



POWDER & THE PASSION

Bathrooms are a chance to let loose your inner aesthete.

BY Karen McCartney | PHOTOGRAPH BY Anson Smart

I always thought of the euphemistically named “powder room” as a place for ladies in the 1950s to powder their noses. But the term dates from the 18th century, when it was a closet specially designed for touching up or “powdering” your wig. These days, it’s a fancy term for a bathroom, often one in the part of the house used by guests.

While its origins are centuries old, the powder room is once again an important feature in many contemporary interiors. I’ve come to see it as a tiny jewel, an art piece in its own right that transcends its basic amenities of toilet and hand basin.

One good example is an apartment in Sydney’s Darling Point designed by Surry Hills architects Chenchow Little, which has a powder room that’s like a mini hall of mirrors. Its owners were apparently keen to show their guests multiple facets of themselves. Another is a project by Neeson Murcutt Architects, also of Sydney, in which a tiny circular space is covered in wallpaper of a print artist Del Kathryn Barton did for fashion designers Romance Was Born.

The pitch-perfect example shown at left, by Alexandra Donohoe Church of Sydney’s Decus Interiors, reflects carefully calibrated choices and, equally importantly, restraint. “We used rich tones and the visual texture

STYLING TIP:

“Dark colours don’t always enclose a space; sometimes they create the right amount of intimacy,” says Alexandra Donohoe Church.

of the marble, coupled with a layering of styles in lighting and the mirror,” says Church.

Wall sconces from American designer Kelly Wearstler have been paired with a vintage mirror from Melbourne’s Nicholas & Alistair, alongside

Artemis stone and antique tiles sourced by the client. The result has “a certain sense of tension”, Church says. The components are not intended to match, but to create an unlikely dynamism.

Her advice to the home renovator? “Don’t be shy, but don’t go out all guns blazing either. Choose judiciously and be confident.”

When creating a powder room, Sydney interior designer Greg Natale cautions that a balance needs to be made “between packing a decorative punch and planning smartly for all the requisite amenities. There’s nothing worse than a toilet seat that leaves your knees colliding with joinery.”

Natale – who knows a thing or two about the decorative possibilities of confined spaces, having designed a range of bathroom tiles for Italian company Bisazza – has recently completed a home with not one but three exquisite powder rooms, the character of each derived from an adjacent area of the house.

“The endless creative possibilities in tiling, wallpapering and lighting mean that, for some of our clients, it can be easier to make braver decisions in these areas,” he says. “That way, they don’t have to commit to something highly decorative or embellished elsewhere in the house.” ■

STYLING BY ALEXANDRA GORDON



OBJECT OF DESIRE

Sneaker aficionados will be pleased to hear that cult Japanese label Hender Scheme has finally landed in Australia. Founder Ryo Kashiwazaki is known for paying homage to classic sports brands in his shoes, which are handmade over months from fine pre-tanned leather. Hender Scheme’s take on iconic multinational sneaker brands transforms mass-market items into luxury goods. Kashiwazaki explains, “Japan in particular has this cultural imitation, and it’s quite common and established as a way of making things.”

Anna-Lisa Backlund

Hender Scheme “MIP 10” sneakers, \$1455
SORRYTHANKSILOVEYOU.COM

SHOP

Band leaders

Statement rings can be bold *and* playful.

STYLING BY Anna-Lisa Backlund



Delfina Delettrez “Marry Me Eye” ring, \$3299
POLYVORE.COM



Fendi ring, \$470
NET-A-PORTER.COM



Peter Lang “Tropica” ring, \$59
THEICONIC.COM.AU



Sarah & Sebastian “Scribble” ring, \$790
SARAHANDSEBASTIAN.COM