

“FIELDWORK”

**QUINO HOLLAND
FIELDWORK ARCHITECTS**

Quino Holland is a founder and director of Fieldwork, an innovative, soon-to-be local architecture and design practice. Driven by the ethos to improve the built environment, and known for their sensitive approach to residential work, Fieldwork was appointed to design the new landmark in Dight Street. In a candid interview, Quino talks to writer Clare Kennedy about the influences and inspiration behind the design.

c.k. So tell me about the location.

q.h. In my opinion Collingwood is one of the most exciting parts of Melbourne, especially right now. I think it's going through a really exciting transformation. I've got a really long history in the area. I used to live in Collingwood in the late 90s and early 2000s and in the time I've known it, the area has always been a real hotbed of creativity and innovation. There has always been some really exciting artist's studios and super exciting businesses coming out of them.

As well as being appointed the architects of Dight Street we were recently appointed as the project architects for the new Collingwood Arts Precinct, which for me is a project that is really going to galvanise Collingwood's position as a real creative hub. The new arts precinct will be on the site of the former Collingwood Technical School, which has the iconic mural by the late Keith Haring on the wall, literally around the corner from Dight Street. The new precinct is going to be a mix of cafés, studios, shops and restaurants and I think it's going to be an incredibly exciting project.

ed. *The late Keith Haring was a highly influential New York artist who gained recognition in the 1980s for bringing the world's attention to street art, and for using it to promote important social issues. In 1984 the then Collingwood Technical School asked him to do a mural on one of the college walls. Recently restored, the mural gained heritage listing in 2004 and is reportedly one of only 31 known Haring murals still in existence.*

c.k. Can you tell me about the attributes of the site?

q.h. The site is far away enough from Johnston Street not to get the traffic noise; it's a really interesting pocket with some very, very positive little attributes. The moment we saw the site we thought it had the sort of characteristics you'll find on a location in Kyoto or somewhere like that, because of its proportions, and because it lends itself to a project with just twelve units.

We went on a study tour of Japan, and subsequently the guys from Milieu, with one of the Fieldwork team members, went for a week to Tokyo and looked at a lot of relevant examples. Those two study trips provided a great deal of inspiration for the design of Dight Street.

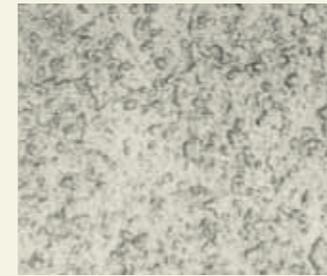
c.k. Can you give me some specific examples of that Japanese influence?



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q.h. The overall form of the building and the very refined and pared back palette of materials was certainly inspired by Japan. There's a lot of temptation these days to have a whole bunch of different colours, materials, forms and textures in projects, but in this one we went for a very refined and restrained palette.

There are only really four materials on the facade. There's the very rough cast render, there's the white metal blades that will be a veil-like screen over the staircase and the northern terraces. And the top floor is clad in a brass material, which I think will be very beautiful and will contrast really well, I think, and create a nice balance between the very rough sort of rendered base and the top, which will be very crisp, and have a lovely shimmering effect. The brass will weather and get a beautiful patina over time.

The fourth, and I'd say just as important a material, are the landscape elements. We're going to have a couple of planter boxes on the ground floor, and the idea is that, over time, the creepers will grow up the render. I think that will really help settle the building into its context.

c.k. Sounds beautiful. Can you give me an overview of Dight Street?

q.h. Sure. It's a super small project. It's going to be an intimate building with only twelve units. There's four one-bedroom units on the first and second floors, and the top floors are taken up by four double-storey units which we've been referring to as 'sky lofts'. They will each have an internal staircase, almost like little townhouses in the sky.

The single bedroom units and the sky lofts are fantastic because they both have dual aspect; all have views out to the north, and the sky lofts also have views out to the south.

An external circulation staircase accesses all the units. We took inspiration from some of the Art Deco walk-ups. This one does have a lift as well, but there's an external stair and external corridors, so the experience of arriving and walking up to your unit or sky loft is going to be lovely because as you walk along the corridors you'll feel the beautiful breeze coming through, with views back to the city.

c.k. What kind of person do you think Dight Street would appeal to?

q.h. I was thinking of myself a little bit to be honest, and about what kind of project I would like to live in. I imagine this will appeal to people who are design literate. People who appreciate good design and the thought and love we've put into the project, the interesting juxtapositions of materials, as well as the level of detail in the internal spaces.

I think it will also appeal to people who are excited about the sort of neighbourhood Collingwood is, who are excited to see it being transformed, and who would like to be part of that transformation, as well, in a positive way.

c.k. Can you tell me about the internal design?

q.h. We've been thinking very carefully about making sure these apartments are as good as they possibly can be. All of them have dual aspect, that is they have both northern and southern windows, which means that they can get beautiful cross flow ventilation.

We've thought carefully about how the building can have a very strong sustainability agenda. It's been designed so that from a passive design point of view it will work very well thermally. So all the north-facing windows and openings have eaves on them which blocks out the strong summer sun, but during the winter months the depth of the eave is designed so that when the sun is lower in the sky, the winter sun goes straight into the units, and that means your requirement for heating is much reduced. It's a very positive thing.

c.k. Are there any other sustainable design features?

q.h. There will be rainwater harvesting and we are proposing ceiling fans as an option. But the single most important thing you can do from a sustainability point of view is to ensure it's a thermally responsive building, and these really are.

c.k. The interior details?

q.h. We've chosen a very tactile palette of materials. We were kind of joking it's like a relaxed Japanese aesthetic with a combination of Japanese and Australian influences. We've got this beautiful engineered cork flooring and a lot of thought has gone into the kitchen designs. It's important to make sure the space is flexible and has as much functionality built into it as possible.

In the sky lofts we have taken the unusual decision to place the kitchens on the north with really large north facing windows. We love the idea of preparing a meal while looking out to this amazing view. Kitchens are often tucked away in these sorts of projects, whereas here we have given them a really prominent position to make that experience of cooking and entertaining a beautiful one.

The other point worth mentioning is the positioning of bedrooms in relation to one another for acoustic privacy.

Regarding outdoor space, each one-bedroom apartment has north facing terraces, and the sky lofts have terraces with city views off the living spaces.

c.k. Tell me about the materials used in the design?

q.h. Both the brass and the rough render are interesting materials because they are really very changeable from day to day and season to season. Neither of them is a flat boring material. They are multidimensional.

c.k. Do any particular artists, architects or designers inspire your work? Obviously nothing comes out of a vacuum.

q.h. To be honest, for this apartment design I was inspired by some furniture and lighting designers that take a very



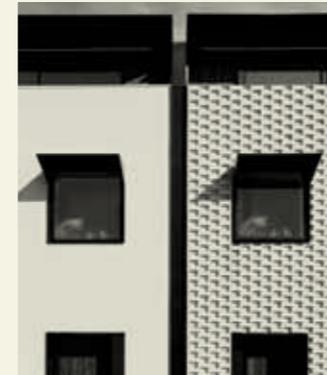
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sculptural approach to form such as the Flos 'Copycat' by Michael Anastassiades.

I am also interested in Japanese design such as the concept of wabi sabi, the idea that, in a way, the imperfections in things help highlight the things that are perfect. It's also a very Japanese thing to try and bring nature into the design. I'm really interested in the idea of the passage of time and how it impacts on the building. The idea that the brass will develop a patina over time, that the creepers will grow up. For me that's important.

I am actually inspired by my wife's work, Eugenia Lim. Eugenia is an artist interested in performance, sculpture and installations. She explores the beautiful things that come out of juxtaposing different cultures and cultural identities.

c.k. Where were you raised? Tell us about your career so far.

q.h. I was born in England but moved to South America when I was two. I lived in a small village not far from Machu Picchu, up until I was about 16, and then moved to Australia. My parents subsequently moved to Spain but we still have a lot of ties back to Peru. My dad set up the first adventure travel company in Peru and they often go back there. My brother still lives there and runs a very successful film production company. I went to Melbourne University, before moving to Denmark for about three years to live and study. Back in Melbourne I worked with JCB architects for about 12 years, and became their design associate.

About three years ago I set up Fieldwork with my business partner Ben Keck, who has a background in finance and property. We also publish a progressive magazine called Assemble Papers to explore ideas about architecture, art and design.

c.k. Are you multilingual?

q.h. I grew up speaking English and Spanish, my Danish is very rusty though.

c.k. Has your experience of living in an apartment overseas informed this design?

q.h. Yes absolutely. For example, in the one-bedroom apartments we are proposing sliding doors between the bedrooms and the living space, which really allows them to be a bit more flexible. I actually lived in a 33 sqm one-bedroom apartment in Copenhagen with my then girlfriend for about three years, and that really taught me a lot about maximising the use of space, and the efficiency of the use of space.

A lot of the apartments we looked at in Japan were really, really tiny and, quite frankly, this project is super generous by comparison to that Danish example and the apartments we saw in Tokyo. But we certainly drew on them to try to maximise the efficient use of space. ●

16

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- 01 The Collingwood Technical School on Johnston Street. Soon to be the headquarters of the new Collingwood Arts Precinct.
Photography: Tom Ross
- 02 Downtown Tokyo, architectural inspiration on every corner.
- 03 A contextual reference of traditional stucco applied to a wall at the Abbotsford Convent. It has a more coarse finish than usual due to the aggregate used.
- 04 External stairwell on the side of the building, providing ample cross flow and ventilation.
- 05 Desirable views from Apartment 304's kitchen window.
- 06 Public Middle School of Labarthe-sur-Lèze, France, by LCR Architects.
The shimmering bronze exterior provides a unique reaction in every light.
- 07 "*Shelter*" by Eugenia Lim displayed at Grey Gardens, November 2015.
- 08 Armadale Townhouses recently completed by Fieldwork.

Below: Dight's lead architect, Quino Holland.

