

# cubes

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# considering context

## THE HIGHGATE HILL RESIDENCE BY RICHARD KIRK ARCHITECTS WORKS AROUND ITS SITE'S COMPLEXITIES.

Text contribution by Richard Kirk Architects and adapted by Rossara Jamil | Photography by Patrick Bingham Hall & Scott Burrows



**Dornoch** Terrace, one of the oldest ridgeline roads in Brisbane, stands tall above the city, overlooking the bright lights of the central business district. The topography is one of steep grounds, making for a space that is rich in flora both native and exotic to the locale. Located on this heavily sloping site is the Highgate Hill House, a three-storey home conceptualised by architecture firm Richard Kirk Architects. The Brisbane-based architecture firm is not new to building residential houses on the ridge, but it is the Highgate Hill House that has won frequent mention in the architecture scene.

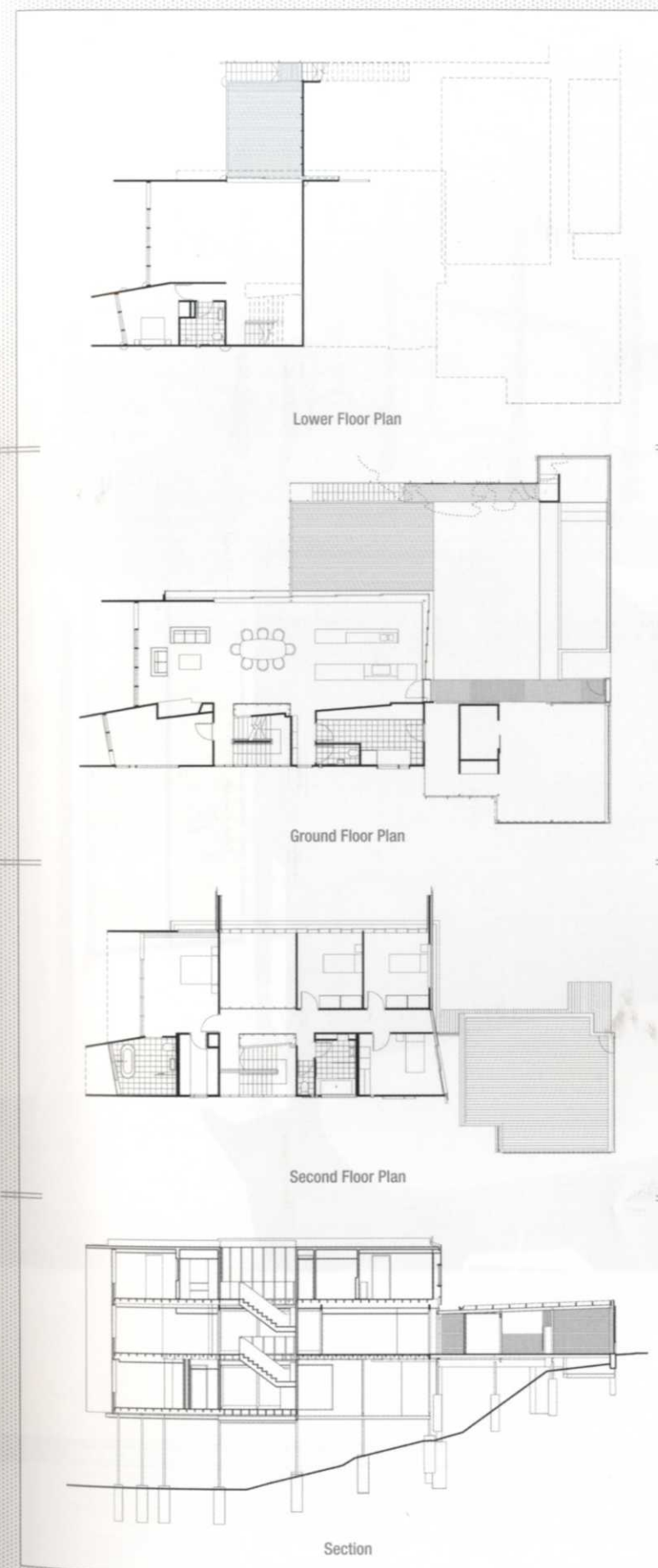
Located on a south facing ravine adjacent to Dornoch Terrace, the steep site offers challenges that few architects would take on. The client had also wanted a space that connects to an outdoor ground plane despite the steepness of the site. At the same time, the rectangular site offers unparalleled beauty, as it sits within lush verdant greenery that provides potential for a structure that blends the exterior and interior in a seamless manner.

Given the unique qualities of the site, principal design architect Richard Kirk then drew up a plan that showcases a different facet on each side of the building. This can be defined by two distinct identities, one that reveals a single floating volume on the northern and eastern sides of the building, and a tall and lofty character on the southern and western sides.

THIS PAGE: The middle level features voids and openings that blend the interior and exterior OPPOSITE: One sees a lofty structure from one side, and a compact one from another



PAGE: The southern side of the house reveals all its three levels

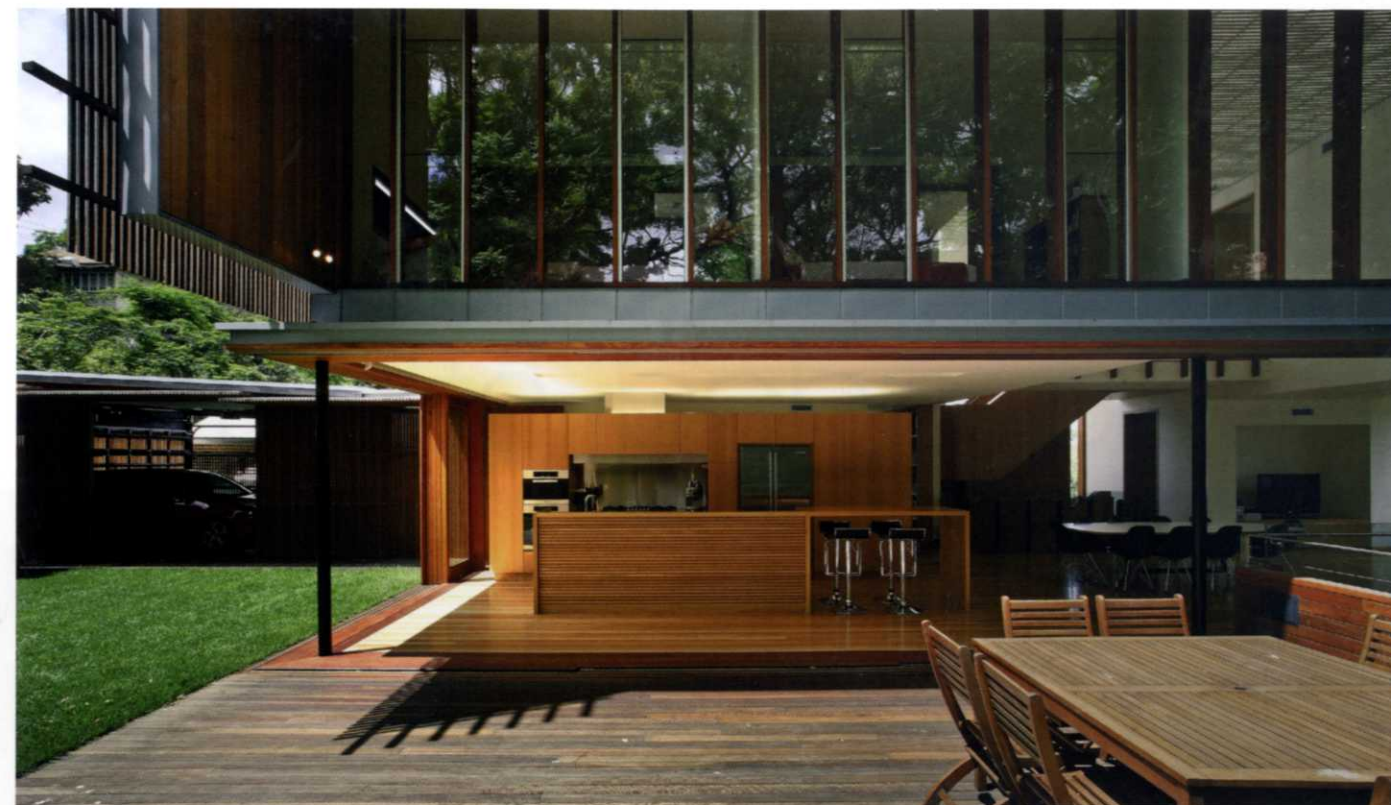


Towards the north and east, the aforementioned single-volume floating structure seems to perch precariously atop fine steel pins, presenting an interesting juxtaposition of volume and void. From the street, the floating structure appears as a single volume given its protective veil of fine timber strips. From the north however, it presents itself as a protective canopy that hovers over the open spaces below.

Concurring with the more intimate spaces that occupy this end of the house, the materials and detailing used here are deliberately fine and can be appreciated on a smaller scale. The upper levels of the northern wall are sheathed in glass that has been punctuated with vertical timber mullions. This allows the interior to open up to the landscape where a large tree stands astride the house, filtering sunlight into the interior. On the lower floor, an openness towards the interior is also seen, with the internal floor plates opening up completely to the outdoor spaces that consist of a series of floating platforms. This seamless transition from interior to exterior is further compounded when fully stackable sliding glazed timber doors are pushed aside and the two spaces are allowed to meld into each other.



OPPOSITE: From the dining area, one can see the bridge that separates the bedroom area into two sections OPPOSITE: Living spaces within the interior bleeds towards the exterior



Inside, the house has been organised neatly. The ground level is where the media centre is, while tucked at the side is a guest room, where guests staying over are rendered privacy of space.

The heart of the home where most of the interaction occurs is really the middle level. Here are the living and dining spaces, and where one steps into the house from the street level. From the outside, as one enters the dining area, the space burgeons in volume, putting emphasis on the double-height space. From here, one can see the bridge that links the stairs, and separates the bedroom area into two sections.

In the scheme of things, Kirk had approached the design of the house with several factors in mind. Striving to accentuate all the site has to offer, he also developed a home that is made for practical living while keeping in mind the privacy required for the respective members in the household. But most of all, it stands as a response to the variegated context of its site. ■

Architect: Richard Kirk Architect  
Project Team: Richard Kirk, Kieron Gait, Andrew Drummond  
Structural Engineer: Tod Consulting  
Hydraulic Engineer: NDY  
Builder: Charlie Woodward Builder