

Poetica by Cox Architecture

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

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Not far from Sydney Harbour, where the air still carries the faintest whiff of the sea, hides another ode to the coast. Poetica by Cox Architecture in North Sydney is a bar and grill that is as much for dining as it is for delighting, with equal references to people, place, past and present.

The interior nods to the legacy of such storied locals as the convict-turned-boatman William 'Billy' Blue and late artist Brett Whiteley by way of natural materials, lyrical artworks and theatrical flourishes that serve as counterpoints to the muted tones. A large-scale mural by artist Kristian Flindt Hawker, which graces the eight-metre-high entry volume, summons diners into the space past a formidable wine display. As director at Cox Architecture Brooke Lloyd explains, "it's a beautiful introduction to the restaurant, emphasising the creative legacy of the area."

Poetica is true to its name. The space lilts to an elemental rhythm balanced by fire and water. At the heart of the main dining space is an open kitchen, flanked by a smorgasbord of meat, fish and wine selections. As culinary delights come to life over an open fire, the wild and unpredictable nature of the flames provides a larger-than-life experience for diners.

In many ways, the finishes and forms hold a mirror to the harbour: seafoam-toned counters and brushed oak floors respectively allude to the waves and foreshore, while diaphanous floating pendants overhead channel a flock of soaring seagulls. The coastal leitmotifs reappear in the walnut and oak furniture, tan and burnt honey upholstery, high-gloss joinery, marble surfaces, glazed tiles and brick wood grill, serving as a rustic overlay to the cement foundations.

The adjoining bar is gentle and placid, with soft, steely blue tones and copper accents steeping the space in calm. The bar basks in natural light and connects to a covered terrace that overlooks the bustling street below. And yet it exists in a realm of its own, in a slipstream removed from heightened activity.

