

Hidden harmony

Studio Prineas creates a thoughtful addition that hides behind a heritage frontage.



OPPOSITE The Zip HydroTap All-In-One Celsius Arc in matte black is an aesthetic complement to the interiors

OPPOSITE Cnr Virginia seamlessly blends heritage and contemporary

Photography by Chris Warnes



There is a certain art to the melding of the old and the new, to balancing preservation and innovation and paying respect to the past while keeping one eye firmly on the future.

For Sydney-based design firm Studio Prineas, heritage conservation is an essential practice. Led by Principal Eva-Marie Prineas, the firm specialises in the creation and adaptation of homes that are steeped in history, where they can draw on their heritage features and rework them to create spaces that are decidedly modern.

Enter Cnr Virginia, a federation-era home in Sydney's south-eastern suburb of Kensington. From the street, the house appears every bit the traditionalist: white-painted sash windows and a tiled entry-way, hallmarks of the Queen-Anne architectural vernacular. And yet, this home has a secret: an immense, light-filled extension that sinks below the street line, an architectural surprise that hides in plain sight.

Step inside Cnr Virginia and you'll be greeted by a series of rooms that hint at what is to come. Ornate fireplaces and decorative ceilings are highlighted with crisp white wall treatments and elongated, mellow timber flooring. A pared-back, monochromatic approach to furnishings modernises the heritage details of these front rooms. Soft textures create a homey, lived-in feel while the curvaceous lines of sofas and bedheads create a subtle interplay with the contoured mouldings of architraves and skirting boards.

Through the central hallway, the original part of the home gives way to an expansive new addition, with a glazed walkway providing the connection point between past and present. Containing a large, open-plan living, dining and kitchen area on the ground floor and a bedroom, ensuite and study nook upstairs on the first, Cnr Virginia's extension injects light, space and sleek modernity into a home that has stood since the early 1900s.

Even in the extension, Studio Prineas has created a multi-layered interplay between the historic and the contemporary. On the façade, recycled red brick draws from the federation-era style, while blackened timber creates a more contemporary aesthetic.

Inside, figured grey marble and statement black fixtures tie into a modern, monochromatic design, while light wells and a sloped roof line echo the traditional, pitched volumes of the home's frontage.

Adding to this architectural dialogue is a refined approach to sustainability, ensuring the project is considerate of its surrounding environment. Recycled bricks, locally-sourced hardwood and Australian natives work alongside a kitchen made from Paperock – an Australian owned, sustainable material crafted from layers of renewable paper bonded with resin.

This sustainable approach to materiality is echoed in the choices of home technology, with a Zip HydroTap All-In-One Celsius Arc in matte black offering an approach to living that blends sleek design and environmentalism. Reducing the need for harmful plastics and packaging, the HydroTap offers filtered drinking water plus unfiltered hot and cold, all at the touch of a button. Finished in matte black, the tap's design complements the home's interiors, its serpentine shape and sleek texture tying into the aesthetic of Cnr Virginia.

While the regulations of heritage homes can often dissuade from renovations, this project is a showcase of just what can be achieved. Through balance, thought and consideration, Studio Prineas has created an effortless synchronicity, where new does not replace old but rather co-exists beside it, offering a harmonious approach to residential design.