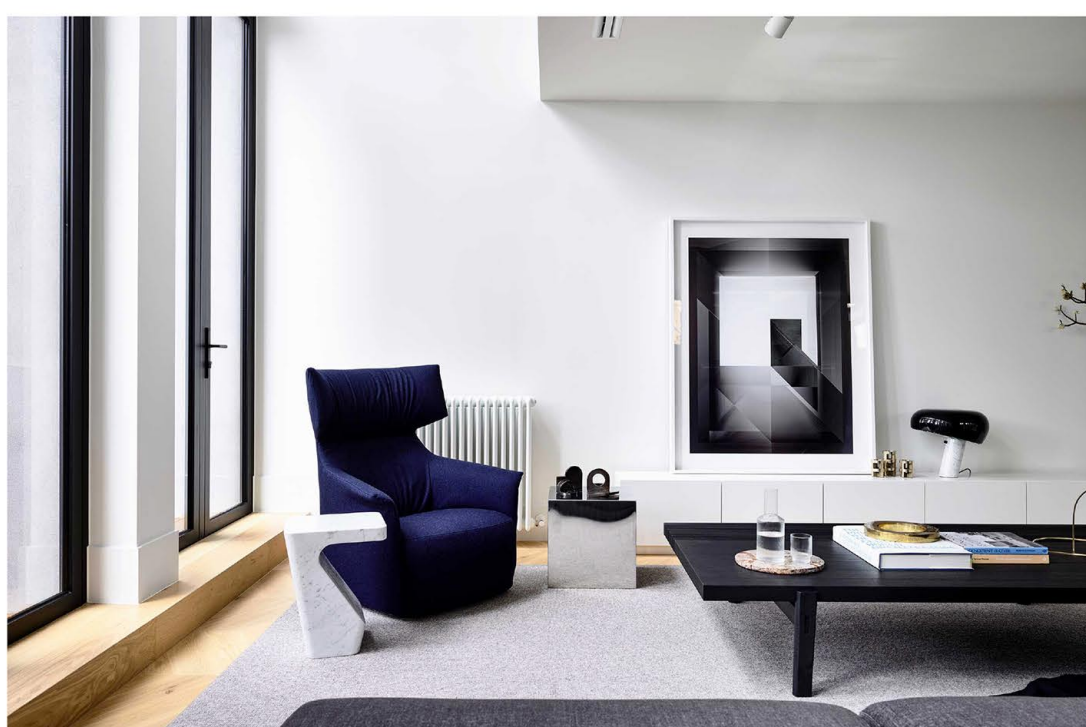


Melbourne, Australia

## Calm & Collected

Architect Paul Conrad's family home is an elegant and ordered take on a classic townhouse



In Malvern, a leafy inner suburb of Melbourne filled with late Victorian and Edwardian houses, architect Paul Conrad – director of architecture and interior design firm [Conrad Architects](#) – took inspiration from classic townhouses ranging from the Georgian architecture of Bath to the Neo-classicism of London, to redesign his family home. The result is an understated, contemporary spin on a classic style.

‘The design approach is contemporary in style but influenced by a broad spectrum of historical references,’ Conrad explains. Being his family home, it also reflects the architect’s personal tastes. ‘Hornsby Residence is particularly special to me, and being both architect and client it was an amazing opportunity to deliver on my vision without too much compromise.’

Conrad’s vision for the house follows a highly controlled grid pattern defined by a colonnade, with distinctive axial paths of movement through the house and between internal to external areas. ‘The geometry of the floor plan, the orientation of the rooms, and the quality of natural light they received were the most critical elements to the design,’ he says. There are two primary zones: a formal area in the front and an informal area to the rear. Sets of French doors open out onto the external areas to create a flow between indoor and outdoor spaces, such as the front courtyard which acts as an extension of the formal living room and the rear courtyard used for entertaining.

Though all the rooms share a pared back aesthetic, according to Conrad, ‘there was a strong desire to create a different mood in each of them.’ This is perhaps most evident in the juxtaposition between the formal and informal living rooms, where Conrad used varying ceiling heights, floor levels, lighting fixtures and windows to effect. A more vertical proportion was created in the formal living room by tightening the plan dimensions and raising the ceiling height. The room was structured according to a symmetrical plan – the fireplace, furniture and even the trees in the adjacent courtyard, all sit on a central symmetrical axis. On the other hand, in the informal living room, he raised the floor to compress the ceiling height and brought in less formal furniture pieces to create a more intimate ambiance.

A neutral materials and colour palette runs throughout the home, reflecting what Conrad describes as ‘restraint and an attraction to natural materials that improve with age.’ Materials such as marble and natural oak were chosen for their sense of calm minimalism.

The home’s subdued ambiance is enhanced by the artworks that fill the space, such as a single-line drawing by Frederic Forest which hangs in the bathroom. ‘I love the way the work explores exactly the same ideas as the space in which it sits,’ Conrad shares. An artwork by Shannon McGrath and Marcus Piper that explores the interplay of light echoes the architect’s own characteristic use of light.

From its considered layout to the muted palette and well-curated design and art pieces, the Hornsby Residence melds a classical appreciation of beauty and detail with strong lines and a minimalist aesthetic. Conrad offers his own conclusion: ‘The aesthetic could be described as having a contemporary expression, a classical sense of rhythm, a Georgian sense of proportion, a minimalist expression of detail, with a European layering of texture and material.’

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