

Richard Kirk Architect

Highgate Hill Residence

Brisbane, Australia

Photographs: contributed by Richard Kirk Architects

The Highgate Hill Residence, by Richard Kirk, is located on a south facing ravine adjacent to one of Brisbane's oldest ridgeline roads – Dornoch Terrace. The steepness of the rectangular site has resulted in a verdant and mature landscape consisting of a mixture of native and exotic flora, which created the opportunity to place the house within a rich landscape environment.

As a result of the steepness of the site and the desire to connect the house to an outdoor ground plane, the house adopts two distinct identities – to the north (landscape) and east (street) sides the house appears as a diminutive floating single level volume hovering on fine steel pins, while to the south and west the vertical and monumental character of the three level residence is revealed.

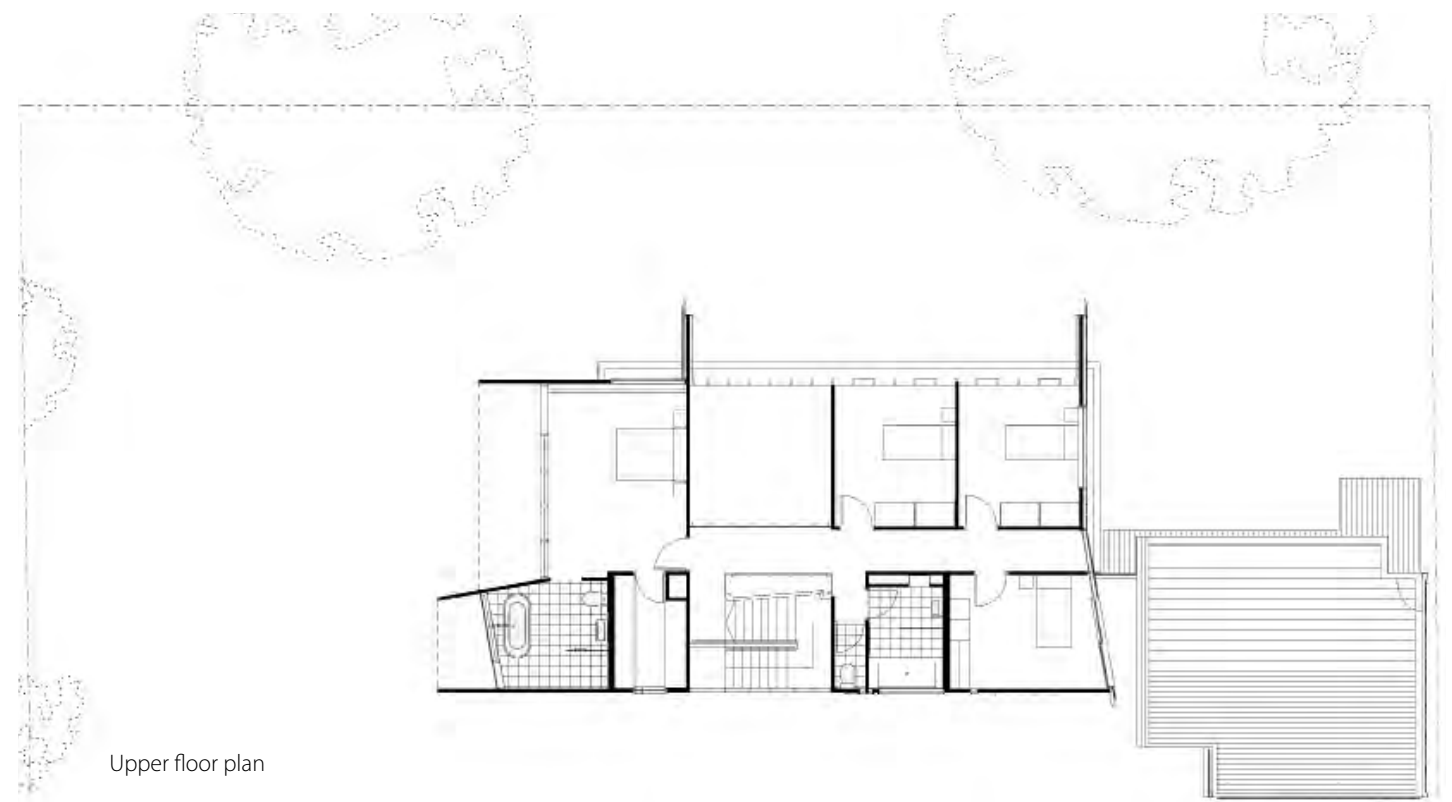
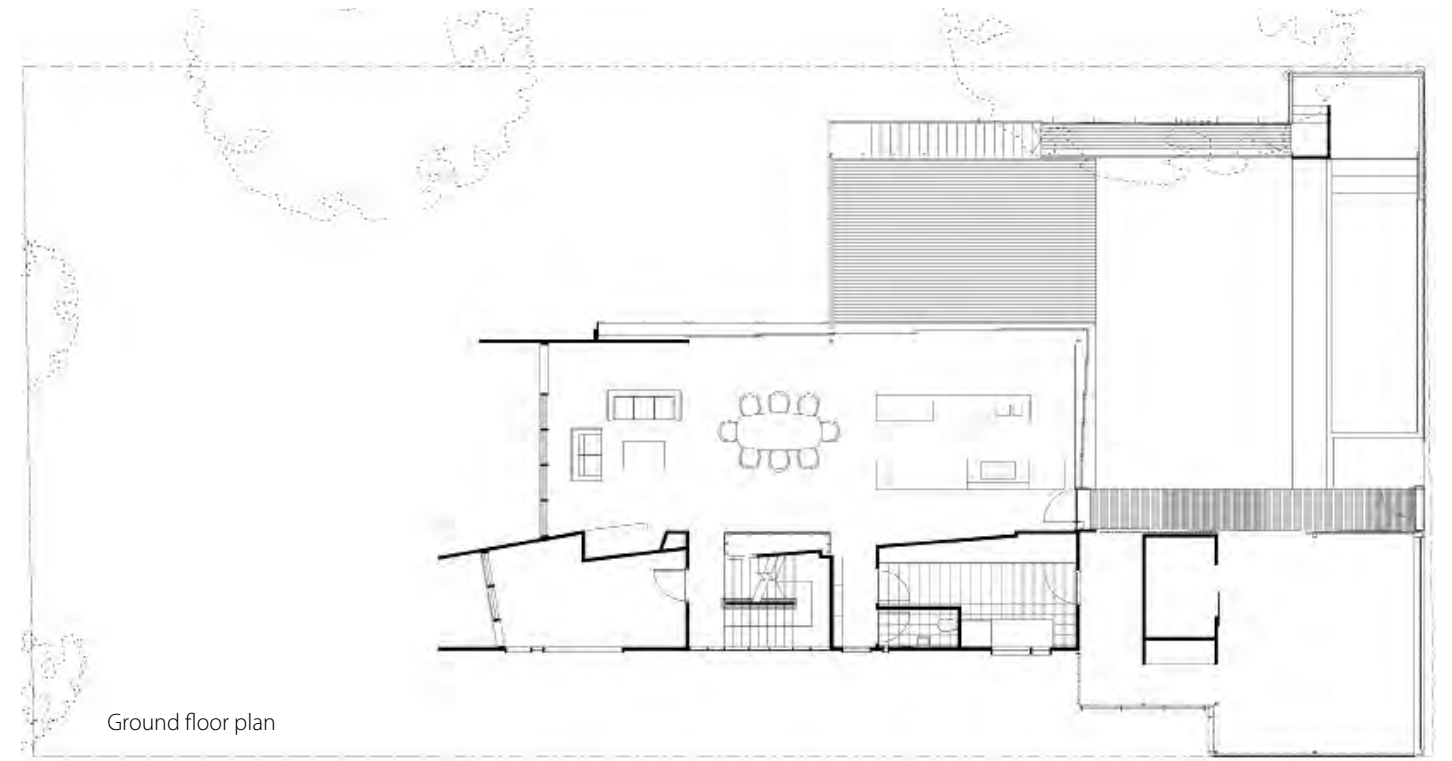
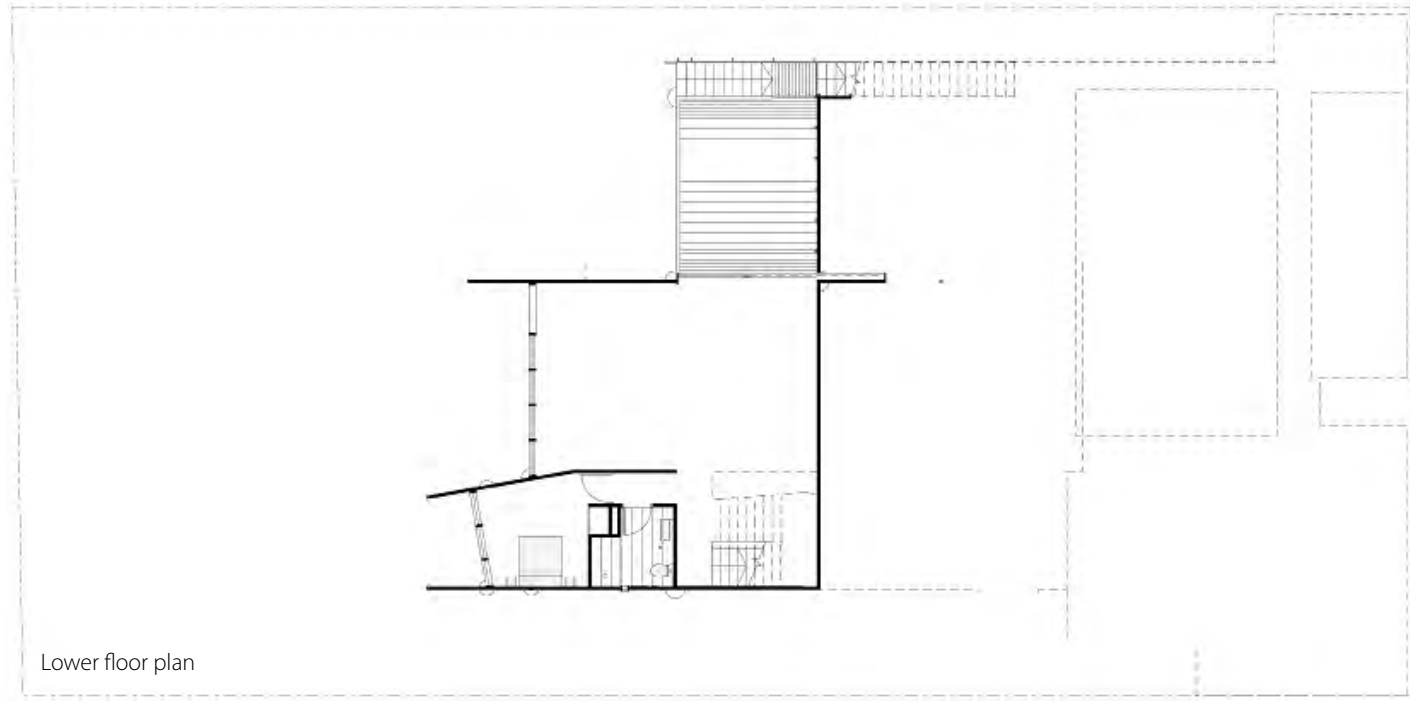
The rectangular form of the house is organized over three levels with the middle level containing living and dining spaces and also the entrance from the street. The upper level contains all the bedrooms and a void that is located over the dining area. The lower level contains a guest room and a media space. The void within the house acts not only as a spatial device to orient and extenuate the verticality of the trees outside, but also separates the bedrooms of the parents and children. The stair is an important organizational element between the levels and is treated as a sculptural object that twists slightly within the void to allow its form to link all levels.

To the north and east, the living level embraces the landscape from under the protective canopy of the upper level. In these areas where the building is more intimate, the materials and detailing are deliberately fine and delicate. Fine vertical timber members screen the building's upper level from the street providing a public façade that is read as a series of layers laid over the building's mass. The northern façade on the upper level has glazed vertical timber mullions which open the interior to the landscape and the northern light filtered through the tree canopy. To integrate the landscape with the living spaces on the middle level, the external openings are of a significant scale so that the interior opens up completely to the outdoor spaces that consist of a series of floating platforms. To celebrate the transition from interior to exterior, the east and north-facing walls open completely via a series of stacking sliding glazed timber panels.

In response to the dominance of the landscape, the house is entirely clad in timber using glazed timber façade systems. The species of wood used for each orientation have been selected for their weathering and durability properties.

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