

RICHARD KIRK ARCHITECT

‘With each project, we work to make evocative places and buildings that are memorable and clearly legible in terms of how they are spatially organised and constructed . . .’

Brisbane-based architect Richard Kirk studied under Brit Andresen and Peter O’Gorman at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, graduating with first class honours in 1991. After spending several years working for Lindsay and Kerry Clare at Buderim on the Sunshine Coast, he established his own practice, Richard Kirk Architect (RKA), in 1995. Like the Clares, Kirk’s impressive body of work demonstrates his respect for craftsmanship — particularly in his use of timber, although the heroic forms and visual tone of his buildings also show his admiration for the work of twentieth-century European architects such as Carlo Scarpa or Alvaro Siza.





RKA now employs 15 staff who work across a broad range of projects — from detached suburban houses and adaptations and extensions to character Queenslanders, to multi-residential buildings within mixed-use developments, educational buildings and specialist commercial structures. The firm also undertakes master planning and urban, interior and landscape design.

Of primary concern to RKA is the role that well-made buildings play in the communities and environments they serve. Community and youth housing projects and public education buildings have been developed alongside high-value private commissions and mixed-use transit-oriented developments.

The diversity of purpose and function of RKA's projects does not mean that they have a pluralist aesthetic. On the contrary, the practice has developed a robust design sensibility that sees RKA's work characterised by an almost sculptural monumentality. The development of a 'family' of detailing and material use across all projects lends the firm's buildings a significant degree of visual sophistication, as well as recognisable authorship.

Dekkers Residence (2006)
Photograph: Jon Linkins



Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School

Site area: 3974 m²
Gross building area: 1484 m²
Location: Acacia Ridge, Brisbane
Completed 2004 (Stage one)

The Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School (or Murri School, as it is more widely known), located in the southern Brisbane suburb of Acacia Ridge, is one of the few Indigenous-owned and operated schools in Australia. Stage one, completed by Richard Kirk Architect in 2004, is the first of a five-stage master plan proposed to be realised over a ten-year period. It comprises four separate buildings: two general learning buildings for students in years one to five, a kitchen and amenities building, and an arts and science facility.

The site was previously a state-owned public school that comprised a collection of older timber-framed two-level buildings, the earliest of which was constructed in the 1930s. A substantial fire and the subsequent destruction of one of the large timber buildings in 2001 was the catalyst for the project and provided the opportunity to completely reconsider the future of the school environment and its built form.

Indigenous students remain among the most educationally disadvantaged in Australia. Part of the philosophy underpinning the Murri School is to address issues surrounding this disadvantage. The project to redevelop the school's facilities was a rare opportunity to respond to these issues in built form.

The new buildings are well grounded and provide a sense of openness and transparency. Over time, the site planning, building forms, materials and details will work in conjunction to give the school its own identity as an important landmark facility for the area's Indigenous community.

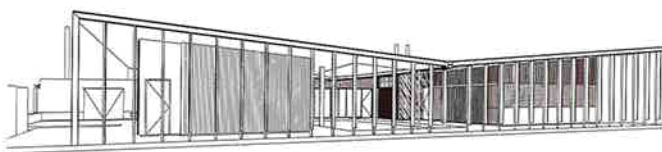


View towards one of the two
general learning buildings
from the central landscaped
area
Photograph: Jon Linkins

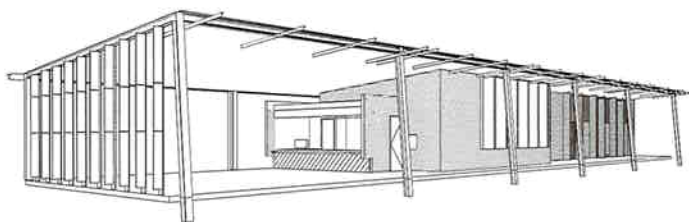
GENERAL LEARNING BUILDING



ARTS AND SCIENCE BUILDING

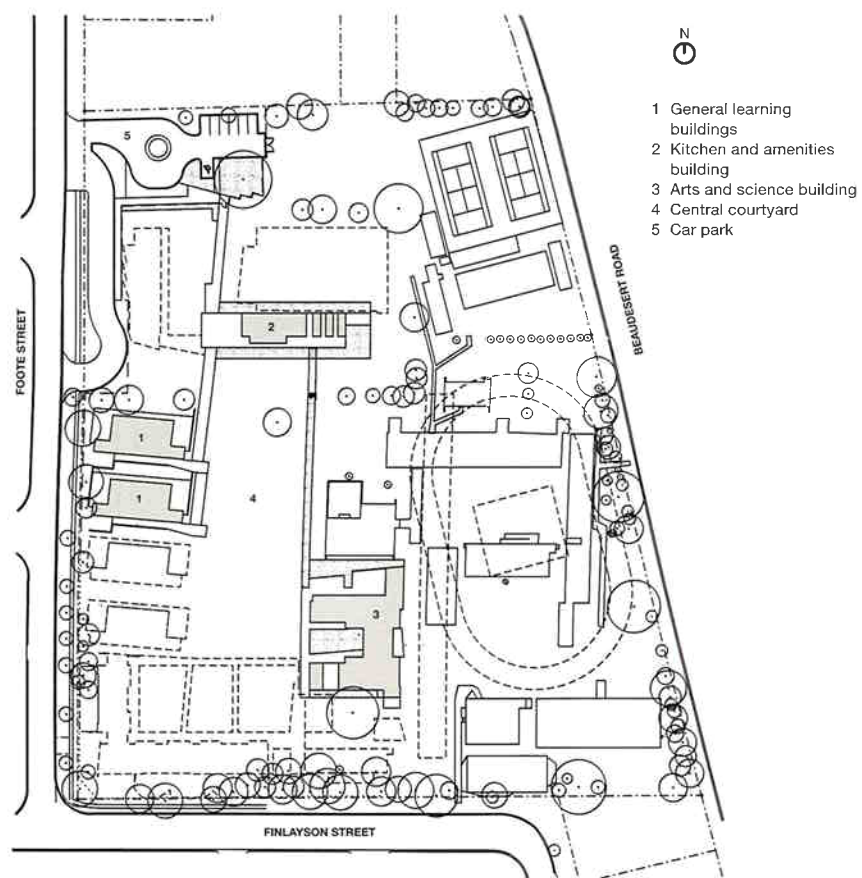


KITCHEN AND AMENITIES BUILDING



‘[W]e wanted the school to demonstrate the core cultural values of the school and its relationship to the culture it is endeavouring to sustain and promote.’

SITE PLAN





1 & 2 Views of the kitchen and amenities building

3 A timber colonnade, covered with a butterfly roof, marks the western perimeter of the arts and science building

4 Covered outdoor areas are used as teaching spaces
Photographs: Jon Linkins





Cutting Edge

Site area: 2172 m²
Gross floor area: 3750 m²
Location: West End, Brisbane
Completed 2004

The Cutting Edge studio is a 4500-square-metre film and television post-production facility located on the Brisbane River with frontage to Davies Park in West End. The four-level building contains a wide range of work spaces including staff offices, audio rooms and booths, studio spaces, multimedia and visual effects suites, a theatre for 60 people, and a large staff restaurant on the top level with an external lawn and roof terrace.

The area of South Brisbane and West End in which **Cutting Edge** is situated was once dominated by light industry, with warehouses and rowing sheds lining this stretch of the Brisbane River. Only in the past 10 to 20 years has the potential afforded by the area's proximity to the city been recognised by property developers, and the precinct is being radically reshaped. Many residential developments offer luxury apartments with extensive river views. The location of **Cutting Edge** — a technology-driven commercial enterprise that serves the entertainment industry — in the midst of this inner city area indicates how integral such business is to contemporary life, and also exemplifies the vastly different social and economic circumstances which now determine the built landscape of the inner city.

The building's design responds to the site by addressing its largely landscaped setting. The building is glazed for views and natural light on the river- and street-facing elevations. Most glazed areas are protected by external screening, and motorised steel blinds on the riverfront elevation automatically change angle and open or close according to the time of day.

In addition to dealing with a diverse functional brief — the varying design requirements of editing suites, sound recording studios and meeting rooms — the interior also needed an inherent degree of flexibility to enable it to change along with future advances in technology and media types. In response to this requirement all servicing is exposed to allow ease of modification and retrofitting.

1 Jane Street elevation

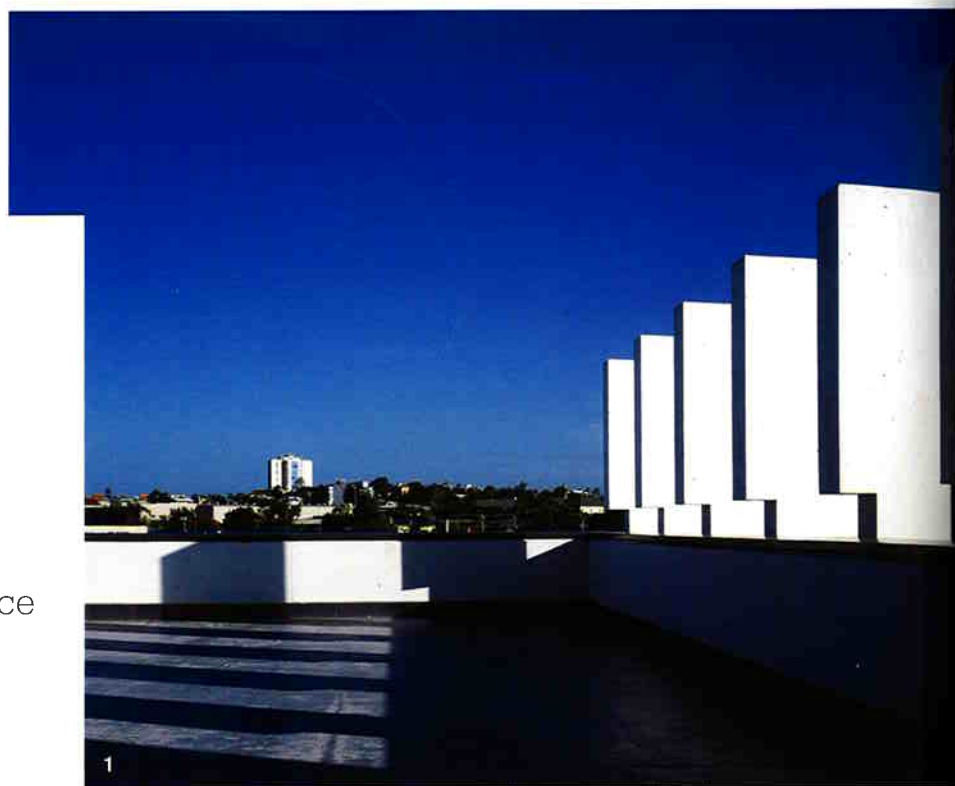
2 The roof and soffit zinc planes fold down and float over the building's concrete base

Photographs: Jon Linkins



'There is a faith here in a kind of regional modernism that can accept the context of climate and local architectural idiom as a base for thinking rather than an ideology to be propagated. What appears as modelling of the exterior form of the building is in fact driven by a holistic logic of organization, structure, spatial experience and lighting conditions.'¹

¹ John Macarthur, 'Sweet whiteness', *Architecture Australia*, July–August 2004, <<http://www.archmedia.com.au>>, viewed 10 February 2008.



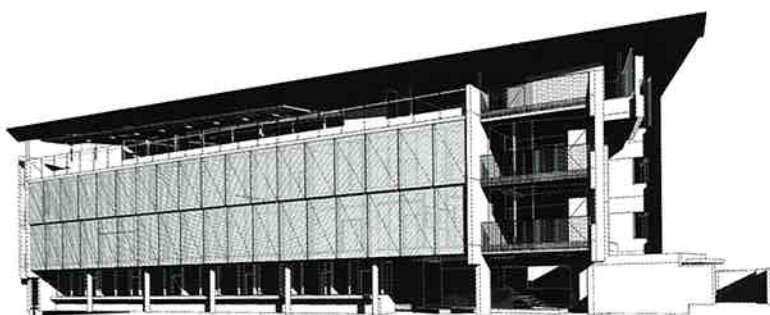


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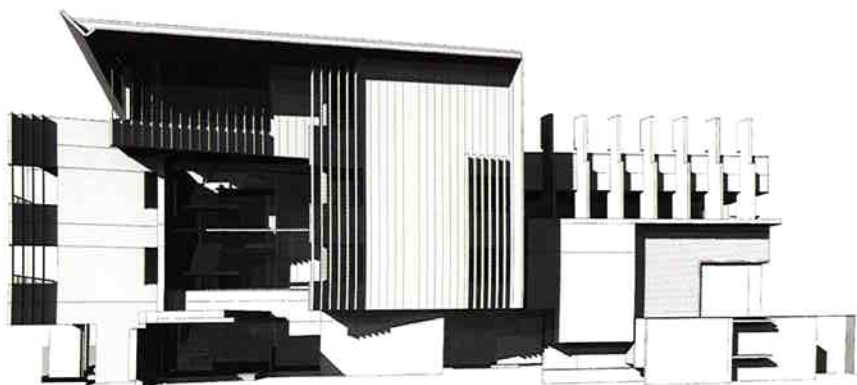


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NORTH-WEST ELEVATION



SOUTH-WEST ELEVATION



1 Views from roof terrace across West End. Vertical precast concrete blades continue above the parapet, protecting office spaces from the low setting sun while enabling continued views to the park opposite

2 All spaces are linked by a four-storey void — with both stair and lift for circulation — which includes the reception area on the ground floor

3 The rooftop staff restaurant and outdoor entertainment area with river views

4 & 5 The four-level building has a two-storey wall of steel blinds on the north-western elevation, which open and close according to the angle of the sun

Photographs: Jon Linkins



1

1 Steel plate reinforces the strong geometric line of the roof

2 At the rear of the garden, the roof steps down to become the back wall

Photography: Jon Linkins

NORTH ELEVATION





Dekkers Residence

Site area: 665 m²
Gross floor area: 350 m²
Location: Wilston, Brisbane
Completed 2006

The Dekkers Residence project involved the addition of a largely free-standing structure to an original 1930s residence located in one of the older inner-city suburbs of Brisbane. This unorthodox 'extension' incorporates three children's bedrooms, a playroom, and a large living and dining space and kitchen. A stairwell connects to the old building and marks the transition from the relatively small-scaled traditional Queensland house to a substantial living pavilion in the back garden.

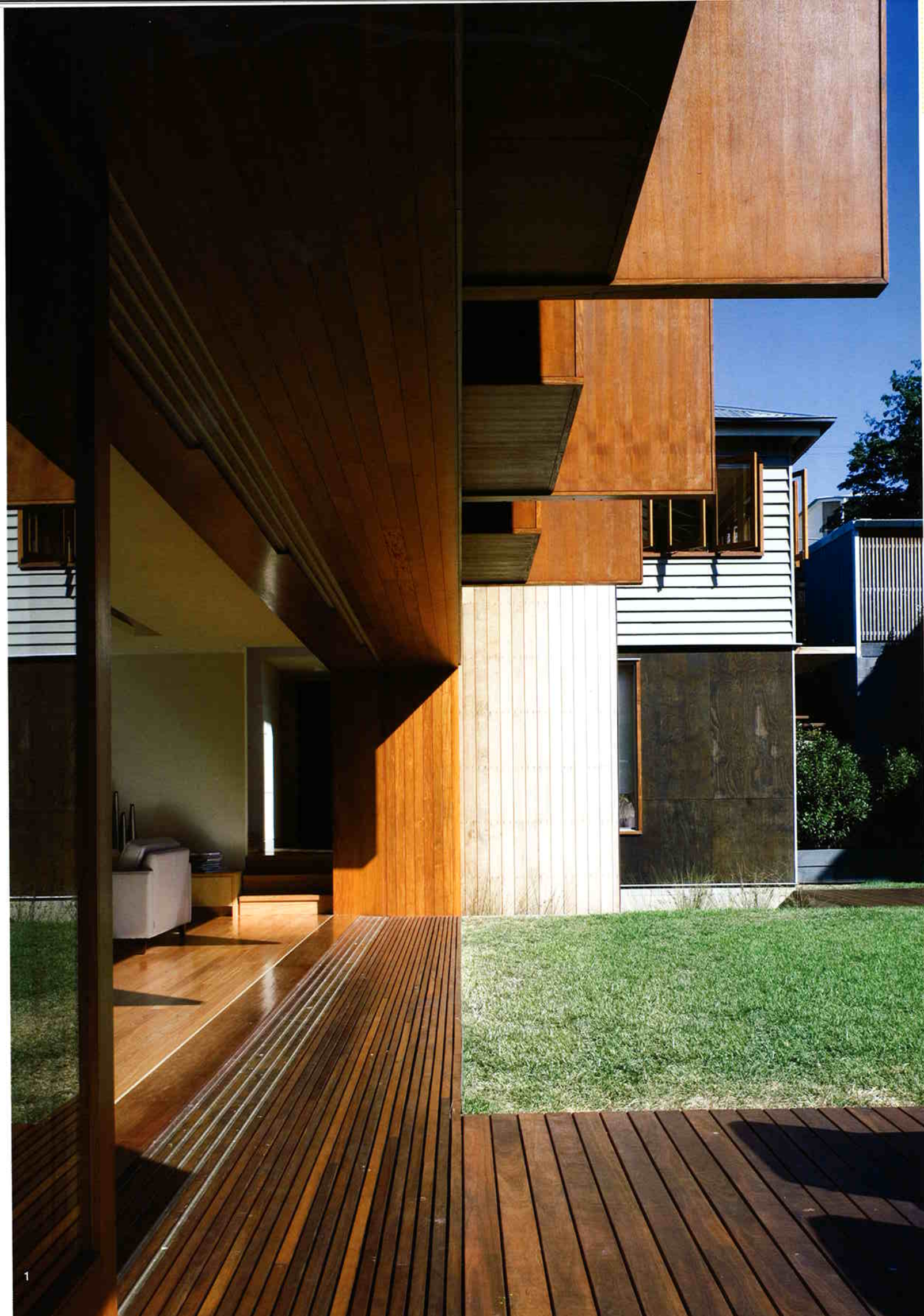
The original house was stripped back to its core by removing all of the additions that had been made over time, allowing its formal qualities and the manner in which it engages with the street to be retained. Its internal spaces were reconfigured to include a more formal living area, the main bedroom space and a study, although there was little physical intervention into the structure of the building itself.

The new building is treated as a pavilion and is placed in the existing garden space at the rear of the site, which has an east-west axis. All spaces in the new building have a northerly outlook and a strong visual connection with the surrounding garden. The northern facade is presented as a piece of timber joinery; teak, Western red cedar and New Guinea rosewood, contained under a dramatic roof line, wrap downwards to form the walls. This facade addresses the garden space, which becomes an outside 'room' edged by the pool, deck and reed bed. The living space has an uninterrupted ten-metre-wide opening, with fully retractable sliding doors, and the threshold is flush with the lawn, allowing a seamless visual and physical transition from inside to out. The functional differentiation of the various glazing systems — sliding doors and series of casement windows — articulates the main building form.

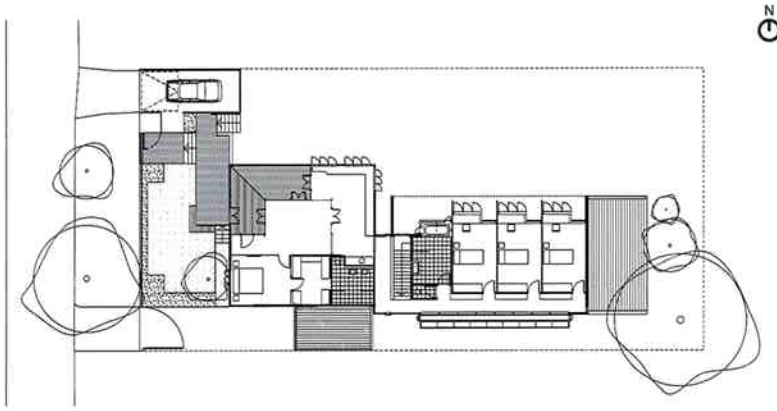
The folding walls and soffits are clad in Western red cedar, intended to slowly weather to a silver-grey colour, and are edged with steel plate. Beneath the roof, the protected bedroom walls are clad in teak veneer, treated so that they will maintain their rich colour and figuring. These materials will allow the building to age within the surrounding landscape. The combination of the boldly geometric building form and the varied hues of the timber cladding seems oppositional, yet the resultant building possesses both grandeur and warmth, creating a memorable setting for family and social life.



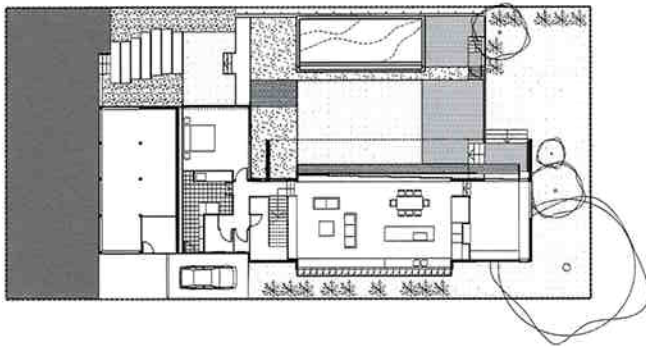
Dekkers Residence



UPPER FLOOR PLAN



LOWER FLOOR PLAN



1 The seamless transition from inside to outside is made more dramatic by the ability to retract all sliding doors to create an uninterrupted ten-metre-wide threshold

2 The addition at the rear of the site, glimpsed from inside the front boundary

3 Casement windows run the length of the living area

4 Street elevation, in which a new garage and entry adds a contemporary element to the traditional frontage

Photographs: Jon Linkins



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Highgate Hill Residence

Site area: 821 m²
Gross floor area: 420 m²
Location: Highgate Hill, Brisbane
Completed 2007

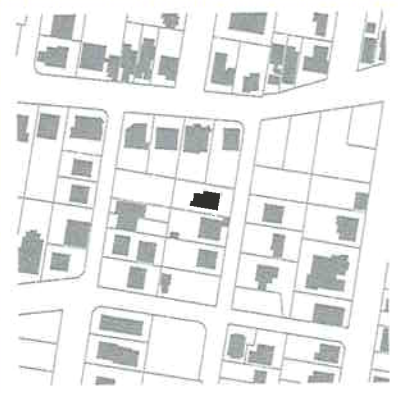
Highgate Hill Residence is located on a south-facing ravine adjacent to one of Brisbane's oldest ridge line roads. The steepness of the rectangular site has resulted in a verdant and mature landscape consisting of a mixture of native and exotic plants, providing Richard Kirk Architect with the opportunity to place the house within a richly vegetated landscape.

In response to the dominance of the landscape, the house is clad in timber or has glazed facades with timber mullions. Each timber type is selected to age in response to its orientation and weathering conditions. Like the **Dekkers Residence**, over time this will turn from red and brown to silver and grey.

The steepness of the site, and a desire to connect the house to an outdoor ground plane, has resulted in a house with two distinct identities: from the northern and eastern aspects (from the garden and street respectively) it is a diminutive, floating, single-level volume hovering over fine steel pins. From southern and western aspects (which are distant views from across the ravine) the vertical and monumental character of what is in fact a tall three-level residence is revealed.

The upper level contains all the bedrooms and a void that is located over the dining area. The middle level comprises living and dining spaces and also the point of entry from the street. A series of constructed platforms at this level supports a lawn, timber decking and swimming pool, extending the living area outdoors in a seamless transition. The lower level contains a guest room and a media space.



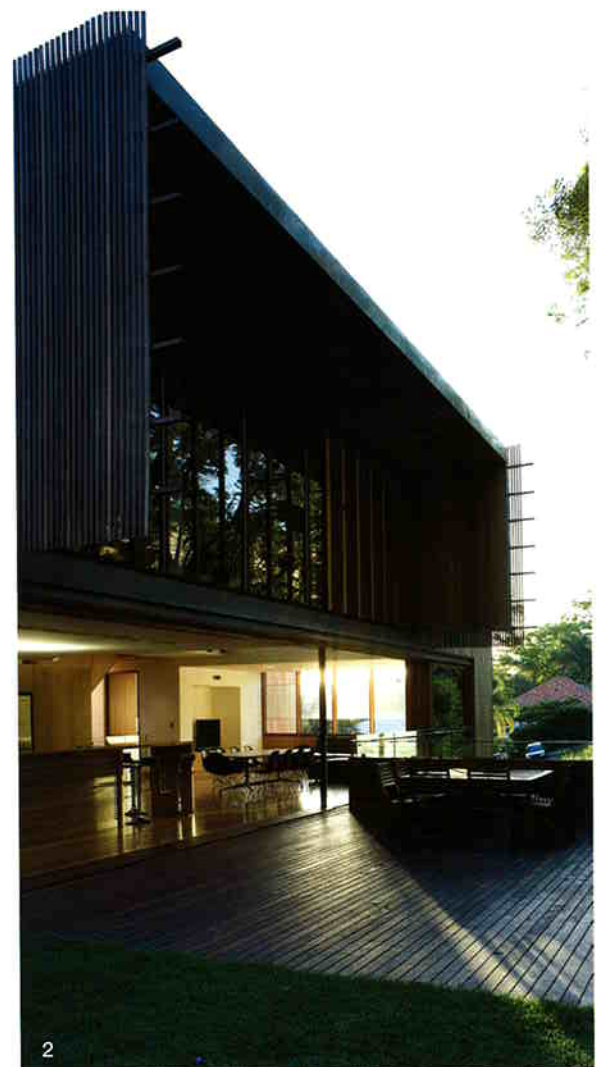


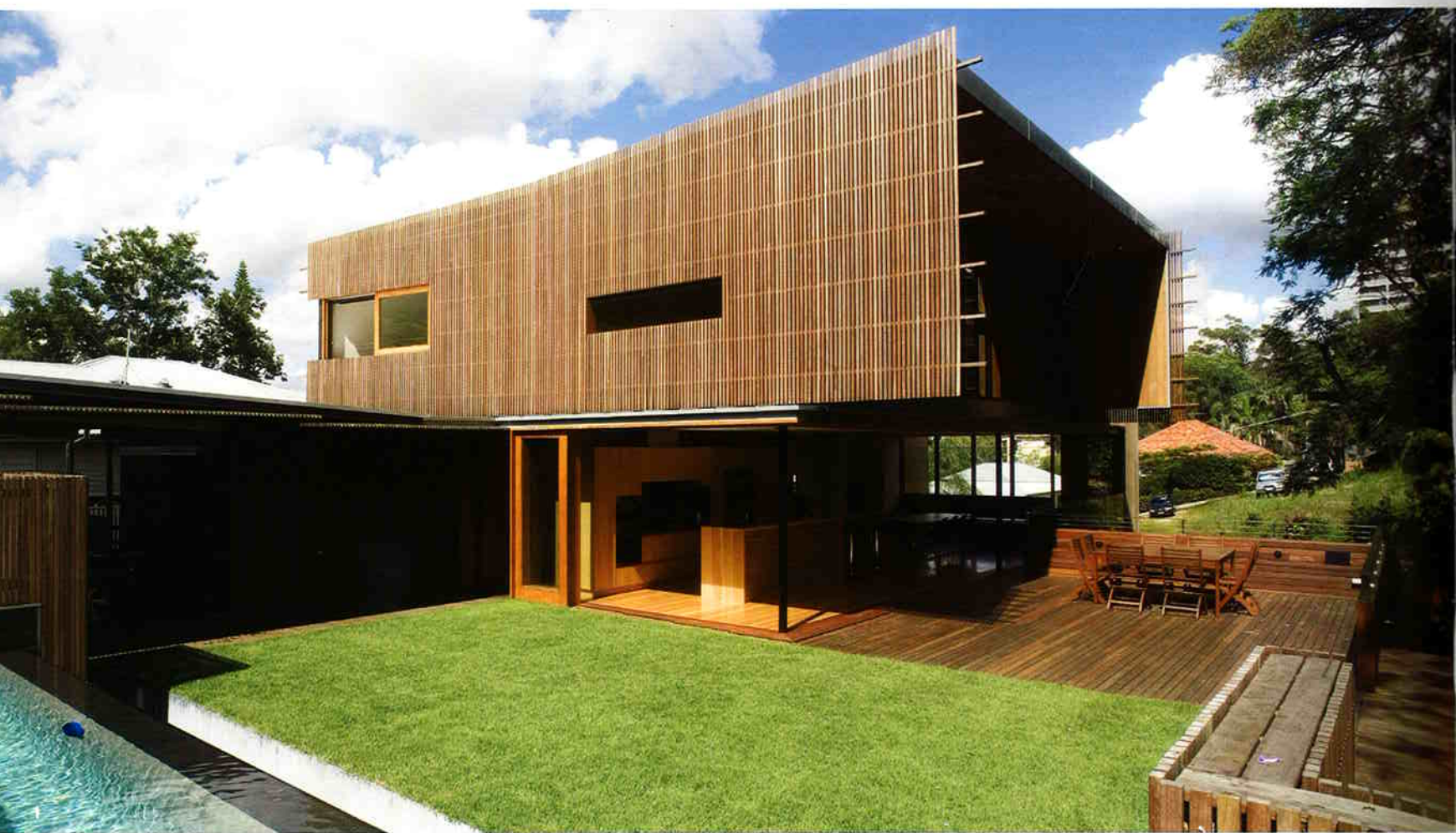
Highgate Hill Residence



1 Fine vertical timber battens screen the building's upper level on the street side, providing a public facade of a veil of timber screens that work as a series of layers laid over the building volume

2 The northern facade, featuring glazed vertical timber mullions on the upper level
Photographs: Jon Linkins



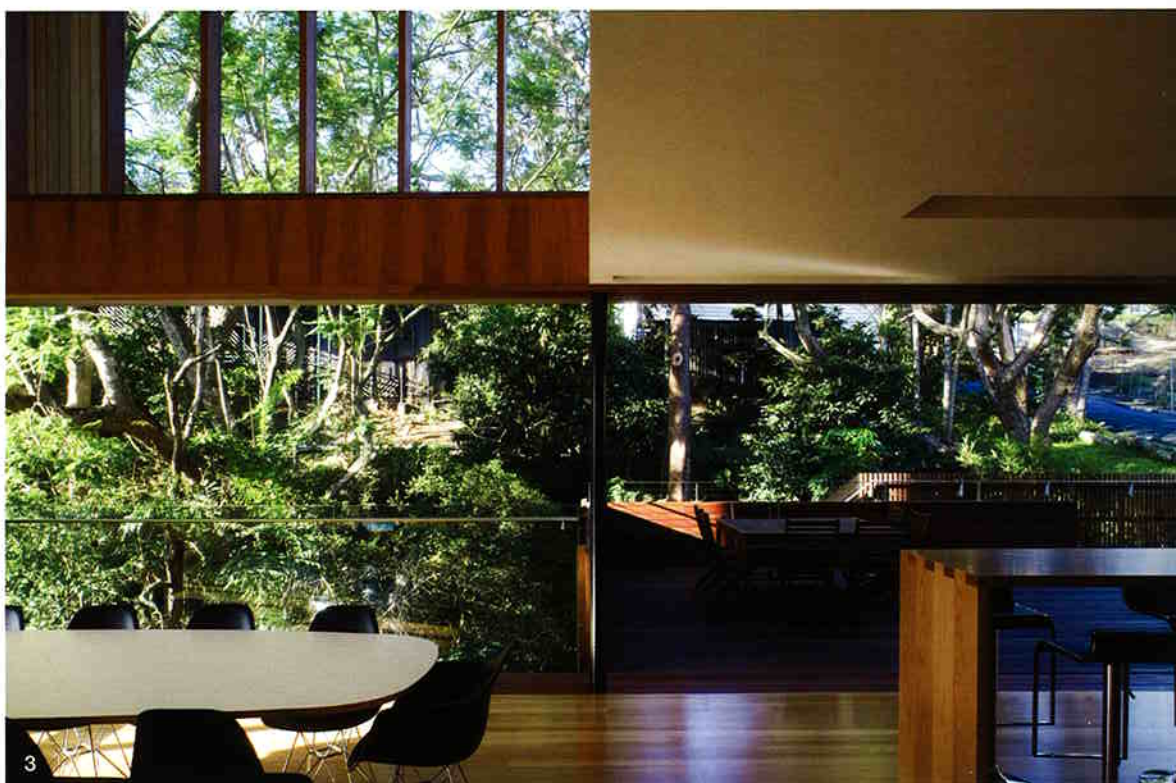


1 Large-scale openings on the middle level integrate the landscape with the living spaces

2 The stair is an important organisational reference between the levels, and is treated as a sculptural element that twists slightly within its own void, allowing its form to visually link all levels

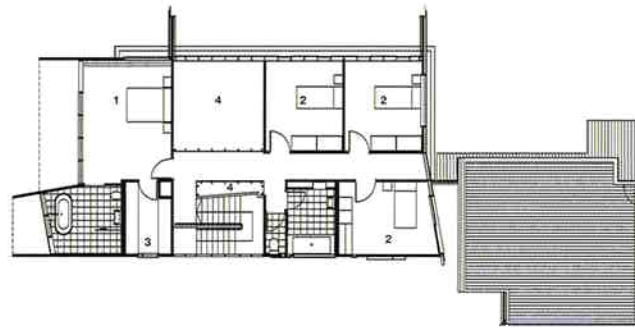
3 The glazed upper level of the northern wall opens the interior to the landscape and northern light, filtered through lush vegetation

Photographs: Jon Linkins

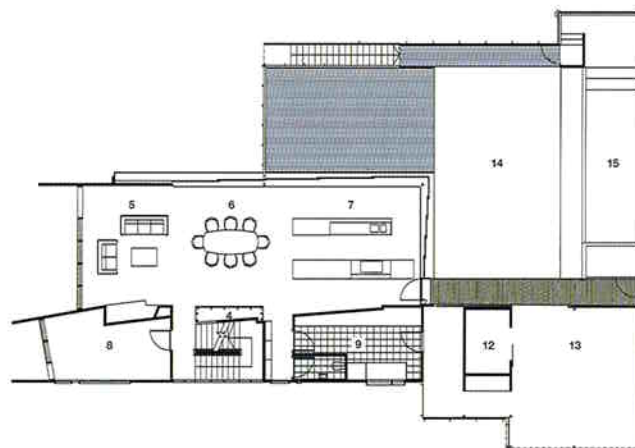




UPPER FLOOR PLAN

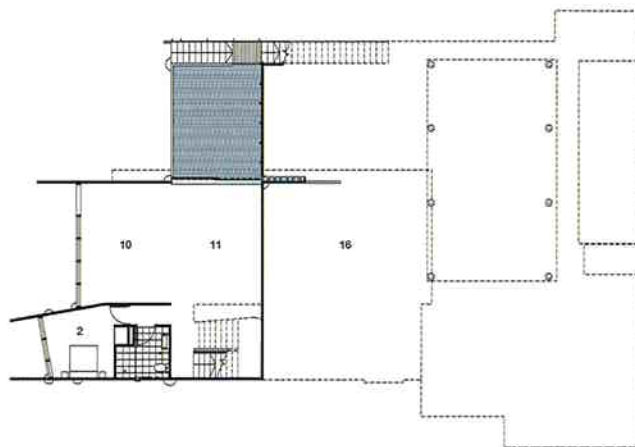


GROUND FLOOR PLAN



- 1 Master bedroom
- 2 Bedroom
- 3 Walk-in robe
- 4 Void
- 5 Living
- 6 Dining
- 7 Kitchen
- 8 Study
- 9 Laundry
- 10 Media room
- 11 Playroom
- 12 Store
- 13 Garage
- 14 Lawn
- 15 Pool
- 16 Undercroft

LOWER FLOOR PLAN



NORTH ELEVATION

