



# BACK TO NATURE

A MELBOURNE DINING ESTABLISHMENT HAS BEEN REFURBISHED AND OPENED UP TO NATURE

If you perch on one of the outdoor tables at the Botanical Hotel, you'll notice a gap in the graceful trees that line the other side of the road. The tree that filled that gap is now a sleek dining table, and it's one of the bold highlights of the newly re-designed South Yarra restaurant in Melbourne. The 'Bot' – as it's known – has been serving well-heeled locals for decades. However, its Scandinavian look was tired and in need of a revamp. Enter WEBB+, a Melbourne-based design company.

The studio managed the building's former fit-out and was brought back by new owner, Colonial Leisure Group, to re-invent, modernise and create a standout all-day dining venue with some serious pub credentials. "The intention was for a timeless piece of design that was neither funky nor fashionable," says WEBB+ Design Director, Adrian Downes. It wasn't easy though, with problems such as a leaky roof, tricky floor plan, rigid council and internal noise issues, plus the added pressure of a tight timeframe.

Adrian's primary design response was to open up the 700m<sup>2</sup> building. "From the front door there is a clear line of sight through to the rear fireplace and conservatory area," he says. Other spaces that were

part of the refurbishment include the alfresco dining area at the entry, a café, bar and wine store to the front, and the lounge bar, conservatory and fine dining room to the rear.

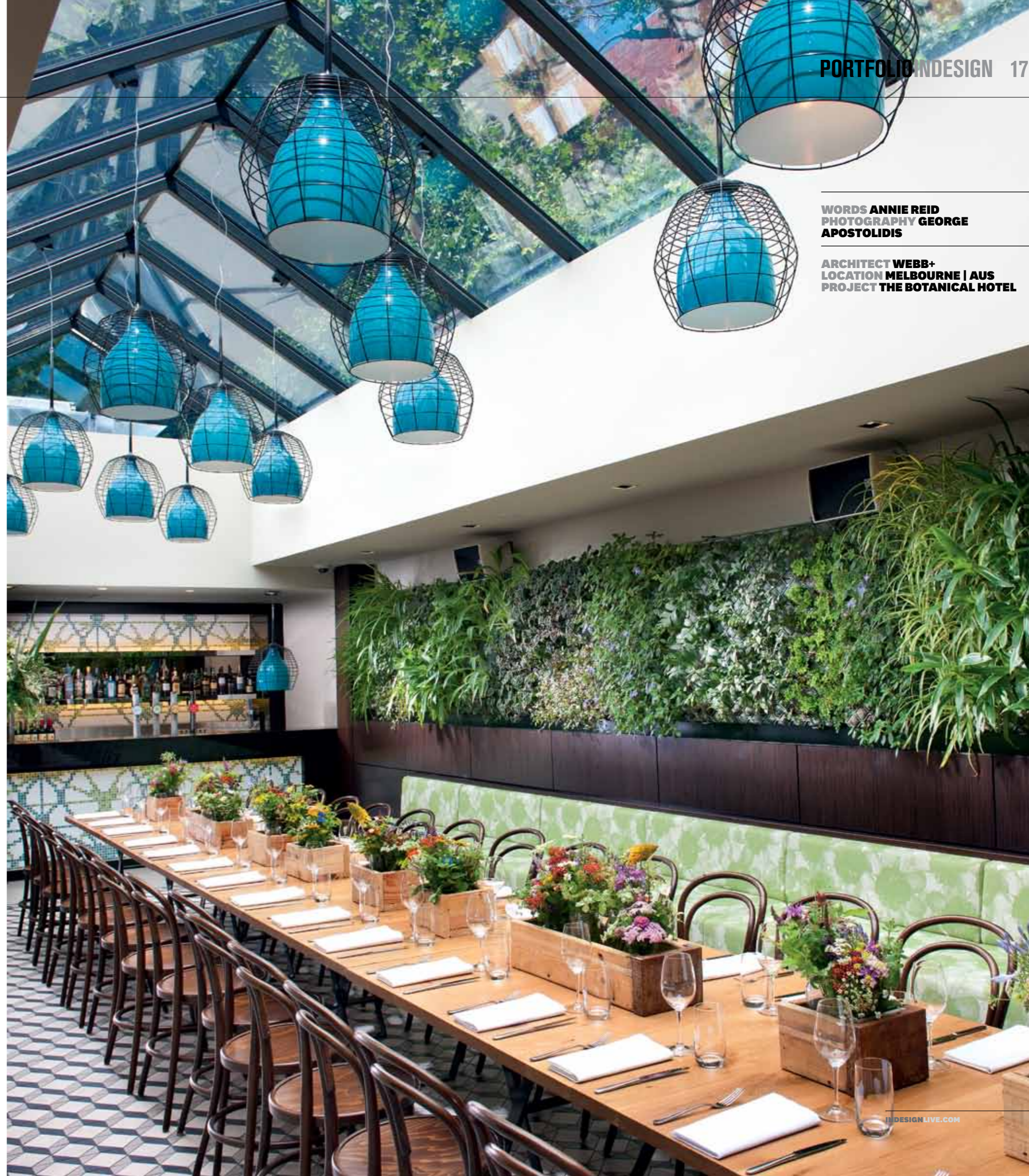
Upon entry, the front café, bar and wine store is reminiscent of a traditional French café. There is still plenty of space outside to people-watch, and inside, the Tolix chairs, deep Oak herringbone floors, existing skylight and buttoned leather banquettes by Ashwood Design create a classic, sophisticated feel.

The front area also sets the tone for the other bars and lounge spaces in The Botanical Hotel, which follow suit using a similar palette. "It's supposed to be a kind of monochromatic palette, but with little pops of rich colour," says Downes. An example is the bold splash of red that re-appears throughout in four artworks by Janenne Eaton.

Just beyond the front area, the rear bar and lounge is geared towards the more serious drinker. Lighting the way is a full-height wine display cabinet, which focuses the view to the long bar, clad in Pietra Grigio marble, and iconic wingback chairs by Tom Dixon.

At the very rear, the Archer Room is a bright conservatory with a whimsical feel. It features a large

**ABOVE** A wine display leads the way from the front café to the bar at the rear  
**RIGHT** The green wall in the Archer Room references the Royal Botanic Gardens



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LOCATION MELBOURNE | AUS  
PROJECT THE BOTANICAL HOTEL

skylight, blue 'Cage' pendant lights by Diesel for Foscarini, and a nine-metre-tall green wall, referencing the lush Royal Botanic Gardens opposite the restaurant. In the fine dining room, an earthy, soft, natural design emerges, with the custom dining table opposite the brand new kitchen, and two iconic 'Artichoke' lights that featured in the old fit-out. At night, light dances prettily across folded metal and timber screens, while chestnut leather chairs by Jordan – a nod to local design – add warm tones.

In order to create continuity and draw the large spaces together, Downes has repeated a number of finishes throughout the building. "We wanted the restaurant to divide very neatly into areas, and tried to run certain consistent materials through so it's not jarring when you walk in." The best examples are the dark timbers, offset by black steel, warm leather and geometric, French-style floor tiles, which complement the different sections in which they are used.

"It was really satisfying to see it finished," says Downes. "I think we've succeeded in opening the whole thing up and it's much more sophisticated now."

Annie Reid is a freelance writer based in Melbourne.



**ABOVE** The rear lounge features a marble-clad bar and other rich finishes

## THE BOTANICAL HOTEL

**CLIENT** Colonial Leisure Group

**ARCHITECT** WEBB+

**PROJECT TEAM** Simon Webb (Principal), Adrian Downes (Design Director), Mariana Millares (Project Architect), Matt Sullivan (Documentation Coordinator)

**CONSTRUCTION MANAGER**

Leeda Construction (Frank Rossi – Director, Dave Miller – Project Manager, Cameron Martinelli – Site Manager)

**LIGHTING DESIGN** NDY

**MECHANICAL ELECTRICAL & ACOUSTIC DESIGN** NDY

**BUDGET** \$3.5 million (including structural work, commercial kitchen and services)

**TIME TO COMPLETE** 6 months (design),

5 months (construction)

**TOTAL FLOOR AREA** 712m<sup>2</sup>

**WEBB+**

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**FURNITURE** In The Botanical Hotel Café and Bar, custom round tables, high tasting bench and circular Oak table with Caesarstone top from Jordan, and Andreu World 'Carola' chairs from Living Edge. In Dining Room and Private Dining Room, 'Maggie' chairs and stained Oak pedestal table from Jordan. In Bar and Lounge, tall pedestal dry bar, stools, tables and ottomans from Jordan, and Tom Dixon wingback chairs from dedece. In Smoking Area, table from Temperature Design, and timber drum stool from Eco Timber. In The Archer Room Conservatory, trestle tables and long timber bench with cushions from Jordan, external steel mosaic rectangular tables from Temperature Design, and 'Canasta' lounge chairs from Space Furniture. Generally throughout, Tolix 'Fauteuil' and 'Chaise A' metal chairs, 'Tabouret' metal stools, and 'Table G' all from Thonet.

**LIGHTING** In The Archer Room, Diesel for Foscarini 'Cage' lights from Space Furniture. In Back Bar and Café Bar, Tom Dixon 'Beat', 'Top' and 'Pressed Glass' lights from dedece. In Private Dining Room, custom lights by Dean Phillips. Generally throughout, refurbished original Louis Poulsen 'Artichoke' lights, and external lights from JSB Lighting.

**FINISHES** In Dining Room and Private Dining Room, carpet from Brintons Carpets. In Bar and Lounge, Tretford carpet from Gibbon Group. In Cool Rooms, epoxy floor from Sika. In Café Bar, colourback glass from Viridian. In Dining Room Service Bar and Café Bar, reconstituted stone from Caesarstone. In Café and Bar, Alfresco, Dining and Bar Lounge, timber floorboards from Eco Timber. In Alfresco, Conservatory and Smoking Area, bluestone flooring from Amalgamated Marble. In Toilet, wallpaper

from Baresque. Generally throughout, leather upholstery from Pelle Leathers. Fabric upholstery from Kvadrat Maharam. Laminates from Laminex. Mirrors from Viridian. Metal skirtings and trims from Rimex. Stone and marble from Artedomus. Tiles from Earp Brothers, Perini, National Tiles, Bisazza and Artedomus. Timber veneers from Evener.

**FIXED & FITTED** In Bathrooms, basins from Rogerseller and Caroma, tapware from Streamline, Caroma, and Enware, toilets from Reece and Caroma, and other sanitary accessories from JD MacDonald and Madinoz Architectural Hardware.

**ARTWORK** All artwork by Janenne Eaton. In Main Dining Room, *Outgo*, 2009. In Private Dining Room, *Illusions – Hardly Dangerous*, 2008. In Front Alfresco Area, *Mum*, 2006. In Lounge Bar, *Way Home*, 2007.

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