

THIS PAGE: THE INTERNAL TOWER DIVIDING THE MASONIC LODGE INTO SMALLER, LIVEABLE SPACES BEGINS AS A CONCRETE AND STEEL STRUCTURE ON THE LOWER LEVEL (OPPOSITE) AND EVOLVES AS YOU ASCEND THE STAIRS INTO A WARM, TIMBER-CLAD FORM, CREATED FROM THE RECLAIMED FLOORBOARDS OF THE BUILDING'S ORIGINAL ASSEMBLY HALL. THE HANDCRAFTED BOOKCASES OF THE MUSIC ROOM WERE DESIGNED BY TERROIR AND THE LIGHT ABOVE IS A 1960s ALUMINIUM FITTING FROM VAMPT VINTAGE DESIGN. THE ARTWORKS BY BARBARA WEIR, GRASS SEED DREAMING, ARE FROM MBANTUA GALLERY. OPPOSITE: THE CURVED, SAND-BLASTED CONCRETE OF THE INTERNAL TOWER'S BASE PRESSES AGAINST THE ORIGINAL PLASTER CEILINGS. THE STRAIGHT LINES ENDING IN SWEEPING CURVES REFERENCE THE GEOMETRIC SYMBOLS OF THE FREEMASONS. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.



BEFORE

*The generous scale and traditional detailing of a 1920s Masonic hall in Sydney provide a cinematic backdrop to an extraordinary private residence.*

# grand LODGE

PHOTOGRAPHER: BRETT BOARDMAN PRODUCER: HELEN REDMOND WRITER: VERITY MAGDALINO



ABOVE: HIGH WINDOWS ON THE LOWER LEVEL WERE EXTENDED TO THE FLOOR, OPENING THE SPACE ONTO THE GARDEN WITH THE NEW CUSTOM-DESIGNED, STEEL-FRAMED WINDOWS IN THE UPSTAIRS LIVING AREA. **BELOW LEFT**, INFUSING THE BUILDING'S TWO LARGEST SPACES WITH LIGHT. **BELOW**: THE GEOMETRY REFERENCES IN THE ARCHITECTURE ARE MIRRORED IN THE LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY ASPECT STUDIOS. THE OUTSIDE LAWN INFILTRATES THE INTERIOR. **OPPOSITE**: POLISHED CONCRETE IS USED ON THE BASE OF THE CANTILEVERED BEDROOM, SUSPENDED ABOVE THE INDOOR LAP POOL. DARK GREEN PAINTED STEEL ALSO FINISHES THE EXTERIOR OF THIS MEZZANINE-LEVEL GUEST BEDROOM, THE TONE EMPHASISING THE CONNECTION TO THE GARDEN ON THE LOWER LEVEL.



“We wanted to create a contemporary response to the original character of the building.”





TAMARA DONNELLAN OF award-winning architecture firm Terroir surveys the newly-planted Tasmanian tree ferns inside the Masonic hall turned private home in Sydney's Leichhardt. The sweeping tree heights are a graceful complement to the grand scale of the tall, ornate plaster ceilings of what was once the assembly hall of the 1920s Masonic lodge, now an indoor/outdoor entertainment space complete with lap pool. It was the upholding of this sense of grandeur and openness that formed part of the owners' original brief to Terroir. "We wanted to create a contemporary response to the original character and qualities of the building," explains Donnellan. "A real melding of the old and new to create great interactions between the two."

The result is the expansion of the original, cavernous two-storey building into four levels, linked by a central, internal tower which contains a complex system of smaller, private rooms. It's this boldly sculpted tower, a building within a building, which illustrates the bold juxtaposition of contemporary architecture against age-old craftsmanship. Starting on the ground floor as a smooth concrete and steel structure, the tower evolves as it climbs a winding staircase into an enticingly curved timber form, created from the reclaimed wood of the original assembly hall floorboards. "This spatial approach was derived from the desire to retain the existing volumes of the main rooms," says Donnellan. "Stacking private spaces, such as the bedrooms, against the tower also has sustainable benefits with heating and cooling, particularly in winter when you can retreat into these cosier living areas."

Masonic symbols, such as the square and compass in the plaster ceiling of the original building, have been carefully restored and their geometric references, in particular the straight lines of the stonemason's square merging into the sweeping curves of the compass, have been incorporated throughout the renovation. A nod to geometry is reflected in the sculpted finish of the tower's concrete base on the lower level, and the winding edges of the timber benchtop in the kitchen on the upper level. The sharp lines of the tall metal grilles on the lower level provide a view onto the garden and are softened with rounded arcs, echoing the original design of a fence at the entrance of the building. "Straight to curved lines sit well against the traditional detailing," explains Donnellan. "There are kinks everywhere."

Many of the building's existing elements were refurbished using traditional techniques: the handcrafted detailing of the plaster ceilings, for example, and the wooden balustrades lining the staircase leading off the entrance foyer, which were stripped completely bare before being French polished in shellac.

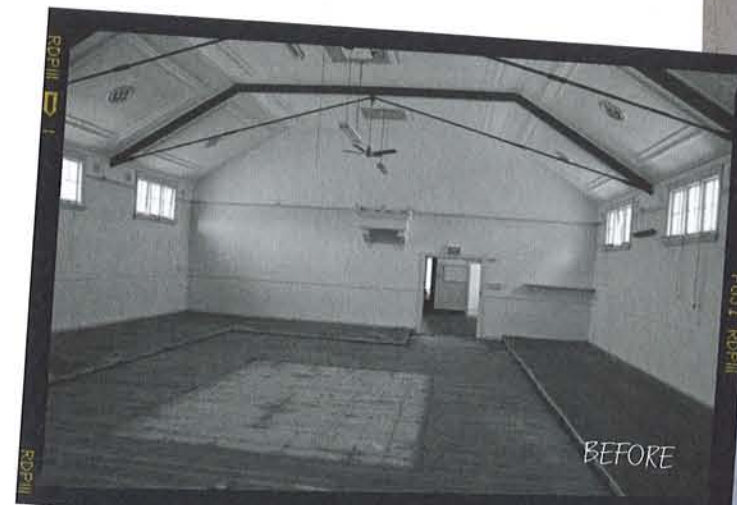
Perhaps the most dramatic change for the owners was on the lower level, where the high windows were extended to the floor (see previous pages). This not only opened the area to the garden but also, along with new windows in the upper living area, changed the lighting levels of the building's largest spaces.

The geometric shapes continue in the garden design, which infiltrates the outdoor room in a sinuous botanical line across the slab concrete floor. There's also an inviting patch of lawn extending from outside to in, marking the hall's former stage area.

A lap pool (not pictured) inhabits the main length of the lower ground floor, with a bedroom positioned in the base of the tower opposite. At mezzanine level, two guest bedrooms nestle either side of the landing. Donnellan's favourite room, the mezzanine-level guest bedroom, with an exterior of painted steel and sand-blasted concrete, is suspended above the lap pool.



IT WAS IMPORTANT TO THE OWNERS THAT THE ORIGINAL EXPANSE AND CHARACTER OF THE BUILDING WAS MAINTAINED. THE SPLIT LEVELS OF THE ORIGINAL MEETING HALL, ABOVE, WHICH INDICATED THE HIERARCHY WITHIN THE FREEMASONS, WERE RETAINED AND ONLY SLIGHTLY ALTERED TO ACCOMMODATE THE NEW KITCHEN AREA. TOP: THE MAIN LIVING SPACE IS DIVIDED BY 20TH-CENTURY DANISH FURNITURE INTO FORMAL DINING, SITTING AND CASUAL EATING AND LOUNGING AREAS.



BELOW: THE OWNERS' DANISH FURNITURE COLLECTION PROVIDED THE INSPIRATION FOR THE SEAMLESS TIMBER KITCHEN. AS MANY OF THE FITTINGS AS POSSIBLE WERE CONCEALED BEHIND TIMBER DOORS. RIGHT: PERSONAL TOUCHES INCLUDE THE ANGLED TASMANIAN BLACKWOOD AND ZINC WINDOW LEDGES DESIGNED SPECIALLY AS LOUNGING SPACES FOR THE COUPLE'S MUCH-LOVED CATS - TWO STRAYS THAT MOVED IN WITH THE OWNERS. THE LIGHT IS BY LUZIFER, AND THE PAINTING IS BY KUDDITJI KNGWARREYE FROM KATE OWEN GALLERY. BELOW RIGHT: THE FRONT OF THE MASONIC HALL IN A SUBURBAN STREET IN SYDNEY'S INNER-WEST, FEATURING REFURBISHED MASONRY AND ROOF STRUCTURE.



It's encased abruptly against the ornate plaster ceiling, providing a tantalising tension between the elaborate and minimal.

Inside the room, the finer details of the ceiling become almost close enough to touch. For Donnellan, this provides one of the most dynamic elements in the renovation. "Being pressed up against the very intricately detailed plaster ceiling gives you an appreciation of it which wasn't available in the previous configuration," she says.

The relationship between the original and the renovated becomes even more apparent as the concrete tower morphs into recycled wooden floorboards. A concealed doorway seamlessly cut into the timber wall leads from the guest bedrooms up to the main living area via a cinematic, floating Tasmanian blackwood staircase.

The music room on the upper level features handcrafted bookcases, custom-designed by Terroir to fit around the owners' extensive art collection. By setting up a website with the dimensions of their artworks and collection of 20th-century Danish furniture, the owners provided functional information and also a spark of inspiration. The kitchen, designed as a large, fluid piece of bespoke furniture, used the discreet elegance of the Danish collection as a key point of reference. "The result," says Donnellan, "conceives the kitchen as a sensuous and substantial piece of furniture." **VL**



THE POOLSIDE SHOWER AREA ON THE LOWER LEVEL, ABOVE, AND MAIN BATHROOM UPSTAIRS, BELOW, WERE INSERTED INTO THE EXISTING BATHROOM SPACES AND KEPT SIMPLE TO CREATE AIRY, CALM SPACES. THE BATHROOM IS CLAD IN UNIFORM, RECONSTITUTED STONE TILING AND FEATURES AN ORIGINAL ARCHED WINDOW. LEFT: AS SEEN FROM THE ENTRANCE HALL, THE CENTRAL TOWER IN THE MUSIC ROOM IS CLAD IN RECLAIMED TIMBER.



# B+A

**Aim of renovation** To retain the character of a 1920s Masonic hall and restore the original details while converting the building for residential use.

**The solution** To insert a tower element, which provided the intimate enclosure necessary for new private spaces such as bedrooms. The tower allowed us to maintain the large volumes of the original hall spaces for use as the main living areas.

**How long did it take?** Design and development took 10 months, documentation six months and construction approximately 20 months – in all, just over three years.

**Which aspect of the renovation are you happiest with?** The quality and balance that result between the existing spaces and the new inserted elements.

**Materials used?** Sand-blasted concrete, painted steel, polyurethane benches, reconstituted stone, original plasterwork, white leather, refurbished existing masonry, colour-backed glass, Tasmanian blackwood, refurbished existing timber oiled or French polished in shellac, reclaimed timber from the floorboards of the original assembly hall.

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IN THE MASTER BEDROOM, WHITE LEATHER WAS CHOSEN FOR THE WALLS INSTEAD OF PLASTER TO COMBAT THE OWNER'S DUST ALLERGY. THE BED AND DARK WALL TO ITS SIDE ARE MADE FROM RECLAIMED TIMBER. THE HEADBOARD AND BEDSIDE ALCOVES FROM TASMANIAN BLACKWOOD. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.

- An inserted tower of concrete and timber creates new, intimate spaces in the hall's vast interior.
- By demolishing service spaces at the rear and extending the windows on the ground level, the architects created a luminous internal landscape complete with a lap pool.
- New joinery on the upper level creates a built landscape for living with a new kitchen and storage.

