



# Ultimate WATERSIDE LIVING

Renato D’Ettorre explores water elements that instil a sense of relaxation and belonging.

WORDS MARGARET QUILTER



The integration of water elements is a defining feature of award-winning architect Renato D’Ettorre’s designs. Although the majority of his work is by the sea, Renato incorporates bodies of water throughout his designs to instil a sense of tranquillity that enables the owner to leave worries at the door and step into a private oasis that’s humbled by nature.

“All the houses I do feature a water element, no matter what the commission is,” Renato says. “I only use water externally, I never put water elements indoors because it has to be amongst air and sun – if you take it out of the sun it has no life.”

Commissioned to create Solis (pictured), a holiday home in the picturesque setting of Hamilton Island in sub-tropical Queensland, Renato incorporated three main bodies of water in the overall design of the home. The result, a seamless blend between the indoors and the natural surrounds, whilst also being functional.

One of the beautiful features of Solis is the rooftop pond. During the twilight hours it’s a place to retreat to, to soak up the surrounding scenery in a cooling environment. During tropical downpours, the pond creates a cascading waterfall, that when the rain eases has continuous beads of water dropping into the trough below, a sound that permeates through the stone interior and generates an unexpected magical element.

“Human beings rely on light, water and air for a sense of wellbeing,” Renato says. “When you have something that the human soul seeks, such as nature, then you bring it in.”

Depending on the orientation of the house, you have to somehow let light deep within by utilising different apertures, be it a skylight or pinholes – or in the case of many of Renato’s designs, the elimination of walls. Renato strategically plans proportional amounts of light for all rooms.

Minimal walls also play a pivotal role in the flow of air throughout the space, especially in the sub-tropical homes.



**FEATURED PROPERTIES:**  
Renato D’Ettorre Architects.  
**THIS PAGE ABOVE AND OPPOSITE:** ‘Azuris’,  
Photography by Francesca Giovanelli. **BELOW:** ‘Solis’  
Photography by Mads Mogensen.





FEATURED PROPERTY:  
Renato D'Ettorre Architects.  
THIS PAGE AND  
OPPOSITE: 'Link',  
Photography by Murray  
Fredericks.



“COASTAL houses are subjected to *extreme* weather conditions and I have a *firm* belief that once you build a house they should be *enduring* in DESIGN and *longevity*, to mellow in age with MINIMAL *maintenance*.”

RENATO D'ETTORRE



“When you’re in the tropics you have to bring the water and the lush vegetation in, so you eliminate walls,” Renato says. “The more parts of the house that can be flexible for opening and closing for privacy and climate control the better.”

The heat and humidity demands an abundance of breeze and air to move throughout the home. When combined these with the materiality used, the seaside retreats take on a character that is both expressive and evocative.

“All material is beautiful, they just need to be called upon at the right time, in the case of Solis and Azuris (pictured on previous page) concrete has been used because it keeps the interiors cool – walk bare feet in summer and you have that tactile sense of touching something cool,” says Renato. “Internally, concrete has a sheen and a softness to it, and externally it’s a rough texture so that has a language with the natural world.”

Exploring different ways to incorporate water features into architecture, Renato journeyed back to his childhood home in the mountains on the outskirts of Rome, Italy. It is here that he was originally introduced to natural springs perforating from the ground. As an adult he once again immersed himself in the architectural beauty of Rome and the way fountains were an integral part of everyday living.

Back in Sydney, Renato won his first commission in South Coogee, where his brief was to design a ‘castle by the sea’, this award-winning home set the tone for Renato’s career.

“The main thing I wanted to evoke was a sense of belonging on the edge of the coast,” says Renato. “My design objective was to build a house that responded to the elements, it had to be assertive, stand proud and had to have elements that made people stop.”

From waterside urban living to sub-tropical Queensland, Renato designs houses that complement the environment, letting go of preconceived ideas of what a home should be, but instead creating a sense of belonging and a place to retreat to that exudes relaxation from its very core.

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