



Text
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Photography
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To the cognoscenti in Melbourne, Kazari (Decorator) has long been a destination for anyone interested in contemporary and traditional Japanese and Chinese furniture, lighting, architectural features and homeware. Likewise, Kazari (Warehouse) for its Japanese textiles and unrestored furniture.

Now directors, Jo Maindonald and Robert Joyce have launched Kazari (Collector), less than a kilometre down Malvern Road from the original and iconic Kazari (Decorator). And the contrast could not be greater. Where the original Kazari was – and remains – a dark but enticing Aladdin's Cave, the new Kazari (designed by Simon Waters) glows like a lantern, thoroughly transparent to the busy road outside. The way the building dematerialises at street level is highly appropriate, given the dominant Japanese aesthetic of light, lightness and robust fragility.

Kazari is a Japanese word which connotes the transformation of the everyday into the sublime, and the transmutation of refined sensuality into heightened spiritual awareness. Hence, it can refer to the fine arts, but perhaps even more so to everyday objects which become charged with an aesthetic radiance as their functionality dissolves.

In fact, the Japanese aesthetic is an intriguing blend of the monumental and the delicate, the dynamic and the still. The façade of Kazari communicates this. Originally a 1960s commercial, brick box, architect Simon Waters has clad the façade in Alucabond (with an aubergine-coloured render) which provides the flexibility to transform the façade into a dynamic and visually surprising collage of planes. The extruding sunshade blades and entry canopy contrast with the dark windows and recessed, faceted window above the entry, while the wall above the entry is angled against the main elevation to ensure that the passing stream of cars and trams is never likely to miss seeing the building. And if the upper level suggests the monumentality of a Japanese castle, then the street level is delicate and insubstantial.

At street level, the gallery is fully transparent. An emblematic glass entry door opens on to a ramp to create a ceremonial entry. Decorative screens interrupt the view into the space from the street, but allow 'view corridors' through to the back of the gallery. Here a café, serving an appropriately eclectic mix of Asian and Western food, opens on to a sculpture court. This embodies Kazari's subtle blending of East and West with its mix of a modernist aesthetic with traditional Asian – beautifully expressed by Ashika's carved granite sculptures and water features.

The cross-cultural programme of Kazari mixes cultures as well as the contemporary and the traditional. And it is reflected in a new approach: a multi-purpose space functioning simultaneously as a gallery, showroom and café. It is a bold juxtaposition of the old and the new, East and West, equally sympathetic to a cluster of apparently competing aesthetics – but in fact connected by a unifying sensibility.

Architect Simon Waters
Creative Director/Project Manager Jo Maindonald
Interior Designer Cara Jones (shelving and display units)
Builder Graham Saian
Artisan Don Browne, EGT (counter, art tracking system, exterior gates)

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