



paddington house

words by **Tom Rubenach**

An honest building can be difficult to come by, particularly with residential architecture. The story told from the street is often disingenuous with respect to the interior space. Traditionalist architecture viewed a building's façade as its most important aspect,

allowing it to set the tone and terms for the rest of the building. Yet our domestic environments are subject to repeated adjustment, making it difficult to sustain a common language between a house's skin and its bones.



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Upon moving into a dwelling we each feel the need to make it our own – tweaking the layout to better suit our individual lifestyle, adding rooms (sometimes floors) to accommodate a growing household and its possessions, modernising elements with updated technologies, and personalising each space to create a sense of intimacy and belonging – the house is gradually rebranded as ‘home’. Then there are those who invest in or develop housing for others, building and remodelling each dwelling to an assumed set of universal requirements for future residents, their decisions steered by profitability.

Such was the history of this project. From Glenmore Road the house resembled a modest Victorian terrace in need of some renewed affection. Yet beyond its period façade the house was entirely of modern construction – 4 and ½ floors of concrete, steel and glass, with chunky detailing, poor functionality and an excess of decorative mouldings, all lacking continuity. Sadly, the only unifying element in the house was the cast iron stair balustrades, which while tying each floor together sat begging for permission to return to the smelter; an affront to its raw material.

bokor architecture + interiors were approached by the new owner (a long standing client) to orchestrate the house’s revival and help craft a more suitable living environment for the family of four, along with an expanding art collection. The project quickly became more focused on taking elements away rather than adding more, in an attempt to rationalise space and reinstate some honesty to the building’s interior detailing.







before



after

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Your arrival point to the house doubles as both living room and gallery, equipped with high ceilings, clean crisp walls, and flexible lighting options. While there is a clear line of sight between here and the back of the house, the edge of the gallery space is defined by a small level change up to the dining area and kitchen beyond. Although open plan, the space is broken up by a small central courtyard, which combined with glazing at both ends allows an even spread of natural light across the full length of the house.

The new galley kitchen sits hidden from the main living area, designed not as a feature element but rather as part of the wall. Aneeta sidelights retrofitted to the existing balcony doors, along with the courtyard, allows the space to be naturally ventilated and operate comfortably without air conditioning.

The existing timber floor has been sanded and refinished, the balustrades appropriately discarded, and the house's vertical circulation highlighted by a warm grey tone which spills across the eastern party wall, connecting each floor via stairways.

The central entrance level is the primary living area. It sits sandwiched between two floors each containing two bedrooms, and two bathrooms. From the upper floor there is an additional stairway to a small loft space fitting out to function as a home office. A new operable Velux skylight allows roof access to service an array of new solar collectors. Custom wardrobe and joinery units have been installed across all bedrooms, and two of the bathrooms renewed. From the lower level there is a further stairway to the existing basement which opens up to the rear garden and pool.







This space was also refreshed: reconfiguring the external doors, installing a timber floor, and incorporating new joinery units – including a small kitchenette below the stair, concealed behind a sliding glass panel.

In parallel to refining the building's aesthetic 'charm' and spatial logic, the brief also sought to address the house's inefficient energy consumption. A combination of passive technologies were installed to improve its performance. The existing air conditioning system was removed, and new units provided to condition only the two upper floor bedrooms. A mix of operable external blinds and louvres were fitted over existing windows and roof lights to shade and control solar access as required.

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Off peak storage heaters were installed in both the basement and kitchen, and all existing light fittings were either replaced or retrofitted with LED technology. The new solar collector system installed on the roof was also set up to allow a future connection to battery storage. Overall the houses energy performance was significantly improved, with costs reported as considerably reduced against previous years.

Nearing two years since its completion, the house has responded well to its owner's tastes. The subtle finishes and minimalist detailing are complemented well by modest furnishings, allowing interchangeable artwork to remain the point of focus throughout the house.

