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WORDS MARK SCRUBY
PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN WHEATLEY

DESIGN MATT GIBSON A+D
LOCATION MELBOURNE | AUS
PROJECT ALBERT PARK RESIDENCE

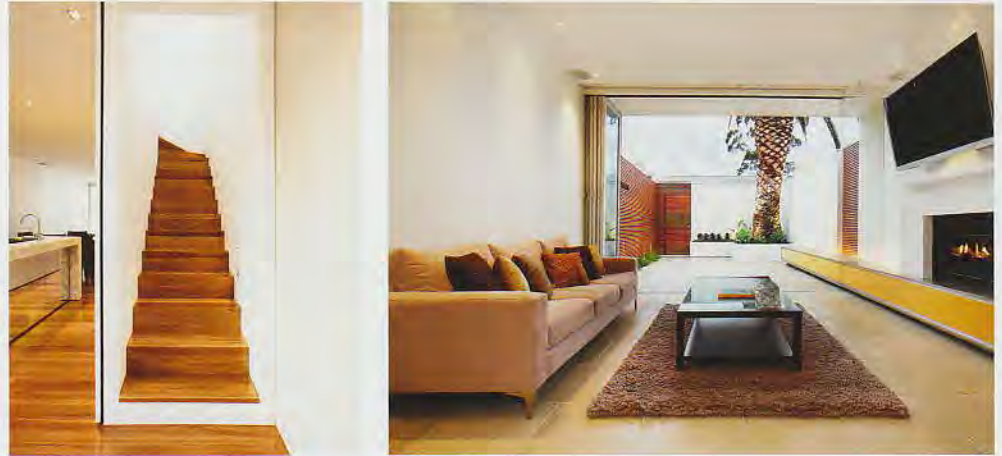
TARANTINO TERRACE

AN ADDITION TO A MELBOURNE TERRACE GOES OUTSIDE THE BOX



“Projects that defy this one-dimensional, front-to-back perception of space are rare, and that is why Melbourne designer Matt Gibson’s Albert Park Residence deserves our attention”

MARK SCRUBY



The list of constraints facing an architect renovating a single-fronted Victorian worker's cottage is almost universal: the house will be long and skinny, claustrophobic, starved of natural light and protected by heritage overlays. And so the architect's response is also invariably generic: front bedrooms are preserved; rear rabbit warrens become open-plan kitchen-dining-lounge areas; council and budget permitting, an extra bedroom and ensuite might be popped up on top. The end result is often a wonderfully liveable contemporary home – but a home which, like its predecessor, is largely defined by its train-carriage footprint. Projects that defy this one-dimensional, front-to-back perception of space are rare, and that is why Melbourne designer Matt Gibson's Albert Park Residence deserves our attention.

Admittedly, Gibson has conformed to a couple of chapters from the architectural narrative described above – the two front bedrooms have been retained and a third bedroom with ensuite has been added as an upper level – but his story quickly spins off, Tarantino-like, on a fantastic tangent. Working with an extraordinarily long block, Gibson strived to use every one of its 43 metres to best effect. At every step, the occupant's attention is pulled in a different direction and their perception of space is challenged and manipulated.

The lovingly restored entry hallway, once the backbone of the original cottage, projects out of the back of the remaining 19th Century structure and steps down into a neat, timber-decked courtyard. The hallway's internal brick wall dissolves into glazed panels that slide away completely and seamlessly, as Melbourne's weather allows, leaving a covered walkway and an expanded outdoor space. The opposite site boundary dissolves too, but in a different way – full-height mirrors reflect plants, sky, clouds and people, and

re-cast the outdoor room as a small tear in the tightly woven inner-urban fabric. At this point, the residential space seems to push sideways in defiance of its narrow confines.

Gibson's key move, however, lies beyond the courtyard – about halfway down the block, it becomes apparent that this alteration and addition is really an alteration and new pavilion. What's more, the new double-storey building isn't just a box in the backyard – it's the new heart of the home. The ground level, which is accessed via the covered walkway, opens completely at both ends, thanks to more operable glass panels. Fresh air and cooling breezes wash through the kitchen and living areas, and natural light is supplied in abundance. Simple strategies are employed throughout to further confuse notions of inside and out: materials are combined in non-traditional ways (for example, Symonite-clad kitchen joinery is paired with Carrara marble benchtops) and floor coverings are deliberately misaligned with functional zones (timber decking flows

PREVIOUS PAGE The back elevation defies its narrow footprint.

OPPOSITE Mirrors create the illusion of space.

ABOVE LEFT Stair detail.

ABOVE RIGHT The narrow living room seems wide.



from the covered walkway into the internal courtyard, and limestone paving overlaps the boundary between the living area and the rear courtyard).

Upstairs, the spatial tricks continue. A slot window in the ensuite, just above the level of the basins, doubles as a splashback and provides a tightly framed view of the mirror-clad internal courtyard below. The adjacent study nook looks down into the void above the stairway. A balcony to the bedroom looks out over neighbouring yards.

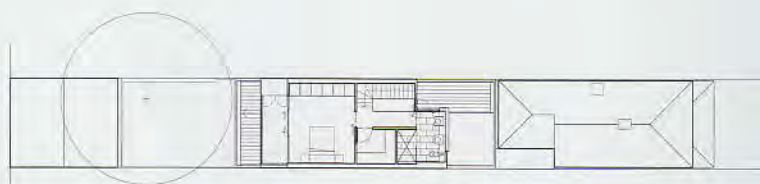
The new pavilion is unashamedly contemporary, with a sleek, modernist bent, but Gibson has inserted some well-considered details that connect it to the old cottage. Perhaps most notable of these is the colour-matching of the Victorian 'cricket bat' entry door to a vibrant seam of yellow 2-pac polyurethane that runs along the vertical face of a banquette. Behind the pavilion, a larger second courtyard terminates at the existing garage – the inner-suburban vernacular of house/yard/shed is seemingly reasserted, but with the Hills hoist supplanted by a shiny new piece of architecture.

Gibson sites the late Sri Lankan architect, Geoffrey Bawa as a major influence on his design here. While it might be hard to imagine Bawa squeezing his trademark pavilions and courtyards into a slender inner-Melbourne block, Gibson's claim somehow rings true. Perhaps it's because almost every internal space in the house opens to the outdoors. This isn't quite tropical South Asia, but it's not very Albert Park either.

Mark Scruby is a freelance architecture and design writer and previous Editor of Houses.

LEFT Exterior front is white with lively yellow touches.

BELOW Ground floor and first floor plans.



ALBERT PARK HOUSE

DESIGNER Matt Gibson A+D

MAIN CONTRACTOR MMP Constructions

ENGINEER S&L Design

JOINERY Anton

LIGHTING CONSULTANT Matt Gibson A+D

BUDGET \$460,000

TOTAL FLOOR AREA 220m²

TIME TO COMPLETE DESIGN 18 months, including 9 months (construct)

MATT GIBSON A+D

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LIGHTING Various Masson and Famco designer fittings

FLOORING Study and bedroom carpets 'Sussex, Taupe' from Godfrey Hirst. Ensuite

Marmi 'Bianco' porcelain tiles from City Tiler. Living/terrace 'Limestone' concrete pavers from Rietmans. Kitchen/dining floorboards Blackbutt with clear satin polyurethane finish. Courtyard Mirbau decking boards.

FINISHES Quartz composite benchtop from Stone Italiana. Kitchen front Symonite-veneered mdf. Courtyard wall in 'Beaux-Beige' paint from Dulux. Internal wall in 'Antique White USA' paint from Dulux.

ROOFING Flat metal deck 'Woodland Grey' from Colorbond.

HEATING Open wood fireplace 'YooSH' from Jetmaster. Atlantic's panel heaters.

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