



Case Study 29

Meira House

Chatswood NSW

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Meira House, Chatswood NSW

Owner/developer: Meira Constructions Australia

Construction: Southern Cross Constructions

Architect: Drew Dickson Architects

Bricklayer: Napoli Constructions Group

Construction cost: \$13 million

Photographer: Jackie Dean



"We wanted something

Above:

The structure above the commercial levels is loadbearing masonry. The rendered brickwork panel is shaded with powder-coated screens.

Left:

Architect Drew Dickson describes this residential/commercial building as "a successful marriage between rendered and face brickwork." He considers that the face brickwork "defines its residential character."

Top right:

The round windows are framed with a slightly-projecting soldier course that casts a fine shadow.

Bottom right:

Large round windows on the eastern face are a striking feature of the building.

Meira House



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In the past 30 years Chatswood has become the commercial hub of Sydney's prosperous North Shore. Although this is a long-established area, much of the newer building stock has a monotone appearance that seems to characterise CBD architecture everywhere.

"We wanted to get away from that," says Drew Dickson, the designer of a new residential/commercial building fronting busy Pacific Highway. Dickson describes his design as "quite a successful marriage between rendered and painted finishes and face brickwork."

Local planning controls governed the height of the street elevation that houses 1400 m² of commercial/showroom space. The building steps back and terraces to create 49 residential units, from studios to three bedroom apartments.

Rendered brickwork at the lower levels is capped by face brickwork above, highlighting the functional difference. "We wanted to break the building concept into two parts," Dickson explains. "The render makes a definite statement that the lower section is commercial, contemporary and slick. But the face brickwork above defines its residential character."

The brickwork – terracotta bricks laid in a standard colour mortar – also hints at the heritage-listed Great Northern Hotel on the adjacent intersection. "It's not a strong link but I think it carries the theme through."

that was quite striking."

Large round windows on the eastern face are the most prominent feature of the building. "They are a little different," Dickson admits. "We wanted something that was quite striking." The windows look out from living or dining rooms and are framed with a slightly-projecting header course. The projection casts a slight shadow relief and will reduce weathering streaks.

The glass in the round windows on the northern end is fire-protected with black mesh screen. "We had to give them fire protection because they are on the boundary."

The building structure is conventional reinforced concrete framing to the carparks and commercial floors, with loadbearing masonry above and concrete floor slabs. The external cladding is all clay brick. Internally there is a mixture of clay blocks, reinforced concrete blockwork and modular walling systems sheeted in plasterboard.

Approximately two-thirds of the units were presold when Meira House opened in July 2003. The building is located near the Warringah Freeway entrance, allowing rapid city access by car or bus.

