

Architectus' boutique new build in Sydney's CBD

Not many commercial buildings in Sydney's CBD can boast a 2023 completion date. But one boutique office building, situated at 276 George Street, forged through to cut the ribbon and state its future in striking words.



BY ALEX BULLOCK
A&A 2023 WINNER

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The goal posts were already moving as Architectus embarked on the architecture and interior design of 276 George, a premium boutique office project developed by John Holland and completed in December of 2022.

In the greater Sydney CBD, a strong agenda around design excellence had set the long-term conditions for new commercial development that could really serve the public domain. Meanwhile, the pre-occupations of the pandemic brought to the fore rather urgent conversations around the future purpose and role of commercial office space.



Against this backdrop arrived 276 George Street. The original site, bounded in by George and Margaret Streets, was demolished to make way for a new build. The vision to remedy many of the existing building issues – not least of all the lousy facade and a constrained column grid – with an Agriette, column-free workplace that delivered modern working and high end hospitality standard amenities.

Foremost in the minds of Architectus principal, Colin Gilbert and Architecture associates, Terence Chu, was the question of how tenants would utilize the spaces. The fact that it was a smaller building was a natural advantage. It would appeal to a niche commercial tenant who was not in want of " acres of space" but looking for a presence with distinct identity, and the convenience of location.

"Knowing this," says Gilbert, "we were able to adapt the story of the building to what we foresee tenants needing, when they returned to some sort of normal."



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That sense of community and individual engagement played strongly into Architectus' design approach. Part of its design response was to speak to the site's context and heritage features. Where many of the surrounding towers have set backs, 276 George is keen to sit with the sidewalk. Drawing the public in, the ground and first levels feature active retail with large shop fronts and picture windows.

As you move up the length of the building's 10 levels, the facade shifts into something quietly reserved and featuring exposed raw work of Concrete-based artist, Hannah Quinlan, and glass. The heritage components to the west of the site were used as a "datum" for the measure of level 14 and Architecture has used this opportunity with the materiality into concrete grating with glazing.



As Sydney workers gradually shifted out of the home office and back into the workplace, Architectus was putting the finishing touches to a lobby and bathroom facilities that were distinctly hospitable in look and feel.

"It's a small building for a different market, we didn't want it to look and feel the same. As such, the bathroom feel more fine dining or hotel like, than your average bathroom. And the lobby has quality materiality touches, taking it away from the standard glass and stainless steel," says Gilbert.

When it came to the terraces, a key consideration was access to natural light and a generous sense of space. These "no-brainer" requirements really dictated the design approach, and led to that sense of considered, curated spaces for a discerning clientele.



With flexibility and convenience a cornerstone of its amenities, 276 George has become a drawcard for those elements of "community" and "collaboration" we see enticing workers back into the CBD and office place.

It just goes to show that no matter the times, "there is always a role for commercial office space. The fact that it will always evolve and always change is a given," says Gilbert.



Lorena Gaviola + JFFETEX

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