



FAMILY HERITAGE

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LUIGI ROSSELLI ARCHITECTS
AND ALWILL INTERIORS

Words by Bronwyn Marshall • Photography by Prue Ruscoe • Architecture by Luigi Rosselli Architects • Interior Design by Alwill Interiors
Build by Aranac Contracting • Landscape by Dangar Barin Smith • Joinery by BWO Fit Out & Interiors • Heritage Consulting by John Oultram
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A home for a young family, Family Heritage fuses a modern, youthful approach together with an existing charm. Weaving elements of the past in with the present, Luigi Rosselli Architects and Alwill Interiors layer a treasured contemporary art collection among an architecture that bridges both the arts and crafts movement and the beginnings of the Federation style.

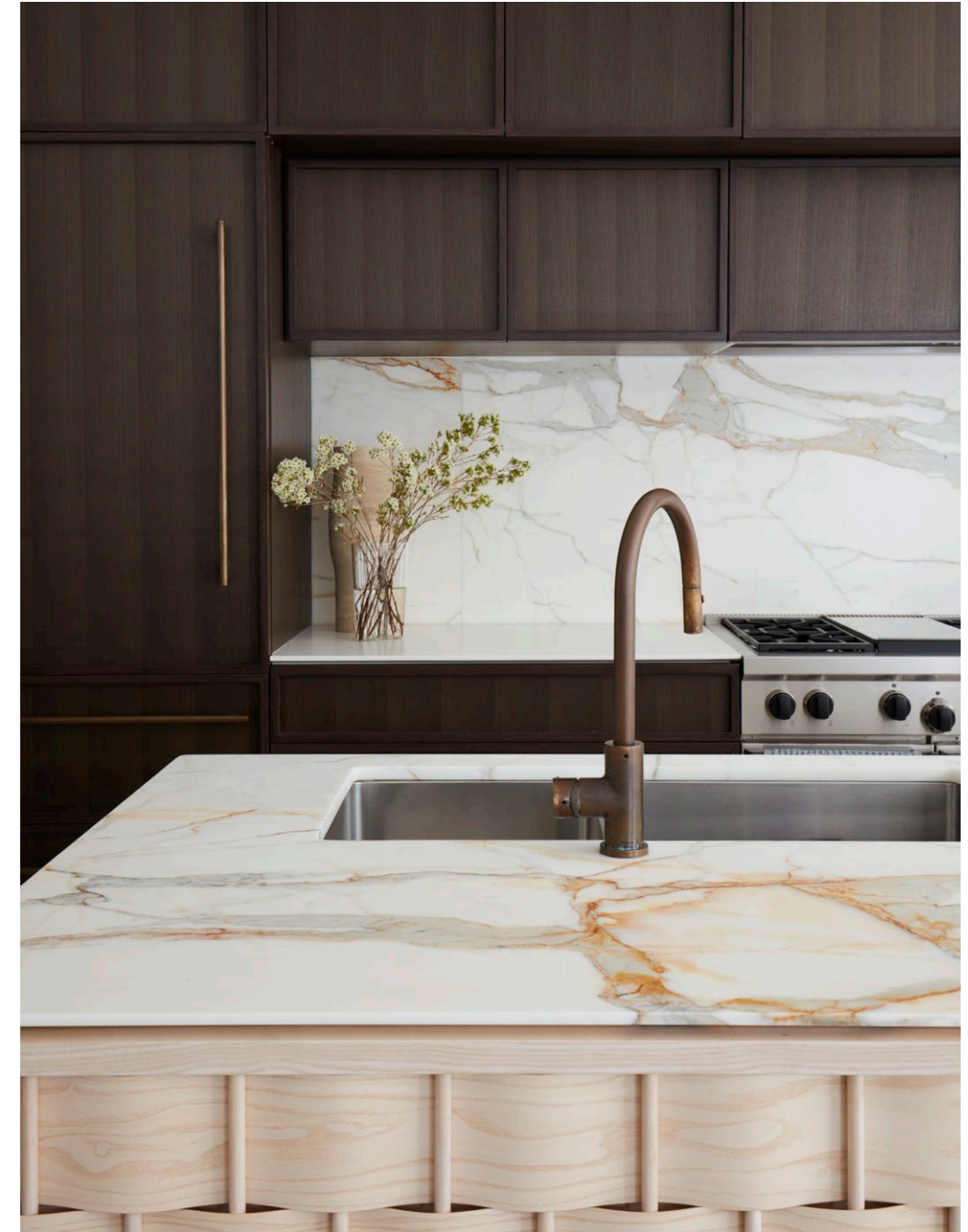
Uniquely positioned amid a rare experimental estate in Neutral Bay in Sydney, the original home was designed and built in the 1880s by esteemed English architect Walter Liberty Vernon, who later went on to become state architect of New South Wales. Rejecting the Victorian style, he worked to propose an approach of his own – one that sat between other popular styles, challenging convention and moving away from the decorative. “The history behind the original building is very important to our approach,” describes Luigi Rosselli, Director of Luigi Rosselli Architects. “[Vernon] was a precursor for the Federation era, where he started to draw away from the ornate Victorian style and more towards his own original approach, which was all about proportions.”

In uniting both architecture and interiors, and the old and the new, there needed to be a shared philosophy on how the owners themselves would

be expressed throughout their home. With the utmost respect for the importance of the original home, Luigi Rosselli Architects and Alwill Interiors wanted to integrate the clients’ own narrative and personalities, resulting in a youthful approach. Bringing their own impressive art collection in tow, the owners sought spaces that “felt contemporary, modern and light filled,” says Alice Benn, Alwill Interiors Associate, “whilst still balancing the heritage aspects throughout.” Describing the clients as “a young and well-travelled couple who have a well-developed appreciation of design,” she explains that “our approach was to bring a similar level of fun and positivity to the home – together, we wanted the house to feel vibrant and energetic, whilst still remaining family friendly. We were influenced by a fun and international Miami and Los Angeles style, and we worked hand-in-hand with Luigi Rosselli Architects throughout the whole process to ensure that the end result appears as though it has been made by one set of hands.”







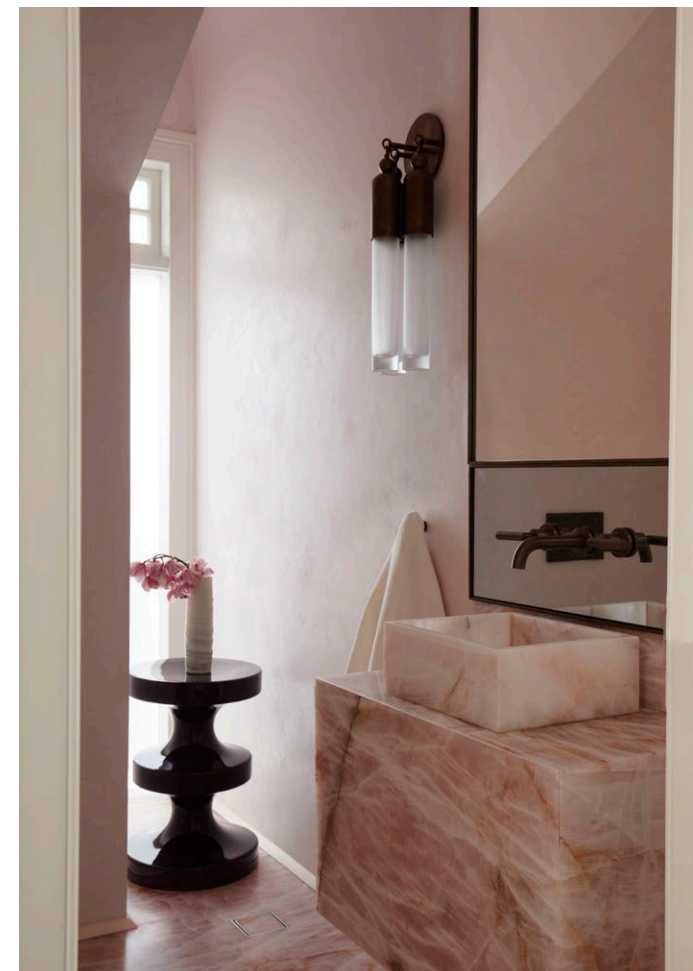
The warmth of the internal materiality is reflective of the sandstone in the front of the home.



Echoing the original 19th-century proportions and form, a more open and generous shared living space takes its place to the rear.

Over the years, additions and renovations saw adjustments to the outer and inner extents of the home. Returning to the original intent of the structure, both Luigi Rosselli Architects and Alwill Interiors bring a sense of purpose in expanding the home through a more contemporary lens. The ill-fitted and ill-fated 1980s addition was removed, seeing a more open and generous shared living space take its place to the rear. The original 19th-century proportions and form remain, with the silhouette, volumes and materiality guiding the new addition. “We provided a very open living area to the rear of the home,” says Luigi. “Although it preserves the gravitas to the original building, the warmth of the materiality is reflective of the sandstone to the front of the home and still has its own presence, yet it is clear that there has been a subtle shift in the architectural style.” Other elements, such as shutters crafted using matched handmade techniques as the original mortice and tenon, offer a direct connection to the original dedication of the craftspeople who built the home.

“It’s a very private house,” describes Luigi, “and our focus was to ensure that we could create a sense of ‘home’ through the connections we created – a feeling of comfort was central to this, as was allowing the family to both gather and to retreat.” An internal rearranging of functionality and connections between zones also opens flow and facilitates more fluid movement. “We decided to open hallways and a few other areas, such as the study,” says Luigi, “which, although it didn’t have access to direct sunlight, became a great place to work from, providing a different type of retreat feeling within a more traditional layout.” Dark and immersive, the space is one that deliberately differs in tone from the remainder of the spaces yet retains a connection to the heritage of the home through the expressed timberwork and joinery. Throughout, a similar aligning of function to feeling was created. “Alwill Interiors managed to find a particular character for each of the children and parent rooms that was overlaid into each of the spaces,” adds Luigi. “There is an openness to the custom shutters, for example, that provides privacy into the main bedroom, whilst also connecting to the adjoining dressing room and bathroom that overlays a certain elegance – elevating a matched maturity for the adults.”





A layering of rich, textural and light elements imbues a soft and welcoming feeling.

Furthermore, “we wanted to make sure a sense of flow existed both internally and between inside and out,” Luigi recalls. In opening the existing volumes, directing both views and access outward, the focus became re-defined to utilise the entire site and activate the garden as a core element of the home. As integral as the architecture and interiors were to the revitalisation of the home, the newly formalised and curated landscape by Will Dangar of Dangar Barin Smith creates an idyllic and softened buffer for the daily rituals of life to unfold. Despite the grandeur and generous scale of the home, council regulations made the addition of a garage near impossible. “We worked closely with the landscape architects to workshop the best way to disguise the garage from the street and integrate off-street parking as a key element of family life,” says Luigi. By creating an underground garage and carefully sculpting a landscape that

hid any semblance of the car from approach, a compromise was reached that ensured functionality could reign whilst maintaining the important rhythm of the streetscape.

Overlaying a soft and welcoming feeling, a combination of rich and textural elements and a lightness throughout connects past and present. “Our focus was to create a calm, fresh and inviting home for the owners and visitors that ultimately felt uplifting, modern, positive and forward-focused,” reflects Alice. It is a goal that has been admirably achieved. Bringing a vibrancy to the formality of the existing grand proportions of Family Heritage, both Luigi Rosselli Architects and Alwill Interiors ensure an enduring resolve, concentrating on the future whilst honouring the past.