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Blurring the Lines
Nature in architecture

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Star Flight

A modest extension grows into a family sanctuary where architecture and landscaping encourage blue sky thinking.

LOCATION **MEEANJIN COUNTRY / BRISBANE / QUEENSLAND**

TEXT **MONIQUE KAWECKI** / PHOTOGRAPHY **CHRISTOPHER FREDERICK JONES**

The charming Queensland workers cottage has been transformed into a spacious two-floor home with a multi-functional split-level kitchen and lounge space connecting seamlessly with a transformed garden outside.

opposite Adding on 70 extra square meterage of space, the renovation by KOA has elevated the home and garden as an environment to live and thrive in.

top The structure of the deck was built together with the existing form, expanding it to create the new multi-purpose split-level spaces.

bottom Living here for 10 years prior to the renovation, the family occupying the home planted a handful of native trees which Sad Landscaping retained including frangipani and traveller's palms. Sad also created a concrete seating area as another outdoor room, in addition to new garden rooms using landform.

opposite Different views in Quadrant House enable different perspectives both inside and outside. KGA's design work facilitates this psychological connection to the garden and the sky, intentionally for bigger-picture thinking.

• A resourceful renovation to a family home in Brisbane has brought a reconnection to nature and the bigger-picture thinking it enables through its clever architecture and passive design. Gazing at the sky outdoors while sitting indoors is not often comfortably possible in city or suburban living, yet Kieron Gait Architects (KGA) founder Kieron Gait understands its importance and subconscious impact on inhabitants' wellbeing.

Originally a Queensland worker's cottage, the charming yet modest three bedroom, one bathroom house, has been recreated into a spacious four bedroom, two bathroom, two floor home with a multi-functional split level kitchen and lounge space connecting seamlessly with a transformed garden outside. Adding on an extra 70 square metres of space, the 18 month renovation completed this year has elevated the home as an environment to live and thrive in. "A lot of the work we try to do is about having those psychological connections to garden, to sky," Kieron explains. "To have that release when gazing up and seeing the changes of the day happen, which you didn't get in this house before."

Titled Quadrant House, different views enable different perspectives both inside and outside. Two quadrants – a soaring ceiling profile and second-floor skylight and ensuite windows – all look into the sky, while the lower quadrants enable a telescopic view into the foliage of the garden on an upslope.

Queensland's environment – sticky, humid days and often thunderstorms and rain at night – is classic tropical Australia. Working mainly on bespoke residential and interiors projects in Queensland thus far, KGA's expertise is in the context of this climate and his clients benefit greatly. Not only from his innate knowledge, but also his passion for supporting local economy and landscape in efforts such as opting to use Queensland timber in his projects. Being resourceful with what they had, KGA detailed all the interiors for Quadrant House, selecting brass handrails and durable timber such as Australian blackbutt in solid timber and plywood from Big River Group. Using the structure of the deck, KGA built together with the existing form, expanding it to create the new multi-purpose split-level spaces. >

KGA's knowledge of the unique Queensland climate is pivotal to their projects, supporting local economy and landscape opting to use Queensland and Australian timbers. For Quadrant House, Australian Blackbutt in solid timber and plywood from Big River Group 'Armourply' (sustainably peeled from the log) was selected.

The only new structure and footings were the two posts to the garden edge. The rest of the extension sits on the pre-existing deck structure. The existing kitchen was extended, utilising the same timber throughout for discreet cabinetry that both conceals the TV in the lounge and creates additional storage. The living room connects to the ground and the external concrete terrace leads into the garden where another 'room' can be experienced under the tree canopies. There are multiple ways KGA's design brings the outdoors in and vice versa, with even the dining space bifold window and its deep sill acting as additional outdoor seating on the edge of the building. Living here for 10 years prior to the renovation, the family occupying the home planted a handful of native trees which grew over the decade, but it was Stuart Bull of Sod Landscaping and Design that brought the outdoor area to life. Working with KGA on a number of projects, Sod embraces natural habitat and ecological assets while retaining any existing natives. Their brief was multi-tiered: to enclose the concrete seating area as an outdoor room, create additional garden rooms using landform, plant selection and layout, manage overland flow and drainage from neighbouring properties and sloping rear yard, and improve privacy from neighbours.

Sod used grading, soil mounding, permeable paving and a natural, meandering rock creekbed to achieve the division of spaces and water management goals. Planting native violet and dichondra were the main groundcovers to help reduce weed invasion and improve moisture retention (along with a thick layer of cypress mulch). Lilypily was used for screening along with vines and Turfstone for part of the paving. Some advanced natives, such as the blackbutt *(Eucalyptus Pilularis)* and flowering gum (*Corymbia ficifolia*) were existing in the garden, along with triangle palm (*Dypsis decaryi)* and traveller's palm (*Ravenala madagascariensis)*.

Already the garden and home are lovingly well-worn, the sign of good design achieving its intended purpose to evolve naturally over decades to come. •

kierongait.com.au / sod.net.au