
The elevated site on Patrick Street has four distinct aspects: one looking over the brooding tree-shrouded bulk of Mount Wellington and the picturesque suburbs of West Hobart; another facing the city centre, the River Derwent and the Eastern Shore; still another fronting onto an early-twentieth-century section of Patrick Street; and the final side facing north, providing a sheltered microclimate at ground level. Instead of ignoring these existing conditions, or worse, working at odds with them, these four faces of the building have inspired four different types of apartment, each of which responds to its own unique conditions.

One set of apartments comprises mezzanine units, each with double-height volumes facing onto sunny courtyards at ground level. These units occupy the site of the main banking hall of the original building, and enjoy the feeling of space that the five-metre-high ceiling lends. Another set slots into the existing structure, creating three-storey apartments with wide views of Mount Wellington. The interiors of both these apartment types reach back deep into the existing structure to fulfil the architects' concept of a "nest" or burrow-like space, tucked far away from the windows and the outside world. This private zone in





- 1 Car space  
 2 Living/dining  
 3 Bedroom  
 4 Void  
 5 Balcony  
 6 Courtyard  
 7 Recreation



each apartment is furnished with correspondingly darker colours and materials and is, as Richard Blythe puts it, “a protected niche from which the space opens out to the larger landscape.” Warm lighting of these spaces completes the cocoon-like ambience. The remaining apartments in the original building face onto Patrick Street, and provided a successful contribution to the streetscape, so changes are small-scale on this side.

A further act in the transformation of the building was to provide a new “plug-on” section on the eastern facade where the building faces the city and the water. This portion houses three-storey units with internal courtyards to provide a sheltered outdoor space on this wind-prone side of the building. Although constructed with contemporary techniques and materials, the new section of the building is not in conflict with the original part. Precast concrete here ties in with the expressed concrete in the older section. “We’ve tried to pick up the line of the expressed concrete frame of the original building and also to pick up the colour of the brickwork,” says Richard. It is on this facade that the building shows its most contemporary side, with paintwork that forms giant bar code patterns, and room-height roman numerals painted across the apartments’ garages. “We looked at the patterns that the windows and the concrete columns created,” the architect explains, “and translated that into something far more contemporary.” The super-graphic becomes an integral part of the architecture here, the asymmetrical design in particular lending the composition dynamism. As Terroir’s inspiration for this, Richard cites the work of Dutch architect Steven Holl, whose recent domestic and museum commissions make frequent use of giant graphic elements.

As dictated by the existing conditions of the building, the interiors of the different apartments vary as well. One set is resplendent in earthy tones of chocolate latte, burnt orange and aubergine; the next in blue-grey tones that match the colours of their wide water views. Some apartments have polished concrete floors, others luxurious wool carpeting in the deepest chocolate brown. Kitchens and bathrooms are dramatic, using a combination of materials that includes Tasmanian timbers, black granite and stainless steel. All apartments have parking for up to two cars, and all also have access to private and shared outdoor spaces, where, despite the proximity to Hobart’s city centre, the environment is remarkably tranquil.

The Patrick Street project is not the first building transformation undertaken by Terroir. The firm has been involved in similar projects previously, as well as several high profile constructions including the Peppermint Bay complex south of Hobart, and the new Hazards Resort at Coles Bay on Tasmania’s east coast. “Just like Patrick Street all these projects meant for us a process of interpreting and fitting in with the existing environment, whether that was already a man-made one, or natural. In the case of Patrick Street, this meant unravelling the onion layers of the site’s inherent character, and then adding something new, as a proposition about the future or at least the present.”

With such intelligent treatment, a 1970s brick and concrete building, built especially for the bank it once housed, now accommodates its inhabitants amongst architecture eminently suitable for living. Above all, the building has kept its soul – its “terroir” – and, once neglected, has become a building with a valued past, a revitalised present and an assured future. **GABI MOCATTA**



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**Engineer** Gandy and Roberts  
**Landscaping** Terroir  
**Interiors, lighting** Terroir,  
Advanced Electrical

**PRODUCTS**  
**Roofing** Lysaght Trimdek,  
Zincalume **External walls**  
Existing red face brickwork,  
precast concrete panels painted  
Dulux 'Weathershield', Harditex  
cement sheet cladding system  
**Internal walls** Plasterboard,  
painted; glazed ceramic tiles  
**Windows** Powdercoated  
aluminium awning sashes;  
Vantage aluminium bi-folds **Doors**  
Vantage powdercoated aluminium  
duo-sliders; Designer Doorware  
door furniture **Flooring** Concrete,  
clear epoxy finish; Marmoleum;  
ply sheets with Marmoleum and  
carpet over **Lighting** Dimmers to  
living areas; recessed and  
surface-mounted luminaires;  
dichroic, iv, incandescent;  
fluorescent fittings **Kitchen**  
Bosch ss dishwasher, oven,  
glass electric cooktop; Smeg  
rangehood; Abey ss sink;  
Laminex joinery, surfaces – ss,  
granite, Tasmanian oak  
**Bathroom** Fuori Box basin;  
Fowler 'Newport' wc; Caroma  
'Marina' vitreous enamel bath  
Hansa Polo taps

**TIME SCHEDULE**  
**Design, documentation**  
10 months  
**Construction** 10 months

**PROJECT COST**  
\$2,810,000 (inc. whitegoods  
and landscaping)

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
Brett Boardman

**THIS PAGE, LEFT:** The apartments differ from one another in terms of finishes, but all are flooded with light via generous glazing and skylights. **OPENING PAGES, LEFT:** Blade walls provide privacy between balconies. **RIGHT:** The eastern facade sports a rhythmic bar code pattern, created by paintwork (see also image on page 102).