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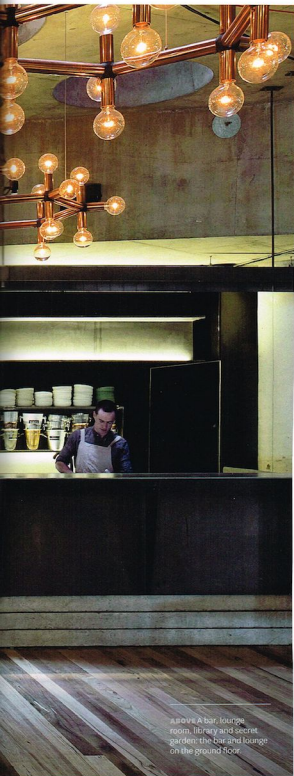


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HOTEL PATRONS



HOTEL HOTEL IS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN DESIGNERS, ARTISTS AND FANTASISTS



above: A bar, lounge, room, library and secret garden: the bar and lounge on the ground floor.

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PHOTOGRAPHY ROSS HONEYSETT

ARCHITECT FENDER-KATSALIDIS
ARCHITECTS
LOCATION CANBERRA | AUS
PROJECT HOTEL HOTEL

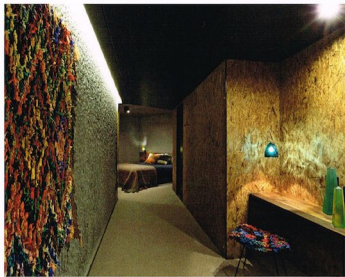
If the true definition of sustainability is the triple-pronged approach of social, economic and environmental concerns, then Canberra's new Hotel Hotel ticks off all three criteria and more. More than an accommodation offering, Hotel Hotel is the product of a broad and talented community. Located across two floors of the Nishi building, which sits on the western edge of the New Acton precinct in Canberra, Hotel Hotel involved a cast of hundreds during its three-year gestation period, including architects, creative directors, interior designers, designer makers and artists, all overseen by the inspirational Efkarpidis brothers, Johnathan and Nectar.

As the directors of Molonglo Group, Johnathan and Nectar spearheaded the transformation of New Acton – a city block on the edge of Canberra's CBD that overlooks Lake Burley Griffin and boasts at its heart heritage buildings from 1927. The brothers see themselves as 'active landlords' and believe that cultural activities – like an outdoor cinema in the central courtyard in summer, and an art gallery with monthly exhibitions – are crucial to the success of the entire precinct. Developed in stages, New Acton East was completed in 2008, New Acton South in 2010, and Nishi – the final stage – finished in 2013/14.

Like all of the major new buildings on the site, Nishi was designed by Melbourne architects Fender Katsalidis. Its triangular form conceals a central atrium that is key to its environmental performance, and the structure comprises four main parts – commercial offices and ground floor retail, 220 residential apartments, the hotel and an eight-screen cinema complex.

Across New Acton, it is sometimes hard to see where the involvement of the Efkarpidis brothers stops and the tenancies begin: the lines are deliberately blurred. The brothers have financial stakeholdings in some of the food and beverage tenants, including A Baker and Mocan and Green Grout, and a philosophy of local, seasonal and handmade can be found in all of the culinary offerings, including at Hotel Hotel, where the menus are overseen by head chef Sean McConnell.

That attention to detail and focus on local can be observed in every aspect of Hotel Hotel, which could be considered the pinnacle of the Efkarpidis creative inspiration and endeavour. The Nishi base-building is a showcase for environmental design, but the social and economic factors are just as important throughout this ambitious project.



"More than an accommodation offering, Hotel Hotel is the product of a broad and talented community."

RACHAEL BERNSTONE

From a green perspective, the Nishi apartments were designed with passive solar at the fore, and feature cross-flow ventilation, thermal mass in walls and floors, and no air-conditioning. The hotel interiors were decorated with locally sourced and made furniture and objects under the curatorship of Nectar Efkarpidis and Sydney-based set designer Don Cameron, so that the benefits of the development flowed through local creative industries.

The rooms feature vintage Australian furniture and lighting sourced by mid-century specialist Ken Neale; glass carafes and drinking vessels were recycled from empty wine and beer bottles by Amos Enders-Moje; original artwork was bought from local graduate and practicing artists; and rather than tiny, fiddly plastic bottles of toiletries, the bathrooms boast large dispensers of Aesop products in showers, baths and beside hand basins.

And with its various room types and sizes, Hotel Hotel offers a range of different experiences for weekend or business travellers, whether staying alone or with a partner or friend. "Depending on your mood and needs, you can face out to the light on a business trip, or if you're in a recreational mood, you can enjoy the moodiness of the rooms overlooking the fern garden," Efkarpidis says. "Because people are paying us repeat visits, they can choose different experiences each time."

While Johnathan considers himself a hotel junkie, he says the underlying theme for the hotel's creative aesthetic was more vernacular than five-star. "The inspiration didn't come out of staying in hotels, although I enjoy different types of hotels for different reasons," he explains. "The hotel is meant to represent 'home' and the idea of the Australian 'shack', which is why 90 percent of the rooms' contents are Australian-made."

The project provided an incredible opportunity to unearth and exploit local creatives, he adds. "If you've been brought up in Canberra, everyone has this perception that it can be boring and sterile, and often when you grow up and finish school, you want to leave and go somewhere else," he laughs. "But there is a lot of talent here. Before we started developing projects we didn't realise how much good talent there is in Canberra; we wanted to harness some of that in the hotel."

Sitting in the downstairs lobby with Johnathan and Hotel Hotel manager Tracey Atherton – who managed Hyatt hotels and Aman resorts before joining this project 18 months ahead of its launch – she draws my attention around the room. "There's a story in everything," she says. "Nectar found the trunks in a market in Mumbai, the tables were created as part of the Broached furniture program, there is Australian vintage furniture everywhere you look: it's so different from a hotel where every room has the same picture."

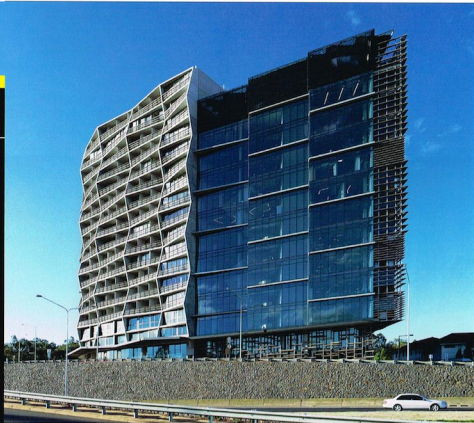
The long gestation and highly bespoke nature of this project obviously cost more to create than a typical hotel, Johnathan concedes, but he says that in some cases, budget was simply redirected. "Take that tiled art wall in the lobby bar," he says.

OPPOSITE ABOVE Hotel rooms overlook the beauty of Lake Burley Griffin

OPPOSITE BELOW All rooms feature Australian furniture and design, and source local material where possible

BELOW The foyer provides a grand and inviting entrance to the hotel inside





ABOVE The quirky character of the hotel is flagged by its distinctive facade, with the building positioned for panoramic views over Lake Burley Griffin

"Everyone in the office helped to put it up, I did one tile, and members of our team did lots more. We just took the money that we would have paid a builder to create a wall and gave it to an artist to create an installation instead." The lobby bar with its kitchen overseen by Sean McConnell is already attracting a broad range of visitors, Efkarpidis says. "Once the apartments are fully occupied, this space will attract residents as well as hotel guests, and with the Palace Electric Cinema downstairs, we think this will become like people's lounge room, not your typical hotel lobby."

It's an approach that is already paying dividends in terms of occupancy. During my visit, just three months after Hotel Hotel opened in December 2013, Atherton said five of the guests checking in that night were repeat visitors: one was about to commence his tenth stay. "The feedback – via the guest surveys and on TripAdvisor – has been extremely good," she says. "And we are excited that there are still more layers to come, with the full kitchen, a hair salon and other new tenants all scheduled to open soon. As they come online, the whole dream comes to life."

So while Hotel Hotel is a beautiful place to stay in Canberra, with quirky details that elevate the experience from drab to delightful, it's much more than that. It's the embodiment of a new era where the focus is on green design, slow food, social engagement, responsible consumption, doing-more-with-less, reducing, reusing and recycling, promoting creative endeavour and celebrating the ordinary. In short, it's sustainability, available to all, for the price of a nightly rate.

Rachael Bernstone is a freelance writer on architecture and design based in Sydney.

HOTEL HOTEL

PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT Fender Katsalidis Architects

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT Oculus ENGINEER Hup, AWT, Mott MacDonald and Co-Strut

CONTRACTOR CBD Contracting **BUILDING CERTIFIER** ACT Metro **GRAPHIC DESIGN AND SIGNAGE** Clear Design and Studio Round

ARTISTS Lucy McCrae, Anna Will, rightfield, Charles Wilson, Adam Goodrum, Amos Enders-Moyle, Al Stark, Lee Grant, Gerard Havekes and Kire Coad **KITCHEN** RBD Consulting

TIME TO DESIGN

18 months

TIME TO COMPLETE

18 months

FENDER KATSALIDIS ARCHITECTS (61 2) 8016 3500 | Australia.com

FURNITURE In Hotel Rooms, Don Cameron bespoke cabinetry fabricated by Gecko Joinery and imported by the Salvage Company. Side tables, coffee tables and "Hairy" desk chairs also by Don Cameron and Ken Neske. Adam Goodrum designed wooden bowls from Broached Commissions, edition furniture items from Atelier Furniture. In Hotel Restaurant and Bar, feasting table, chairs and stools by Adam Goodrum from Broached Commissions, patented brass communal table by Don Cameron and manufactured by Berco Copper Company. In Hotel Foyer, Charles Wilson couches and Lucy McCrae lenticular mirror from Broached Commissions. Generally throughout, Adam Goodrum designed concrete benches from

Broached Commissions. In Bathrooms, concrete baths from Boyd Alternatives.

LIGHTING Throughout Hotel Rooms, Don Cameron pendant lighting manufactured by Nocturnal Lighting and Berco Copper Company, and glass pendant lighting by Amos Enders-Moyle.

FINISHES Throughout Hotel Rooms, blackout roller blinds from Chemway. Aesop curtain fabric from Warwick Fabrics and Berber Carpet. On the Ground Floor Lobby, "Vfloat" toughened glazing from Viridian, custom-made steel frames with Dulux Ferrodor finish, "Tilt" windows from Smartech, Blackbutt floorboards, burnished concrete and concrete lintels from Ultrafloor, and "Bondage" velvet carpet from Superluff. Generally throughout, natural fibre wallpapers from

South Pacific Fabrics, The Textile Company and Edra, and leather finishes from Instyle.

FIXED & FITTED On the Ground Floor Lobby, concrete lintels from Ultrafloor, "Ornyx" cube acoustic insulation panels from Autex, Cemintel "BareStone" fibre cement sheet from Cemintel and Blackbutt timber battens throughout. In Bathrooms, bathroom mixers, shower rails and shower heads from Astra Walker, basins from Rogerseller, benches from SNE stone, and tiles from Onsite Supply and Design. Don Cameron designed robe hooks and towel rails fabricated by Nocturnal Lighting, and brass circular mirror frames fabricated by Berco Copper Company.

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