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SPRING 14

Eco House.

The Highgate Hill Residence is a study in site-responsive design. Delicately responding to its steep, hillside site, it absorbs views and breezes without taking away from the surrounding streetscape.

Designed by Richard Kirk Architects, and constructed between 2005 and 2007, The Residence is located adjacent to one Brisbane's oldest ridgeline roads, Dornoch Terrace.

Richard Kirk acknowledges the dramatic fall across the site as the most challenging part of the design process. However, this allowed him to play with the element of surprise. From the street, the structure appears as a two-storey house, without giving a clue as to the topography which lies beneath it. Not until stepping onto the property do you have any idea of the third level and the view that awaits.

Although the house extends over three storeys, a strong connection to the landscape is maintained throughout the site. One side of the house nestles into the hill, giving close encounters with luscious subtropical vegetation, while the top level projects toward sweeping views on the other side. An inviting lawn and lap pool extend off the ground floor, reinforcing a strong connection between exterior and interior.

A certain lightness is maintained throughout the building. The upper levels project effortlessly, propped up on 'steel pins', protecting the floors below. A veil-like façade covers most of the exterior. Made from timber batons, it gives the surreal effect of filtered light through a forest's canopy, evoking the feeling of a nest up in the trees.

Kirk describes Brisbane's climate as the most benign, or livable, climate in the world. Therefore, he reasons that a well-designed building in this region is one that simply tempers the climate. Comfort can be found sitting under a tree throughout most of the year, and this is ultimately

what defines quintessential South East Queensland design. A house should feel open, welcoming the outside in while simultaneously allowing for a style of living that is not unnecessarily restrained between the rigidity of four walls.

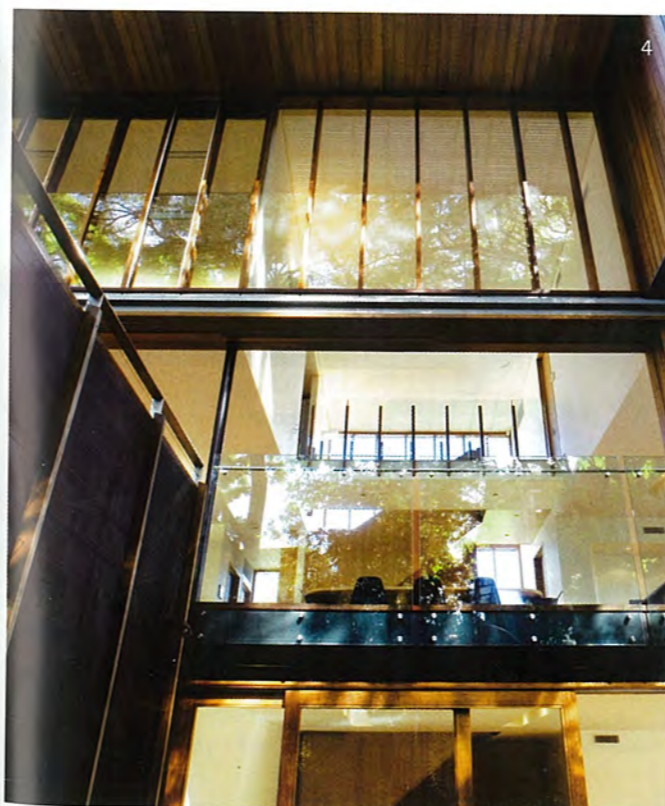
The Highgate Hill residence is testament to this theory. A full bank of sliding glass doors on the lower level fills the house with light and allows the occupants to open the house right up to the outdoors. This emphasis on generously proportioned external openings and magnificent floating platforms of timber decking help to create a house that is perfect for the local climate.

Thoughtful design plays on the integration between levels. A mezzanine walkway floats between rooms on the upper level and is visible from the floor below. Similarly, the design of the staircase is not only structurally innovative, but acts as a sculptural element, twisting subtly to provide access to all levels. These design elements, along with the expanses of glass openings, act as vehicles for light to be pulled down through the whole building. This thoughtful, modern architectural design marries beautifully with the natural environment around it. Kirk has created a residence that is not only beautiful, but perfect for Brisbane living.

More images can be viewed at our online magazine – www.indulgemagazine.net

BY ALICE LINDLEY





1. The middle level featuring the living and dining areas 2. Illuminated by night 3. Open plan living (image by Jon Linkins) 4. Outside aesthetic 5. Street view (image by Jon Linkins)
Images by Patrick Bingham-Hall