

# WATER FRONT.

WITHIN THE WATERFRONT RESTAURANT  
IN SYDNEY'S ROCKS A SUBTLE AND  
RESPECTFUL RENOVATION BY

**MISHO + ASSOCIATES**

HAS TRANSFORMED A GARISH AND HECTIC INTERIOR TO ONE OF TEXTURED CALM.  
NEW INTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS SIT COMFORTABLY WITHIN ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S  
EARLIEST HERITAGE BUILDINGS. WHILE MARITIME REFERENCES PERVADE, A NEW SENSE OF THE  
OLD HAS BEEN ACHIEVED, SO THAT PATRONS CAN APPRECIATE THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF  
THE BUILDING AS NEVER BEFORE.

REVIEW ANGELA FERGUSON

PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON KENNY



## DESIGN STATEMENT.

→ The Waterfront Restaurant has occupied the original Campbell's Stores building at the Rocks since the early 1970s. The building is a unique example of an early nineteenth century warehouse construction that has been added to as waterfront activity increased. Our fitout for the restaurant was a complete strip-out of the 1970s work. The design approach revolved around preserving and accentuating the historic beauty and textures of the original sandstone, brickwork and timber post and beam structure without further destruction of the original fabric of the building. New freeform elements have been introduced to the existing internal roof structure to conceal new services that were required. These asymmetrical elements float between the post and beam construction and create a language that emphasises and expresses the existing fabric. → The functions of each bay, of which there are 10 in total, have been kept as they were when the restaurant first opened. Being a heritage building of such great importance, there was very little flexibility in altering the functions. All new services have been kept to the eastern side of the building and careful detailing has made them virtually invisible. New timber vertical 'fins' to the original opening help to control the flow of people and to isolate private functions with concealed sliding blades. Each individual bay has a distinct ambience, created through extremely subtle difference in the existing fabric of the building and through the subtle play of new elements. → **Misho + Associates**







→ Originally the site of one of the first settlements in Australia, the Rocks is now a tourist Mecca in Sydney. Here the Waterfront Restaurant epitomises the recent visual and structural rebirth of Sydney. The restaurant itself is uniquely Sydney and a popular venue, yet adds an

intimate dining and function rooms. → The existing building is graphic and stoic, with timber veneer sliding fins inserted between internal vertical beams. These highlight the inherent structure as well as allowing the spaces some flexibility – they can be intimate dining rooms or

element of style to the gamut of tourist venues in the area. The design has been realised with care and concern, with simplicity of detail allowing the strength of the original structure to radiate throughout. → Since 1979 the Waterfront Restaurant had been brim-full with plastic lobsters, ceiling strung fishing nets and various other extraneous maritime flotsam and jetsam, catering for a voluminous tourist clientele. The desire was to make the restaurant more accessible to existing and new patrons. Not to create something new, but to pare back the existing and reveal the beauty and strength of the heritage building, taking the restaurant into the new millennium. The design needed to be subtle, without overwhelming or alienating its existing clientele. → Sited in an old Campbell's storehouse (the oldest standing building of its kind in the area), Misho + Associates Architects were given the brief to overhaul the restaurant with a visual and semi-structural facelift. Heritage concerns restricted any major organic development, with the client wanting to project the space into its next life phase via the new design. → There are two entrances to the restaurant. The original street entrance sits gently in the facade and is used mainly for private functions. Lighting inserted into the foot-path leads to a quiet formal entrance. The main entrance is down a flight of sandstone steps (for which the Rocks is renowned) and via the water's edge. The Harbour Bridge and the Opera House embrace a large outdoor area, perfunctory to the site. The visitor is then caressed by a curved and twisted plasterboard wall, led over blackbutt floors and welcomed into the first of a series of

larger function rooms, able to control the flow of people through the space. The heritage structure was simply cleaned and uplit to accentuate its unique beauty and scale. Each alcove has its own idiosyncrasies (ceiling heights all vary), yet each has been designed so that it can be read as part of an interactive and flexible whole. → The overall colour palette is warm and neutral, with carpeted areas softening dining spaces, and recessed indirect lighting revealing the warmth of sandstone walls. Many of the architectural features are 'invisible' because they sit so well within the old building. Rising through the two levels is a stainless steel and glass staircase inserted into an existing cavity. Dilapidated window frames have been cleaned and inserted with single sheets of glass, refracting the view of both the interior and exterior. A glazed black steel sheet rises solitarily through the two levels and can be read through cut-outs to the flooring. No false ceilings have been installed so that all

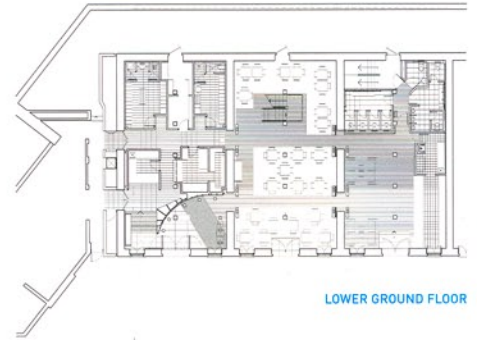
services are designed to hide within existing beams. → To complete the picture, the old maritime paraphernalia has been stylised in the same manner as the interior. The essence of the maritime theme remains but is now subtly highlighted. Framing of old archival photos interacts with the language of the stairs. Overall, there is no competition between the new design and the historical content. Each complements the other. The almost imperceptible strength of the new work accentuates the original structure and highlights the potent talents of the designers. ●

OPENING PAGE (LEFT TO RIGHT) → VIEW FROM MAIN ENTRANCE ALONG CURVED RECEPTION WALL WITH NEW METALLIC BOX ATTACHED TO ENTRY POST. → VIEW TO GROUND FLOOR DINING AREA ALONG NEW SANDSTONE SHEET WALL. THE Juxtaposition of the heritage fabric and the new elements are enhanced here. → VIEW TO BAR FROM GROUND FLOOR SEATING AREA WITH ENTRANCE FROM WATERFRONT TO RIGHT. → GROUND FLOOR SEATING / LOUNGE AREA WITH NEWLY INSERTED ZINC EDGED PANELS AND SANDSTONE END WALL. A palette of brown and metallic finish complement the existing post and beam construction and the existing brick / sandstone construction.

FACING PAGE (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) → NEW CIRCULATION STAIRS IN TIMBER, STEEL AND GLASS FORM A DRAMATIC ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENT TO THE CENTRAL CORE. THESE STAIRS FLOAT INDEPENDENTLY WITHIN THE CIRCULATION VOID, RESPECTING THE HERITAGE MAXIM OF NON-INTRUSION. → ONE OF THE UPPER LEVEL DINING BAYS WITH HERITAGE BRICKWORK EXPOSED AND A DRAMATIC VIEW TO THE SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE. → DRAMATIC INSERTIONS IN WHITE FRAME THE STAIR CIRCULATION AND WORKING IN ASSOCIATION WITH CURVED FREEFORM CEILING ELEMENTS LIFT THE SPACE, CONCEALING SERVICES AND CONTRASTING WITH THE HERITAGE FABRIC.



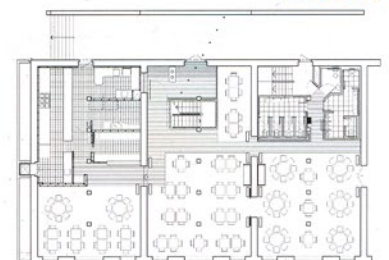
FIRST FLOOR



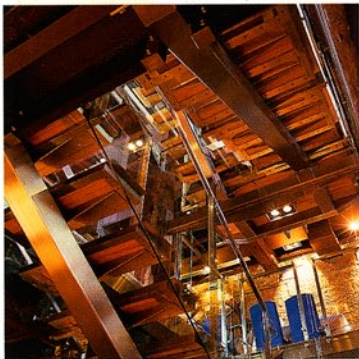
LOWER GROUND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR







#### PROJECT SUMMARY / THE WATERFRONT RESTAURANT

**Interior architect** Misho + Associates **Project design team** Misho, Olga Gruzdeff, Paul Semple, Fleur Kay, Csaba Moldan, Ivan Jeldrez, Anthony Bowden **Project manager** Misho + Associates, St.Hilliers **Lighting design** Misho + Associates **Builder** St.Hilliers **Client** The Waterfront Restaurant **Sub-contractors** Structural steel work by Man of Steel, stainless steel, glass and timber stairs by Metfab Engineering and Constructions Pty Ltd **Consultants** Mechanical, electrical and hydraulic by Donnelley, Simpson, Cleary, structural by Partridge Partners, acoustic by Louis A. Challis & Associates Pty Ltd, BCA by Trevor Howse & Associates **Size** 1200 sq.m. **Time to complete** 3 months **Council** Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and Sydney City **Lighting** Freeway lights by JSB, general lighting by The Light Shop **Chairs/seating** White EINA chairs by KeZu, client's existing blue chairs, BOX bar lounges by Stylecraft **Tables** Client's existing **Flooring** Timber flooring by Harvey Norman and GM Boatbuilding, carpet by Harvey Norman **Ceiling** Feature ceiling on first floor designed by Misho + Associates **Internal walls** St.Hilliers **Internal wall cladding** Feature black metal walls by St.Hilliers and special paint finish by DiEmme Creative Solutions **Paint** 'Gallery White' by Aalto **Joinery** St.Hilliers **Stainless steel** Wyvern Commercial Kitchens and Metafab Engineering & Construction Pty Ltd **Bathroom fixtures** Meco **Signage** Cunneen & Co. **Air-conditioning systems** Total replacement by Sovereign Air

