HOUSES®

AUSTRALIAN RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

ISSUE 88 – $11.95

PICTURE PERFECT
Rooms that frame the view

PEOPLE:
THE SMART DESIGN STUDIO
Refined homes with luxury and style

PRODUCTS:
FLOORING & HOMEWARES
Creating your ultimate space

REVISITED:
PHILLIP ISLAND BEACH HOUSE
A Denton Corker Marshall classic

PROJECT N°

03

Gordon Park RESIDENCE *by* Kieron Gait Architects

• BRISBANE, QLD •

A new pavilion attached to the rear of a postwar house in suburban Brisbane gives the owners a series of interlocking, yet varied spaces for living.

Words by Margie Fraser
Photography by Christopher Frederick Jones

Claiming terrain is a consistent theme in contemporary suburbia. The atavistic urge to get down and dirty in the garden is compelling, and often at odds with the planning arrangements of older housing stock. This postwar house in a sleepy, middle-class stretch of Brisbane's northern suburbs stands primly to attention, neatly wedged within a row of neighbouring houses of matching height and scale. Like good soldiers, the homes all square off equidistantly from one another and from the street boundary. The military precision was, until recently, carried through to the back decks attached at a later date, which march up and down the length of the backyards, each looking upon the others.

Kieron Gait Architects was briefed to extend the small, seventy-square-metre original home to accommodate a young family of four. The long, skinny site offers a deep parcel of green at the rear. The backyard sits in a neighbourly community of shared garden gates and circulation paths crisscrossing one another's yards. Trampolines, pools, swings and vegetable patches are readily shared. A small park opposite in the street's median strip is another meeting place for local children.

The original house, raised on stumps and separated from the garden by a long unwieldy flight of stairs, was much more about refuge than prospect. Essentially four small rooms in a box, it is now aptly serving as the family's sleeping and bathing quarters, where retreat, privacy and shadowy light are appropriate conditions. "We loved the original house and the way we used every part of it. Nothing was dormant," says the owner. "That idea has been extended into the new house too, with every part loved and used."

In the brief for the new work, Kieron asked the owners to think of "a puzzle of spaces rather than what the house might look like." "It was a really nice part of the process," says the owner. "We sat down and discussed our aspirations for the coming years – our kids, what we like doing."

01 An outdoor room is defined by a gesturally dramatic overhang.

02

03

02 The rear extension is a series of generous platforms that hover just above ground level.

03 The glazed walls of the kitchen peel away to form a "carved out shell of wall and roof."

With refuge well taken care of in the original section, Kieron redressed the balance by providing ample prospect in the new pavilion. Large openings extrude from the original house, loosening the constriction into a series of generous platforms hovering just above ground level. The solid, almost buried spaces of the original undercroft give way to light-filled rooms that push out into the garden. The peel-away walls of glazing enveloping interior spaces resolve into a mere carved out shell of wall and roof that partially protects the outdoor room – a crisp, chiselled overhang that is gesturally dramatic but materially low-key.

"It's a way of reintroducing the house to the garden," says Kieron of his plan. "Pushing the floor into the yard allows northern light into the kitchen and living spaces and means that these rooms aren't shaded by the next-door property."

The house has reconfigured the landscape into a series of overlapping ledges that fluidly connect and interlock with the original spaces. "The floor plan allows for different experiences," explains Kieron. "Your engagement can be personal or more open. Differing window types and long and short garden views also help create either enclosure or openness."

Extra air space under the generous overhang is delegated to an upper-level deck that is the children's playroom. It looks over the main outdoor room, providing an all-weather play zone and infantile bolthole when grass is not an option.

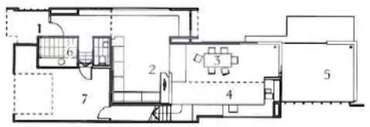
The interfolding built landscape is also evident in the interior ceiling, with its folding planes that delineate specific areas within the open floor plan. The low bulkhead over the kitchen lifts and folds into a deep trough of a lightwell and connects to a higher plane over the lounge. Joinery is likewise a series of folding elements in uniform silver ash. Deference to the layering is adopted in the white "skins" that layer the walls of the external sitting space. Fibrous cement sheeting and slats wrap up the lofty wall of the outside room, feathering the edges.

Bringing light into the interior was paramount. The front door is set into the facade of the original dark undercroft. On entry, a low wall of joinery supports a long glazed panel that looks into the side garden along the boundary. It is a nice moment. The eye is then drawn to the large picture window and window seat at the end of the joinery corridor, which frames a lofty view of the rear garden and sky. "The main living space is really two rooms with lots of moments," says Kieron. Lots of moments is an apt descriptor of this clever crafting of light and levels within a small site.

04 The floor plan allows for different experiences within the house – from personal to more open.

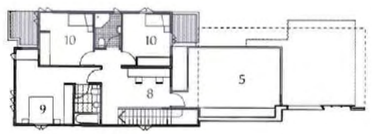
05 The ceiling is a series of folding planes that delineate specific areas within the open floor plan.

1 Entry
2 Living
3 Dining
4 Kitchen
5 Deck
6 Laundry
7 Garage
8 Study
9 Main bedroom
10 Bedroom



Ground floor 1:400

0 5 m



First floor 1:400

06 An upper-level deck contained within the generous roof overhang forms an all-weather playroom.

Architect
Kieron Gait Architects
139 Fifth Avenue
Balmoral Qld 4171
+61 7 3399 5446
kieron@kierongait.com.au
www.kierongait.com.au

Practice profile
A small practice undertaking residential projects in South East Queensland.

Project team
Kieron Gait

Builder
Owner builder

Consultants
Engineer: NJA Consulting
Landscaping: Owner

Products
Roofing: Lysaght Custom Orb sheeting, Zincalume
External walls: James Hardie HardiePanel, painted
Internal walls: Plasterboard, painted Dulux 'Whisper White'
Windows and doors: Duce New Guinea rosewood windows and doors; Viridian ComfortPlus low-e glass; Skydome skylight
Flooring: Boral blackbutt timber flooring, finished with 'Bona' Traffic – matt; concrete, DryTreat Stainproof finish; Regupol rubber; spotted gum decking
Lighting: T5 fluorescent battens
Kitchen: Silver ash veneer joinery; stainless steel benchtops; Bosch dishwasher; existing appliances

Floor area
405 m² site
204 m² floor incl. upper deck

Time schedule
Design, documentation: 9 months
Construction: 9 months