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ISSN 1443 - 0142

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FROM TRASH TO TREASURE

The project site in Paddington was among a group of terraces that were built as workers' cottages in 1885. This particular two-storey terrace was found to be in very poor condition, with extensive dry rot and termite damage throughout.

The design brief from the architect required a reconstruction of the whole structure, as well as providing an additional lower ground-floor living area, while maximising the use of space in a modern, open-plan and clean, unobtrusive manner.

However, in order to achieve this, while maintaining (and greatly improving) the structural integrity of the existing original fragile masonry (including the common boundary walls and garage walls), carefully planned and delicate underpinning on what was very loose sandy soil and debris was carried out to the structural engineer's requirements. This also included underpinning of the adjacent neighbour's garage. A total of approximately 240 cubic metres of soil was then excavated by hand. The entire home was then demolished, except for the roof, which was retained at that stage, to provide bracing support.

Adding to the challenge was very tight and restricted access near and on-site, which is

just 3.8m wide, giving minimal working and material storage area, as well as no craneage.

A key feature of the construction involved a series of steel portal frames integrated together, for great strength and rigidity, with most being exposed. Therefore, Mardini Constructions was required to provide a Class 1 finish for the structural steel columns and beams, as well as for the custom-made balustrade frames for the new internal staircase and rear balconies. A large steel awning was also fabricated and incorporated at the rear. To further highlight the exposed steel columns, continuous full-length LED strip lighting was added behind the column flanges.

Very precise shadowlines (to 1mm tolerances) for the floors, walls and ceilings were also required as part of the pure, clean appearance. Further reducing the margin of error was the extensive use of honed limestone for items such as the floor tiles (lower ground floor and in the bathrooms) as well as for the wall tiles in the bathrooms. In addition, the benchtops, vanities, basins and bathtub were all custom-manufactured on-site from slabs of limestone. The need for maintaining a high degree of accuracy was all the more important, as it was found that the existing

structure was significantly out of alignment and out of level, from all directions.

Whitewashed recycled oregon timber flooring was used for the ground floor and staircase. In the rear yard, the basin and barbecue bench were constructed from Italian basaltina.

Master builder Elvis Mardini of Mardini Constructions has more than 18 years of experience, specialising in the design, construction and restoration of the most challenging quality homes, renovations, extensions and additions, including heritage and remedial works across the Sydney metropolitan area.

JUDGES' COMMENTS: The builder was successful in dealing with site restrictions and structural steel logistics. He achieved detailed work with sharp, clean edges. Meticulous attention to detail in all aspects.

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