

Quality Brew

They say that if you want a look you go to Sydney and if you want an idea go to Melbourne. The bad news for Sydney is that Melbourne more and more seems to combine the two. Melbourne has always had a far greater awareness of its own history, while its younger architects have also been quicker than their Sydney counterparts to engage with leading edge design ideas which they invariably seem to combine with lots of imagination and flair. Photography by Shannon McGrath.

The latest blend of ideas, class and sensitivity to the past looks to be Tribeca, the residential development on the former Victoria Brewery site on Victoria Parade in East Melbourne. Here an entire urban precinct is being designed which will include a gourmet supermarket and café, business centre, concierge facilities and the now mandatory gymnasium, swimming pool and health centre.

The development takes its name from the Tribeca area in New York, once the hub of Manhattan's wholesale and retail food suppliers and now a fashionable residential district with its warehouses converted to loft apartments, boutiques and commercial businesses. Tribeca aims to replicate the look and atmosphere of its New York namesake by setting up a rich counterpoint of contemporary style and historical colour.

The original building was built in 1854 by Scottish brewer, Thomas Aitken. The distinctive 290m façade was added by architect, William Pitt, around 1895 with further additions between 1907 and 1912 when a number of its characteristic buildings were

constructed. These include the still-standing Bottling Hall, and the Bitter Ale and Vacuum Cellars. Further additions followed, but brewery operations ended in 1983 and the site's use as a distribution centre finished in 1995. Now, in a \$240 million joint venture between Red C, R. Corporation and Babcock and Brown, much of the site's heritage will be retained, restored and incorporated into the residential and commercial development.

Starck and the philosophy of Tribeca "go hand in hand" because Tribeca aims to be a "fusion of fashion and design and the way our living environment determines who we are."

Aiming to create a distinctive blend of the old and the new – each building has a name dedicated to the history of the brewery, such as The Wharton, Cohen Cellars and The Victoria - the developers are restoring the heritage walls and retaining a number of the buildings, including Brew Towers, the Bottling Hall, some trusses over the central public courtyard and a number of vintage beer cellars.

As a sign of how the more

enlightened developers are now turning to quality architects in recognition of higher expectations from prospective buyers, the Tribeca group invited a First Eleven group of designers to take on specific aspects of the development: Philippe Starck's company Yoo, Denton Corker Marshall, conservation architects, Allom Lovell & Associates, interior designers, Hassell, Rice + Skinner, SJB Interior Design, Hecker Phelan interior designers and Bruce

Henderson Architects.

Interior design group, Hecker Phelan were asked to come up with a concept for marketing the idea, expressed through a display suite which Hamish Guthrie says "puts it in the context of the existing fabric."

Taking the historic Cohen Cellars with its handsome high ceilings, Hecker Phelan designed a space complete with fittings and furnishings which would reflect the aspirations of



Main display and information area which reveals the high ceilings of the Cohen Cellars Building. The sign-up rooms are in the background with information panels along the side walls.



Philippe Starck display suite kitchen

Tribeca without emphasising any one of the designers in particular. It was a case, says Hamish Guthrie, "of letting the shell do its own thing and tell its own story and then inserting more pristine elements" to project the quality and direction of the whole project. Perhaps inevitably, Philippe Starck has a certain prominence in the display suite – he is a major selling point in his first appearance in the Australian residential property market. According to the developers, Starck and the philosophy of Tribeca "go hand in hand" because Tribeca aims to be a "fusion of fashion and design and the way our living environment determines who we are." Elements of

Starck's signature appear throughout the display suite – for example, the giant, over-sized light fitting and picture frame.

In the long-desirable East Melbourne area with its parklands and proximity to the city and where the median house price is \$640,000, the Tribeca apartments will range in price from \$250,000 to over \$1 million.

Details Tribeca Apartments
T 1300 884 800
W tribecaapartments.com.au
Hecker Phelan
T (61 3) 9417 0466 F (61 3) 9417 0866
E hp@heckerphelan.com.au



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