

Robert Mills Architect

ROBERT MILLS **MELBOURNE, VICTORIA**

The 1991-established practice of Melbourne-based architect Robert Mills works solely on residential projects, and oversees each element of design, from a building's structure to its interior design and landscaping. Mills believes the industry practice of hiring separate contractors for each element is flawed, given that each supplier is looking at the project from a different point of view, rather than a shared, central design concept. Good design, according to Mills, is purity of thought and execution, and it is this philosophy Mills and his team of 18 employees engage with and respect when working on a project.

As a practice, Robert Mills Architect continually strives to refine its approach and execution of design by actively seeking information and solutions. It is a multidisciplinary practice that works according to the belief that the best houses are born of a single design idea with all decisions made as one within it.

Mills believes contemporary Australian residential design should be sophisticated and relaxed, crafted of light and space and of materials that are durable, textural and natural in colour, so as to create a shell. The textural elements such as furniture, rugs, objects and artwork delight the senses and are a pleasure to live with. Mills notes, however, these are only part of the completion of a great home. A building must also shelter its inhabitants from sun in the summer and from cold in the winter, as well as silence the noise of the city. Within a great home, says Mills, one's family will be nurtured and their spirits raised.

The architect describes his work as handsome, in that the houses he builds and renovates stand tall and sit proudly and seamlessly within their surrounding environments. Mills respects the importance of creating a public personality for a home and private sanctuary within. A house's design does not end at the front door, according to the architect, who works regularly with Australia's top landscape architects in order to create environments that respond to the design of

the home. Mills further harmonises the internal and external by minimising the separateness of the two: he uses glazed sliding walls, which when opened create a seamless transition. Mills is convinced our pursuit of space is a balancing of the commercial and economic pressures modern life places on the size of our homes. In response, Mills' practice designs houses that utilise space carefully and create the perception of spaciousness.

Mills has considerable admiration for British, Italian and Japanese Minimalist architects John Pawson, Claudio Silvestrin and Tadao Ando, respectively, as well as Australian Glenn Murcutt, for his ability to create contextually-relevant architecture. Mills is also significantly influenced by the unadorned monasteries of Southern France and Northern Italy, particularly their use of strong, simple geometric forms. Robert Mills Architect constantly searches for ways of simplifying a building's structure. Another key design feature typical of the monasteries is the use of internal spiral staircases that lead to a monastery's spire. As a result, the spiral staircase has become a Robert Mills Architect design signature.

In line with Robert Mills Architect's holistic approach to design, the practice also handles the interior design of a home. Mill's affinity for European design means the practice regularly incorporates the imported products of Molteni, Bocci, Moroso and MDF Italia, sourced locally from Hub with showrooms in both Sydney and Melbourne.

Robert Mills Architect is committed to sustainable architecture in its reduction of a house's size, employment of sustainable materials and preference to renovate rather than demolish. Although the very nature of building inherently impacts upon the environment, Mills strives to reduce this effect by creating structures that are valued and that people will love, maintain and use for generations.



RESIDENCE 2009-built, freestanding house with music room, study, cellar and four bedrooms.

LOCATION Toorak, Victoria.

CLIENT Young family.

BRIEF The family wanted a home that would nurture them and be inspiring and uplifting to live in. The house embodies a strong street presence based on classical proportions. While it does not attempt to mimic the forms of the more historic houses surrounding it, the home sits easily within the streetscape.





PREVIOUS PAGE TossB sphere light pendants create symmetry in the dining room. The Lowe Furniture dining table is completed with Potocco chairs. **THIS PAGE** A Molteni & C sofa and ottoman and Patricia Urquiola stools fill the living space. A Conchita Carambano painting hangs on the wall. **OPPOSITE PAGE** A George Tjungurrayi painting is a focal point of the sitting room, where a B&B Italia sofa is housed.



RESIDENCE 2010-built, freestanding beach house with separate living areas and five bedrooms.

LOCATION Sorrento, Victoria.

CLIENT Young family.

BRIEF Robert Mills Architect was engaged to create a weekend beach house that could accommodate large numbers of friends and family. The first level was dedicated to sleeping quarters, the ground floor to an open-plan living space with alfresco dining and an outdoor bar. The Zen-like stillness and absence of ornamentation in the monochromatic interior creates a durable, casual space.



THIS PAGE LEFT Gandia Blasco bar stools break up the exposed concrete panel walls and honed basalt floors. **THIS PAGE ABOVE** A central stairway breaks up the living and dining spaces of the home's ground floor. **OPPOSITE PAGE** Fatboy beanbags add a casual element to the living space, contrasting the Lowe Furniture dining table. George Tjungurrayi and Makinti Napanangka art hang on the walls in the background.