

# THE LOCAL PROJECT

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HUMAN-CENTRED DESIGN



VOLUME 01

# Interpreting Heritage

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Design at the intersection of old and new.



# A Focus on Architectural and Cultural Urban Context

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## Milieu

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An innate appreciation for physical and cultural context is at the heart of Melbourne-based property developer Milieu, with the company's very name speaking to a belief that multi-residential architecture must both respond and contribute to the city's local urban landscape.

Since Milieu, which now includes, Milieu Built, Milieu Stays and Milieu Hospitality, was founded nine years ago, some 12 projects have been completed, with a further nine in development or under construction. Each has been located within Melbourne's storied inner suburbs, and each in its own way takes its cues from the area's past and architectural vernacular, while looking to the future and the emerging life of the neighbourhood.

In this way, Milieu has played a pivotal role in the evolution of apartment living in Melbourne from uninspired high-rise towers and low-quality smaller blocks toward a vibrant model of development that is committed to strong architectural outcomes and progressive urban design. "Our approach to development was something that we solidified from day one, and it's how the name came about – Milieu, meaning the context or environment one lives in and is influenced by," reflects Milieu co-director Shannon Peach.

"Our ethos was that our projects had to positively contribute to the built and social environment, so design is first and foremost, and there's an underlying theme of always being socially and environmentally responsible," he continues. To achieve this, Milieu has engaged some of Melbourne's leading architects and designers, including Breathe Architecture, Flack Studio, Edition Office, Fieldwork, DKO, DesignOffice, and Freadman White, to deliver buildings that have a strong individual design language, and which embrace the unique qualities of the area in which they are built.

The 231 Napier Street project in Fitzroy, designed by award-winning Melbourne architecture practice Edition Office, demonstrates this belief through the emphasis on materiality in the design response to Fitzroy's history as a suburb of warehouses and workers' cottages. Encountered from the street, the building presents as a series of concrete shells stacked atop each other. A more delicate timber inner skin is sleeved within the weighty concrete exterior, providing a counterpoint to the concrete and warmth at the smaller, human scale.



TOP 231 Napier Street by Edition Office for Milieu presents as a series of concrete shells.  
BOTTOM Photography by Gavin Green.



The interiors of 231 Napier Street exemplifies a strong approach to materiality.

In Collingwood, architects DKO were deeply influenced by the area's rich history and architectural diversity for the Peel Street project they designed for Milieu, offering a striking contemporary interpretation on the suburb's recognisable built environment. The Peel Street exterior expresses these references, from hooded windows informed by local fenestration solutions to raked brickwork inspired by the area's predominant materiality.

Interiors by interior design and architecture studio DesignOffice exhibit a sophisticated approach to spatial planning and a timeless high-quality material palette that reflects the shift toward apartment living across all demographics.

The progressive evolution of Brunswick into a hub of architecture focused on sustainability, meanwhile, is at the centre of Breese Street, the project designed by DKO and Brunswick locals Breathe Architecture. Commencing construction in 2019, this building is free from fossil fuels and achieves a minimum of 7.5-star energy

rating, exemplifying a level of commitment to sustainability that is exceptionally rare among apartment developments. In the same way that Breese Street naturally advocates for sustainable living through its design, the project is also deliberately intended to build community through communal spaces. The result is an apartment building that embodies a holistic approach to both design and development.

Each of these projects and the many others across Milieu's portfolio demonstrate a shared attention to context, sustainability, and community. Through this approach, Milieu highlights that multi-residential development can enrich the neighbourhood from which the design takes its inspiration.

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TOP RIGHT & BOTTOM Breese Street by DKO Architecture & Breathe Architecture for Milieu.  
TOP LEFT Peel by DKO Architecture & DesignOffice for Milieu.