

STONE SOUL HOUSE

Krause Emperor bricks and limestone infuse Stone Soul House with grace and longevity



Stone Soul House is Robson Rak's most ambitious project to date. Renowned for developing high quality, bespoke homes, this impressive duo has more than delivered. What sets Stone Soul House apart is that despite its large size, every space is intimate, welcoming and well proportioned, so it feels like a real family home that's peaceful and calm, and not at all monumental.

Set across three storeys for a dynamic family of six, it's designed to be passed down through the generations; one that evolves with everyone's changing needs. And one purpose-built for regular social connections providing ample spaces for entertaining. So Stone Soul House had to be robust, timeless and low maintenance, and with that in mind longevity, quality and ageing gracefully became its hallmarks, directing the simple natural palette of limestone, brick and timber:

"We chose a limited number of quality materials and just used lashings of them to create strength through that, rather than putting 25 different textures and finishes in, so it's quite a simple palette," Kathryn Robson explains.

An intentional blurring of the lines between inside and out creates seamless continuity, as every material runs from the outside to the inside, each having real purpose.

"The limestone came first; we found the perfect limestone that has so much texture in it; with its ancient fossils you can see the stories of time. And we chose the Krause bricks because they were almost the perfect colour match to the limestone, but just in a different texture, and together they'll age well and gracefully. They're not synthetic materials so it was about longevity and aging gracefully," adds Chris Rak.



From the external elevation, a datum line between the stone and brick runs around every side of the house, separating the limestone on the lower half and the bricks on the upper half of the building, ensuring the house doesn't appear so monumental.

"The Krause bricks add that extra level of texture, and are slightly more recessive in the elevation, so it softens the overall elevation because of the texture and pattern in the brickwork," Chris explains.

Inside, every detail is well-considered and beautifully resolved. And there is a slow reveal of one delightful surprise after another.

Along with the materials, the datum line is also carried seamlessly inside. The solid front door of American Oak timber continues up to the ceiling and is carried throughout the ground floor, adding beautiful warmth. From the entrance, locally-selected, custom designed art, furniture and rugs add depth and punctuate the palette with vibrant colours:

"The stone and the bricks have so much texture and pattern within them, so then we worked on the decoration and custom-designing the furniture, layering it up with so much colour and texture, which offsets the harsh impact of the stone," remarks Kathryn.

Chris and Kathryn loved working on the interiors with local artisans and craftspeople. Every piece has a story, from the custom-made joinery handles, hand-beaten brass door handle and brass balustrades, and turned timber dish lights on the stairwell, to pendant lights, dining room tables, coffee tables and bespoke rugs.

Most prominent of these is artist John Young Zerunge's custom-designed painting at the entrance; 'Aleph Spring 2021', which presents a beautiful composition of colours and layers, complementing the limestone and brick walls.

The internal design is deeply thoughtful. While the footprint is large, every space is broken up to create that sense of intimacy. The ground floor contains a functional and generous open plan kitchen, living and dining space. Here, bespoke pivoting screens offer versatility, enabling the kitchen to either be closed off and separate from the living space, or opened to create a connection with seated guests. So both spaces have their own personality, while allowing a nice transition between the two. This area leads onto an outdoor terrace and large north-facing garden complete with 25m pool, spa and half basketball court; perfect for a highly social and active family. A home office and library tucked away near the entrance provide working from home options, or a quiet sanctuary away from the action.

There is a seamlessness to every space, too, adding to the sense of peace and calm. For instance, all of the home's services are fully integrated within the design. There is hydronic heating in each floor's concrete slab, and the air conditioning is cleverly concealed within the ceiling, so no vent is visible.



Attention to detail is also evident in the magnificent sweeping staircase running through the building's core, showcasing in one moment the way all key materials work in perfect harmony:

"There's a lot of work to pull off that detail and have all of those materials meet effortlessly. Walking up those stairs, you leave the limestone and enter the brick on the top floor, and it's quite nice travelling through that; it's a bit of a change and it's a pleasant feeling. And as you enter the top floor, it feels different again, that's where all the bedrooms are, so it's calm."

The top floor's five bedrooms include one master bedroom, and one for every child, each with ensuite, walk-in-robe and a place to study. A communal study area, with a library, outside the children's bedrooms will work well when study intensifies at uni. It's all purposely designed to evolve as the years progress and everyone's needs change.

On the basement level, a guest room with ensuite completes the sixth bedroom (which is also ear-marked as a room for the parent's carers when that time comes). A spacious rumpus room, home gym and two courtyards complete the bottom storey.

A strong connection to the landscape on every level brings warmth and life in

abundance. At every turn there's either an atrium courtyard, garden aspect or large window making Stone Soul House a really comforting space to be in. A key driver of this connection are the two courtyards in the basement, each positioned so that when you enter the house, to the right and left of the front door, you see the tops of two plane trees, travelling up from the basement through the light wells to the ground floor. It's a delightful surprise upon entering.

Stone Soul House is a magnificent family home, where every space is well used and much loved. That's a product of not only a deeply thoughtful design, but also great clients and a team of trades who are as passionate about their crafts as are Robson Rak:

"They were just the most trusting clients, trusting our vision and us, and we worked with LBA Construction who are the most extraordinary builders, so it took the build to another level of smoothness. And there were so many people working together to make this project a success," says Kathryn. A point to which Chris adds: "It was probably one of the best building vibes we've had - every trade (even through Covid) got to do what they do well. That was the brief and nobody was cutting any corners," concludes Chris.

Architect:	Robson Rak
Builder:	LBA Construction
Product:	Krause Emperor Bricks, Ghost
Landscape Design:	Cos Design
Landscape Construction:	Landscape Constructions
Photography:	Shannon McGrath