

# Walsh Street APARTMENT by Neometro with MA Architects and Carr Design Group

• MELBOURNE, VIC •

This thoughtful apartment transforms the idea of multi-residential living into something much more house-like, with luxury of space, amenity and scale.

Words by Peter Davies  
Photography by Derek Swalwell

The collaborative process isn't necessarily an easy one – particularly when there are diverse aesthetics, talents and objectives at play. Despite such potential complexities, this project is a very successful case study of developer, architect and interior designer working together in harmony.

The challenge for this low-rise multi-residential project was to balance the craft and experimentation of MA Architects, the crisp minimalism of Carr Design Group and the warmth and liveability that has come to characterize the work of Neometro. “We all aspire to the same design principles – authenticity of materials, clean design, beautiful detailing,” says Jeff Provan, design director at Neometro. “I’ve found that we like a lot of the same things, and that’s probably why this collaboration worked so well.”

The tasks were neatly divided between the three practices: while MA Architects took control of the building’s shell, Carr Design Group began working on elegant interiors, with Neometro overseeing the development of both schemes.

From the outside, the project is thoughtfully resolved but unobtrusive. Its three lower levels house single-floor apartments, comprising three bedrooms and three bathrooms each, while the top floor steps back from the facade, with a more compact two-bedroom apartment.



01 Neometro’s signature concrete ceiling adds a sense of tactility; the use of natural materials such as stone and timber “satisfy the senses.”  
Artwork: Sally Ross, *La panthère*, 2012.





02 The kitchen combines the warmth of timber joinery with an onyx-hued island bench, splashback and oversized rangehood.

The building's form responds to the neighbourhood's legacy of high-quality residential apartment buildings. "It's a simple facade composition of engaged and freestanding columns framing large recessed balconies – a contemporary reinterpretation of early mansion-flat building forms – while the simple palette of external materials and understated detailing takes cues from 1960s modernism," says Karen Alcock of MA Architects.

Height restrictions forced the team to perform some spatial manoeuvres to accommodate the desired four floors. The 650-square-metre-site rises toward the rear, so the ground floor digs into the site. This practical measure reorients the highlight windows of the ground-floor apartment to soak up the lush garden aspect without making it feel subterranean.

Over the years, Neometro has developed a talent for successful speculative developments, designing for a type of client rather than a specific one. In this instance, the target demographic is established individuals and couples looking to downsize without losing the space

or amenity afforded by a detached home. Neometro's real success in this project is managing to achieve the necessary flexibility and broad appeal without it feeling generic or bland.

The site runs east-west, and the building's spatial planning is simple but precise. At the western end, facing the street, an expansive open-plan living zone incorporates a kitchen and dining area that leads out to a terrace. A wide, almost gallery-like hallway runs perpendicular, opening to a scullery, a study and two bedrooms on the southern side, and a powder room, laundry, second living zone with terrace and the main suite on the north.

The project is an object lesson in high-end residential design, but its approach is refreshingly understated. "It's not really about luxury finishes," Jeff explains. "It's about luxury of space, of scale, of amenity." And that is perhaps the crux of this project – it manages to transform the very idea of apartment living into something much more house-like, in terms of its proportions, lightness and sense of privacy.



03 Stretching the width of the building, the main terrace accommodates a dining table and an integrated kitchen.



Level 1 apartment plan 1:400



- 1 Entry
- 2 Outdoor entertaining
- 3 Barbecue
- 4 Dining
- 5 Living
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Scullery
- 8 Coat store
- 9 Study
- 10 Sitting/rumpus
- 11 Laundry
- 12 Bedroom
- 13 Terrace



**04** The study features the same light tones as the bedroom and living space, but with warm, dark joinery.

**05** In contrast to the kitchen space, the bedrooms are elegant compositions of pale grey and white. Artwork: Mira Gojak, *Denials and Accumulations*, 2011.

**06** Rather than being about luxury finishes, the project is more about luxury of space, scale and amenity.

The outdoor spaces are a case in point. Stretching the width of the building, the main terrace accommodates a dining table at one end and a beautifully integrated stainless steel kitchen at the other. To combat any intrusion from sun, wind or rain, a bank of sturdy, louvred bifolding screens can enclose the space. It all works together so well that it is somewhat surprising to learn that it was resized during construction.

The materials palette ably demonstrates the craft and detail favoured by all three practices. The kitchen combines the warmth of timber joinery with an onyx-hued island bench, splashback and oversized rangehood. The bedrooms and study, in contrast, are elegant compositions of pale grey and white. Above, Neometro's signature concrete ceiling adds a sense of tactility. "To complement the ceiling but soften the space, we used natural materials such as stone and timber in a purposeful way," explains Sue Carr of Carr Design Group. "These materials not only enhance the interior but they also satisfy the senses and provide a neutral backdrop that

encourages focus on the surrounding environment."

The exterior demonstrates the same considered approach to materiality. "We specified a simple palette of external materials chosen for their quality, longevity and low maintenance to help ensure that the building will age gracefully – concrete, render, stone, weathered zinc and powdercoated steel," says Karen.

Clever details abound. The two secondary bedrooms are equipped with narrow balconies for potted plants and a sense of expanded space. Eschewing the ubiquitous frosted glass, the balustrades are finished in reeded glass that is simultaneously retro and contemporary. In the bathrooms, the designers have employed a limited palette of materials that folds up the walls and into shelves. Velvety Corian vanity units create a sense of tactility.

The unity of the project's layout, design and structure belies its multi-author origins. "It's quite an honest project – we don't like doing interiors with too many applied finishes. It's a minimalist aesthetic, it's understated," Jeff says proudly. ☐



**07** To combat intrusion from the elements, a bank of louvred bifolding screens can enclose the terraces.

**08** In the bathrooms, a limited palette of materials folds up the walls and into shelves.

#### Developer/builder

**Neometro**  
Studio 4, 15 Inkerman Street  
St Kilda Vic 3182  
+61 3 9534 7774  
info@neometro.com.au  
neometro.com.au

#### Practice profile

A design-focused property development company that creates residential and mixed-use buildings with a sense of place and belonging.

#### Architect

**MA Architects**  
25 William Street  
Cremorne Vic 3121  
+61 3 9421 6671  
studio@maarchitects.com.au  
maarchitects.com.au

#### Practice profile

A practice that creates beautifully considered contemporary architecture, interiors and urban design, with a focus on its projects contributing positively to the environment.

#### Interior designer

**Carr Design Group**  
Level 4, 31 Flinders Lane  
Melbourne Vic 3000  
+61 3 9665 2300  
melb@carr.net.au  
carr.net.au

#### Practice profile

A multidisciplinary design firm with three specializations to address design for work, home and leisure.

#### Consultants

**Engineer:** Bland Connard Menzies  
**Landscape architect:** John Patrick Landscape Architects  
**Styling:** Nina Provan

#### Products

**Roofing:** Lysaght Klip-lok roof decking in Colorbond 'Woodland Grey'  
**External walls:** MAC natural render in Portofino finish; pre-weathered Quartz-Zinc cladding from VM Zinc; concrete panels and expressed columns  
**Internal walls:** Natural render in grey with smooth finish; concrete expressed columns; Gyprock plasterboard, painted  
**Windows:** Capral aluminium sliders in bronze powdercoat; Austview Sashless Windows

sashless aluminium windows in bronze powdercoat; Maxim Louvres external shutters in grey powdercoat; D & C Design external awning; custom external privacy screens

**Doors:** Spence Doors solid-core doors, painted; CS Group cavity sliders; Designer Doorware custom blade pulls; Custom Aluminium external blade pulls in bronze powdercoat; Elmes Japanese cast iron handles in charcoal-baked finish

**Flooring:** Bentzon Carpets wool carpet; Renaissance Parquet solid oak flooring in natural oil finish

**Lighting:** Gubi Semi Pendant from Cult; Tuba track lighting, and Delta Light recessed LED downlights and external lighting, all from Inlite

**Kitchen:** Miele ovens, cooktop and dishwasher; Liebherr fridges; Vintec wine fridges; Qasair rangehood; Assoluto granite from Parthenon Marble; Lignapal oak veneer from George Fethers and Co; Ashwood Design joinery in stainless steel and 2-pac; Astra Walker chrome tapware; Abey Schock sink

**Bathroom:** Astra Walker accessories, chrome tapware

and showers; C-Design custom basins in Corian, from Omvivo; Seascape Bath and freestanding Pool Basin from Apaiser; heated towel rail and Catalano toilet suite from Rogerseller; Signorino Carrara marble, Tundra limestone and Perla porcelain, all honed

**Heating and cooling:** Livezi ducted reverse-cycle airconditioning; Nest smart thermostats; Heatmaster gas fireplace

#### External elements:

Signorino Perla porcelain; Bamstone bluestone tiles; Saxons Windows and Joinery cedar lining boards; custom-made metal handrails with powdercoat and wet paint finishes; G-Lux limestone facade cladding, honed; Electrolux barbecue; in-situ concrete planters; cedar/steel fencing and gates; painted cedar battens to entry lobby

#### Floor area

600 m<sup>2</sup> site  
299 m<sup>2</sup> apartment floor

#### Time schedule

**Design, documentation:** 18 months (including permits)

**Construction:** 18 months

