



peter elliot
architecture+
urban design

mirka at tolarno hotel

location fitzroy street st kilda melbourne australia

status completed february 2007

client guy grossi, grossi florentino

photography john gollings

Tolarno gallery and restaurant was opened in 1966 by Georges and Mirka Mora. Tolarno has occupied an important part in the history of artistic and gastronomic development in Melbourne. The interior of the restaurant is perhaps best known for the whimsical colourful murals painted by Mirka Mora.

Tolarno has been transformed into Mirka at Tolarno Hotel by Guy Grossi from Grossi Florentino whose family has had a long association with the place. Guy Grossi's intention was to "bring Tolarno into a new era by building on its personality". At Guy's behest, Mirka Mora was involved from the start and she enthusiastically embraced the change.

The overall design philosophy was to somehow capture the essential qualities of Tolarno whilst effectively rebuilding the place, as new meets old. It was the front dining room, side bar and back gallery, which was the heart of Tolarno as these were the principal public rooms. The dining room was seen as the most important space with its secret worldly interior peering

onto Fitzroy Street. The side bar and gallery had been poorly altered and much work was required to retrieve them and give them a new beginning. Another essential characteristic of the venue is the central common corridor shared with the Hotel at the rear for this is like an internal street about which the various rooms cling.

"Pieces of a city accumulate to shape its story. Another part of Melbourne's tapestry has been completed with Peter Elliott's revised Tolarno. Now known as Mirka...it is open, colourful – painted with Mirka Mora's murals – and a bit quirky." Norman Day, The Age, 28 February 2007

"The deft touch of Peter Elliott has woven the past and present lives of this restaurant together. Grossi's conceptual brief was to give Mirka a new contemporary life but maintain its personality...Elliott's approach to architecture couldn't have been a better match to the brief." Judith Abell, Artichoke 22 March 2008

