

FITZROY, C.F ROW

C.F. Row's cohesive design celebrates the rich history of Fitzroy



C.F. Row is more than just a quality, award-winning apartment building in inner-city Fitzroy. It's a well considered marriage of many things – old materials with new, heritage style with contemporary design, young renters with mature owner-occupiers, single apartments with three storey townhouses. In fact, the sum of the parts makes up the whole that is C.F. Row. And there are many parts to this multi-family development.

The building was initially home to C.F. Rojo and Sons in 1948, a premier furniture maker, followed by Thonet, the Bentwood chair manufacturer. So, to celebrate the site's history, Woods Bagot, the creative team behind this project, integrated its heritage base and street frontages into the new design. "We wanted to stay true to the site's inner-city location and give back to the neighbourhood's strong sense of culture by meaningfully integrating elements of history into the final design," Woods Bagot explains.

And what a thoughtful design it is. With no formal heritage requirement, the team didn't knock it down and re-build, but made C.F. Row part of its environment, fully integrated into Fitzroy's culture. "For us, C.F. Row was an opportunity to design a quality dwelling that retained the memory of the building's fascinating past lives and the lively neighbourhood it sits in today," Woods Bagot says.

Renowned for creating designs they would happily live in themselves, this collection of 52 dwellings, including one, two and three bedroom apartments, and seven townhouses swiftly sold out. It attracted a diverse mix of occupants, both young and mature aged, reflecting not only Fitzroy's vibrant culture, but also the design's resonance across generations.

"We considered the social history of the area from the beginning and took a layered design approach that reflected Fitzroy's community spirit," Woods Bagot comments.

While the northern boundary houses the low-scale townhouses behind a new façade of Red Blue Krause bricks and concrete, the south façade is home to the higher density apartments (including two basement levels and five contemporary levels) sitting directly behind the original C.F. Rojo and Sons façade. This extends upwards to a set back, providing a break between old and new using a "lightweight piano nobile veiled by a filigree of metallic louvres," Woods Bagot explains. A lush garden terrace then softens these metal-clad, luxury penthouses, completing the design.

To connect this collection of dwellings, and increase the sense of community, a private laneway of Red Blue brick tiles run between the apartments and townhouses. And Bentwood café, snugly nestled below the apartments, not only offers great food and coffee, but also thoughtfully references C.F. Row's material choice, creating a truly



holistic project.

Of course material selection was critical to reflect the craftsmanship of the site's heritage, and provide a tailored, industrial feel. Krause bricks being case in point. These locally manufactured bricks perfectly complement the historical site, and were chosen, "for their textural, high quality feel and their offering of both tile and full brick products." Being available in both face brickwork and brick tiles was another added bonus, "It allowed us to easily conceal a number of priority services within the wall as the tiles created cavities that allowed us to run those services through, while using a combination of the two throughout allowed us to use brickwork on multiple surfaces with ease," Woods Bagot continues.

Excitingly for the team, DealCorp's award winning development won the 2018 Australian Institute of Architects, Victorian Architecture Award for Residential Architecture—Multiple Housing, and is now in the running for the national awards announced on 1 November. It's also a nominee in the 2018 Urban Development Institute of Australia's Awards for Medium Density Housing and Urban Renewal categories, announced in December.

We wait with interest to see how well this design continues to perform. But highly decorated or not, C.F. Row is indeed a beautifully cohesive design that has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from DealCorp, its occupants and the entire Fitzroy community. And that is reward in itself. "It has been an honour to see C.F. Row embraced by the community and integrated into the rich culture of the area," Woods Bagot concludes.

Architects:	Woods Bagot
Product:	Krause Bricks Red Blue bricks and Krause Red Blue brick tiles
Developer:	DealCorp
Builder:	Hacer Group
Landscape Design:	Jack Merlo Design
Tiler:	Skilled Tiling, James Safari
Photographer:	Trevor Mein