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Etched in Stone – A Melbourne Designer's Journey of Heritage and Sustainability



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In the heart of Melbourne during COVID-19, a unique project was starting to take shape—a home designed to blend durability and elegance, embracing elements of both the owner's Chinese heritage and their current home in Australia. The owner, a property developer with family back home in China, wanted more than just a house. They were looking to create something timeless, drawing inspiration from the Chinese tradition of using stone in significant structures for their strength and permanence.

After visiting a range of showrooms, the owner was convinced that sandstone was the perfect building material for their project. They were particularly impressed by its longevity (because it is a natural material, sandstone will stand the test of time for much longer than synthetic materials) and it requires little maintenance. Furthermore, it is a very eco-friendly building material with a low carbon footprint.

Research shows that sustainable buildings designed for efficiency and durability tend to have lower long-term operational costs, primarily due to reduced repair needs and lower maintenance materials. A World Green Building Council study found that green buildings can cut operational and maintenance costs by up to 37%.

With the building material selected, the owner then shifted to finding the ideal sandstone. The owner was presented with a large variety of colours to choose from, including brown, pink, whites, creams, and gold. They leaned towards a pale colour with a consistent pattern, ultimately choosing Gosford Quarries. Each stone was carefully selected to achieve the desired look, perfectly aligning with the owner's vision.

Some intricate details, such as the fine machining and mouldings, were completed in China, the owner's home country. Stone blocks were shipped there, worked on, and returned to Melbourne for installation.

The project, which began in June 2018, faced lengthy delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 'The most challenging time was during Covid, when each construction site was limited to a maximum of five workers,' said the owner. Despite these challenges, construction continued, and the house was completed in July 2022. A standout of the home design is the feature wall, made up of 15 large pieces of Gosford Quarries sandstone creating an impressive installation. For the owner, this house was just a personal project – but it has made a lasting mark on the community in Kew.

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