

WORDS  
JACQUELINE OUTRED

# M O D N O S T A L G I A

WITH A CLEVER FUSION OF ART DECO ELEMENTS AND ULTRA MODERN RENOVATIONS, DORRINGTON ARCHITECTS' QUIETLY CONFIDENT PROJECT IN AUCKLAND REFUSES TO BE PIGEONHOLED IN JUST ONE BOX.

# E R N

The geometric lines and contemporary angles of this updated residence in Auckland exude an ultramodern feel that is both imposing and intriguing. However, pay closer attention to the structure and you may start to notice something unusual nestled within. A build that was not quite started from scratch and not quite renovation, the tired and worn former residence at the Winsomere crescent was stripped back and incorporated into the finished structure. The result? A 'new' residence that is both unrecognisable and familiar, but altogether beautifully unique.

"We tried to create a rich overall composition that integrated existing elements of the house with new contemporary additions. [It's] a general 'feeling' of modernist retro, keying off the existing features and age of the house," says Dorrington Architects director

and lead architect Tim Dorrington. But the decision to preserve parts of the former home was reasoned by more than just a desire for vintage aesthetics. Conscious of sustainability, the owners wanted Tim to retain and reuse as many materials from the existing dwelling as he could. "Whilst it may have been simpler to demolish these and rebuild, philosophically, the clients didn't like the idea of adding to landfill simply for ease of the build," Tim said.

"There was an amazing mosaic at the front door and an amazing tiled art deco bathroom that we desperately wanted to retain and integrate into the new home, which fortunately we managed to do," says Tim. The mosaic is now overset by cedar panelling, creating an intriguing entrance that, along with the squared off roof, hints at the transformation that has taken place beyond the original facade.

PHOTOGRAPHY  
EMMA-JANE HETHERINGTON





Natural woods including cedar, matai and podocarp have been used throughout the home, infusing the spaces with warmth and comfort. Cedar ceilings complement the existing brickwork, while art deco leadlight windows and tiling contrast against the more natural materials. The interplay of complementary and contrasting materials provides a genuine balance to the spaces, reminiscent of the harmony between the urban and the natural. "We strongly believe in the honesty of materials and structure, celebrating the individual materials and the contrast between them," Tim says. "We work to create a reduced aesthetic where layers of elements are stripped away to leave a clean composition of elements. The idea being that hopefully the composition is recognisable by those inhabiting the space."

But the biggest challenge facing Dorrington was working out how to fuse those elements that were separated by generations, so that their side-by-side existence seemed natural. To give cohesion to the overall composition, Dorrington introduced transition spaces between the three 'sections' of the house. "We wanted to introduce a transition space between the existing old brick elements of the house and the contemporary zinc box and cedar-screened box. To this end there is a flat roof link that sits below the parapets of all of these elements, which provides the cover and circulation between the spaces," Tim explains.

Rather than try and force them to be invisible, the transition spaces have become a major feature of Dorrington's creation, capturing attention and accenting the three different areas of the house. "We worked on the composition until we were happy we had a good balance of new and old; where the new, old and transition spaces between were equally celebrated," Tim says. To meet both objectives, the 'walls' needed to be translucent to emphasise the composition of the brick, cedar and zinc boxes, whilst also being a focal point in their own right. Inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's stained glass, the clients and architects carefully selected hand-made, brightly coloured glass pieces to construct beautiful features truly unique to the property.



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As well as providing eye-catching aesthetics to visually delight, Tim knew that with the clients' having young children the home had to be highly functional too. "There was a focus on creating a comfortable family home for the family to hang out in, and also provide good spaces for entertaining." The split-level dining and entertaining area offers uninterrupted harbour views to give a peaceful ambience and serenity for entertaining friends, whilst the basement of the house includes a bar, library, and home theatre. "The approach here was geared around providing a good entertaining space that can also function as a cosy family movie space," he explains.

A perfect all-rounder, there has been no compromise in the seamless execution of Winsomere Crescent. It is both modern and classic; natural and urban; peaceful but happy to be filled with the chatter of many. Suddenly, it seems impossible to imagine Winsomere Crescent any other way – and according to Tim, that is exactly how it should be. "Good architecture should respond to its site in a natural way. In a home, it should create the intangible feeling of calm and completeness. It should challenge you and steer away from blandness. It should be unique to the client, the brief and the site."

