

271 SPRING STREET

Krause Old Melbourne Town bricks form an engaging podium and entry portal at 271 Spring Street



With its striking brick podium and contemporary office tower, 271 Spring Street has set a new benchmark for integrating with, and complementing, a site that's rich in heritage value.

Designed by the formidable team of John Wardle Architects, this 16-storey boutique office building, including modern office and function spaces and a roof terrace, is now the headquarters for Australian Unity. Located on the corner of Spring and Little Lonsdale Streets, it completes ISPT's long-term vision for the Lonsdale precinct, which began with the Urban Workshop, also designed by John Wardle Architects.

Forefront to the design intent was celebrating the completion of the Lonsdale precinct by creating a permeable connection to its existing buildings, while retaining and expanding on the heritage fabric of the site, and creating a new workplace to celebrate Australian Unity's place in the city.

"Extending the ground plane through to this last piece of the puzzle was a big driver for us, we wanted to finish the precinct off that started with the Urban Workshop, which connects through to Little Lonsdale street. So that permeability of the ground plane was fundamental to the whole design," Paul Holden, Associate, John Wardle Architects, says.

Deciding how best to interface with the existing buildings was critical. Paul says, "And luckily ISPT and Australian Unity came on board with our idea of activating, rather than hiding, the heritage buildings." Lucky indeed.

The tower is set on top of two heritage buildings - the Elms Family Hotel and the Church of England Mission Hall – and a building in between them was removed and replaced with a double storey entry. But in true John Wardle Architects' style, it's no ordinary entry.



"Instead of just having a break in between the two heritage buildings, we thought it would be a great gesture to have something that bridged between the two – as an entry portal, to set the character," Paul comments.

And what a strong character it is. Interpretive brickwork has created an arch, sitting between the Mission Hall and the Elms Hotel, which reflects the rhythm of the existing buildings in the streetscape. Of course, selecting the right brick for the arch and the new brickwork was critical. Paul explains, "We wanted something that respected the heritage bricks, but at the same time could stand on its own and add a bit of life to the design, because the heritage bricks are a uniform monotone and we wanted something to pick up the reds and oranges."

Enter Krause bricks in Old Melbourne Town colour, whose scale and texture reflect the heritage façade of the hotel and hall, while adding something new and special. "We love the bricks not only for the colour variation they provide but also because of the relationship we have with

Krause, because if we need a special brick made, they're quite prepared to make it for us," Paul remarks.

It's beautiful. The brick podium fits perfectly with its neighbours, greeting workers and creating an engaging relationship with people passing by.

Behind the podium, a contemporary office tower emerges with an inclined glass face that is inclined at the bottom to give the heritage building breathing space. Though modern in design and materials, the raking glazed façade includes an interpretive representation of the historic hip rooves of the Elms Hotel. Its russet hued powder coated aluminium sun shades are drawn from the old roof patterns. It's a creative and clever integration.

271 Spring Street is the perfect example of how to balance heritage preservation with contemporary development, setting a high benchmark for future sites. John Wardle Architects and the entire team involved in its design and construction are to be congratulated for delivering such a spectacular and engaging outcome.

Architect:	John Wardle Architects
Product:	Krause bricks, Old Melbourne Town
Owner:	ISPT
Builder:	ProBuild
Bricklayer:	Brickon
Photographer:	Peter Bennetts