

The Commercial Project



Bundanon Art Museum and Bridge by Kerstin Thompson Architects • Four Pillars Gin by Breathe • Ravenscar by Patterson Associates • Cubitt Street Tower by Pandolfini Architects • 15 Young Street by Richards Stanisich Whitby Collegiate by Andrew Sexton Architecture • Poho Flowers Double Bay by Akin Atelier • Lee Mathews by Fiona Lynch • Coco & Lola by Esoteriko—and more

Restaurant Botanic



by Williams Burton Leopardi

Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

Words by Bronwyn Marshall • Photography by Caroline Cameron



With a new and visionary team leading the way, Restaurant Botanic has been transformed from its former dated iteration into a desired destination of relevance. Known for having a refreshing take on fusing contemporary and heritage spaces, Williams Burton Leopardi homes in on the core story of the restaurant to define a new path.

It's a rare find to have such an established and well positioned restaurant surrounded by such bounty. Yet in its previous form, none of this rich milieu was being integrated into its experience. Located in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, the new Restaurant Botanic is given both a new purpose and a new direction, embedding it in place. While it remains as an important part of the heritage fabric of the city, opening and connecting the kitchen with the dining experience were key moves.

There's a reason the colours and tones feel subtle and calm – it was a deliberate design decision. Looking to the surrounding gardens and the natural palette, the designers bring a similar richness to the interior, making it feel like the space is an extension of the gardens. Contrasting wattle greens sit comfortably with sage and eucalyptus tones made richer combined with differing textures throughout.

Bringing his experience from time in the kitchens of Noma, Eleven Madison Park, Blue Hill and Vue de monde, new chef Justin

James's vision was to further ignite the senses. By changing the way guests interact with the food and how it is prepared, the experience is changed as well. Creating an almost stage-like arrangement, the kitchen is brought out from behind its previously closed doors and into the centre of the space, becoming its own performative piece of sorts. An arc of custom seating and benches then surround the show, allowing the preparation to become part of the consumption.

Engaging local makers and ensuring a considered layering of all spaces is a defining touch of the Williams Burton Leopardi approach. Above the main dining area, amidst the existing detailed timber fretwork, an arrangement of native plants (all collected from the garden) sits, almost floating. A similar piece awaits in the restrooms and becomes an evolving artwork installation that is constantly changing to reflect the seasons.

While the history of the heritage-listed Rotunda remains, and the 'new' feel familiar – like an extension of the old – it is the subtleties that make the experience of Restaurant Botanic unique. Under the guiding hand of Williams Burton Leopardi, the space becomes immersive and humble in its honesty.