



Living spaces open directly to the garden platform, an attentive audience to an eighty-year-old poinciana tree with the river behind it.

PROJECT N°

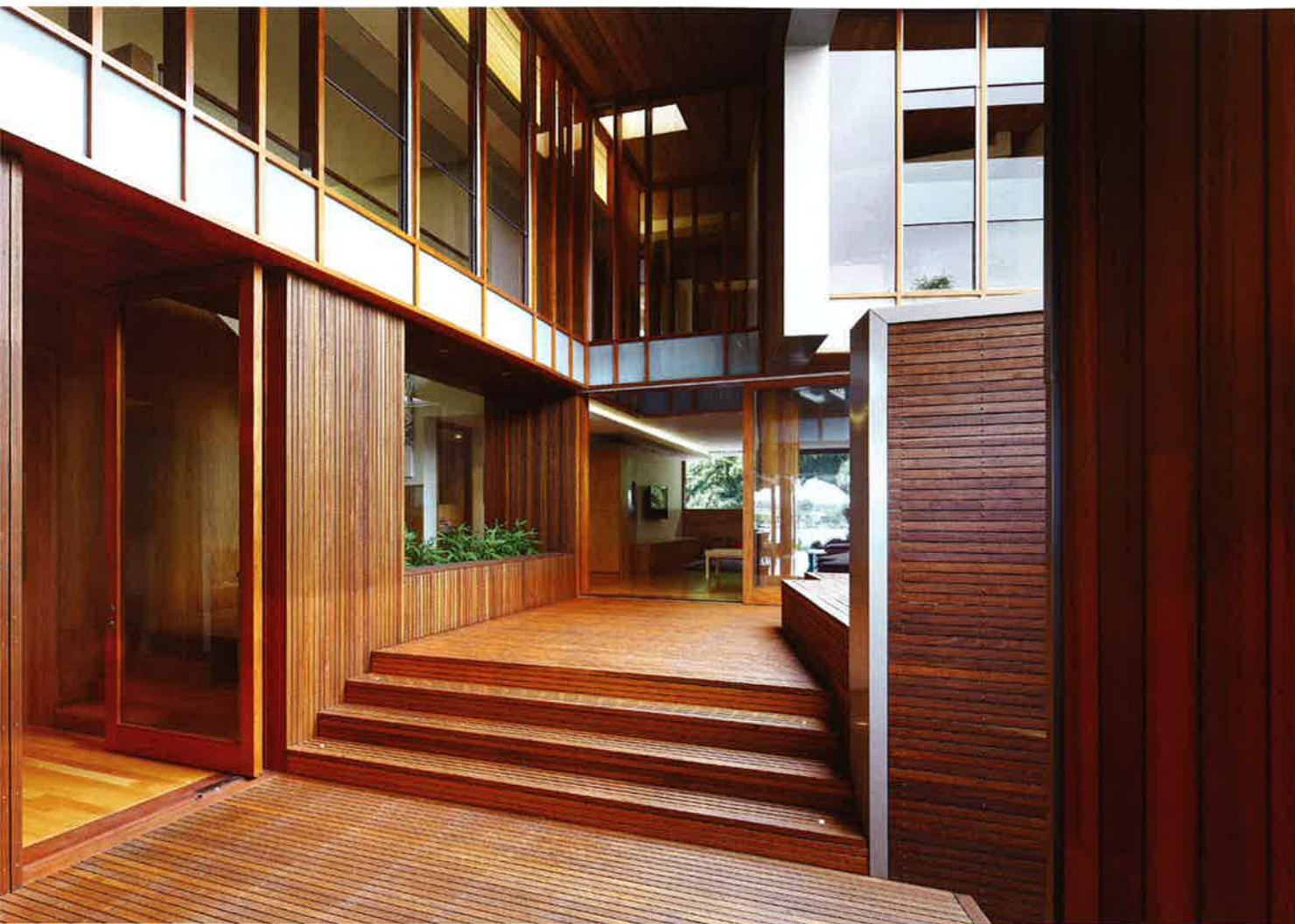
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Arbour HOUSE by Richard Kirk Architect

• BRISBANE, QLD •

Reticence and elegant restraint allow this home on the Brisbane River to make the most of a wonderful riparian and heritage setting.

Words by Margie Fraser
Photography by Scott Burrows



02 The building is shaped by a strong envelope of zinc lined with timber reveals.

03 Folding timber planes direct views outside from within a series of intimate and discrete spaces.

Arbour House" makes for a neat double entendre. Wedged between a dense copse of fig trees in historic parkland on its rear boundary and an eighty-year-old poinciana tree on its riverside frontage, the house defers to its setting among lush foliage and broad canopies. But the deeply recessed, intensely private and restrained structure also speaks of arbour in another sense – that of reclusive umbrage from the outside world. No pompous facades or goldfish-bowl interiors on show for the passing boats here. With characteristic elegance, Richard Kirk Architect instead adopts a quiet, less-is-more plan.

But that's not to say the wonderful riparian setting is ignored – far from it. The house occupies a dress circle position on one of the Brisbane River's less serpentine reaches, with a northern aspect to boot. The thirteen-metre-wide slice of land was originally part of the garden of the neighbouring historic home. "It is an amazing site," says Richard Kirk. "The long northern side has a colonial-era house, when there's the old arbour on one side and the river and precious tree on the other – three sides with interesting elements."

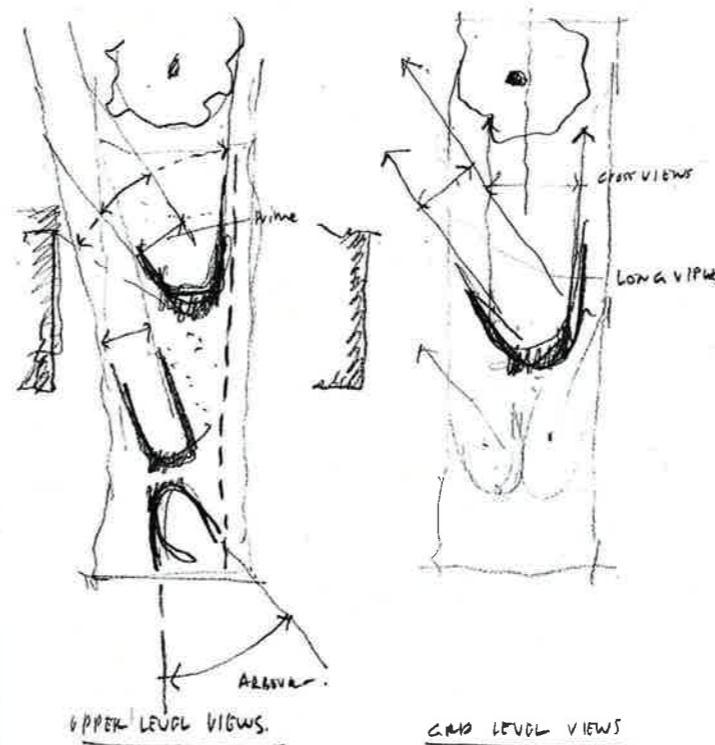
Richard's first instinct was to set the house back from the river as far as possible and to organize the spaces so that every room in the long elevation captured a glimpse of the water. "River views are much better up the length than across to the opposite bank," he observes. His first sketch, in fact, remains close to the finished product and shows the careful skewing of floor plans and manipulation of

rooflines to allow views from all rooms. The main living spaces flow onto the garden ledge, heightening the connection to the landscape.

The reticence of siting the home "as far back on the block as possible," Richard notes, is at odds with a more common impulse toward showy facades to the water. The building platform sits above a public boardwalk on the riverbank, with a pool terrace intervening half a level down. Walkers and joggers are treated to a view of the canopy rather than the home's living rooms. The house recedes into the shadows. Its reticence is assisted by its envelope of robust zinc lined with deep timber reveals, an overarching super-portal that lends the building its formal shape.

As well as capturing the presence of the river as much as possible, another requirement of the brief was to deliver a family home that would grow with its young occupants and fulfil the requirements of several generations and age groups. A courtyard plan allows for the rough and tumble of a young family of five, effectively separating two double-height pavilions with a central arrival zone and void. Children's bedrooms and living areas are on one side of the court; public living spaces are on the other, topped by the private parents' rooms. A bridge-like stair links the two pavilions and wraps up the third side of the court. The "fourth wall" is largely absent – sunshine, moonlight and breezes come through its carved-out niches.

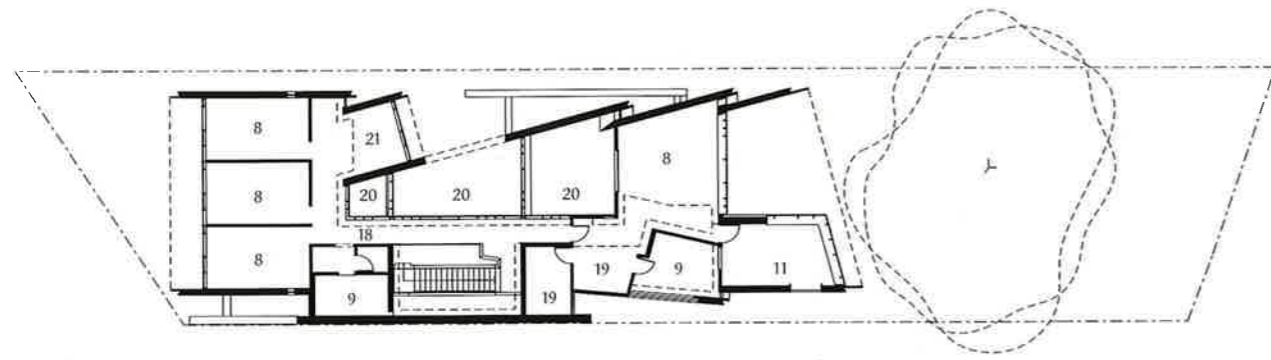
Richard refers to the arrangement as "family home as village," with the arrival court acting as a village square or neutral meeting zone.



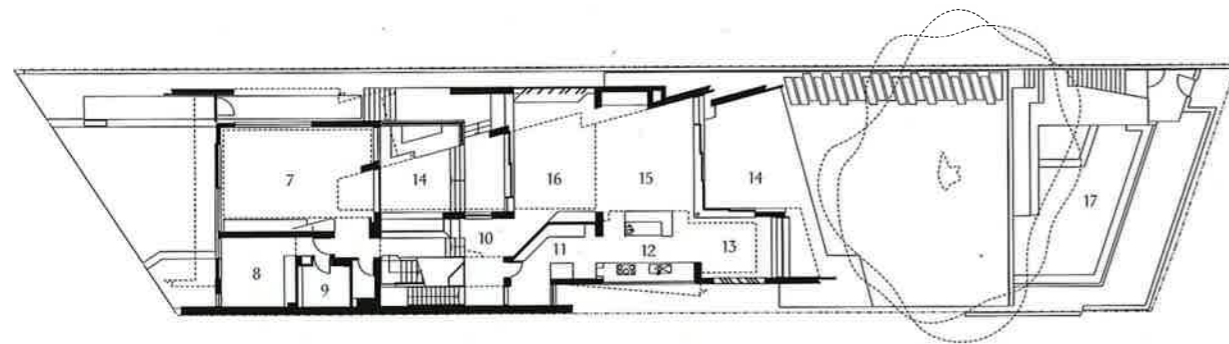
As the home's front door, the courtyard is also a "heroic moment from which to enter," he says. "It's a protective volume from which to cross-ventilate each of the spaces, but also to allow discreet and subtle separation of spaces within the house."

Circulation through and around the house is therefore partly outdoors. On weekends or whenever the family is at home, both sides of the court can be opened up to the elements and the kids can treat it as part of the landscape to run through. It's a simple but delightful device that puts the focus squarely on volumes and spatial relationships rather than objects. It also aligns with a philosophy of not filling up the site with house. "There's often a richer experience in outdoor space," says Richard. "The tendency with indoor space is to fill it up with things. We discussed with the client the importance of discrete spaces rather than large ones that you fill with furnishings. A series of more intimate spaces was preferable."

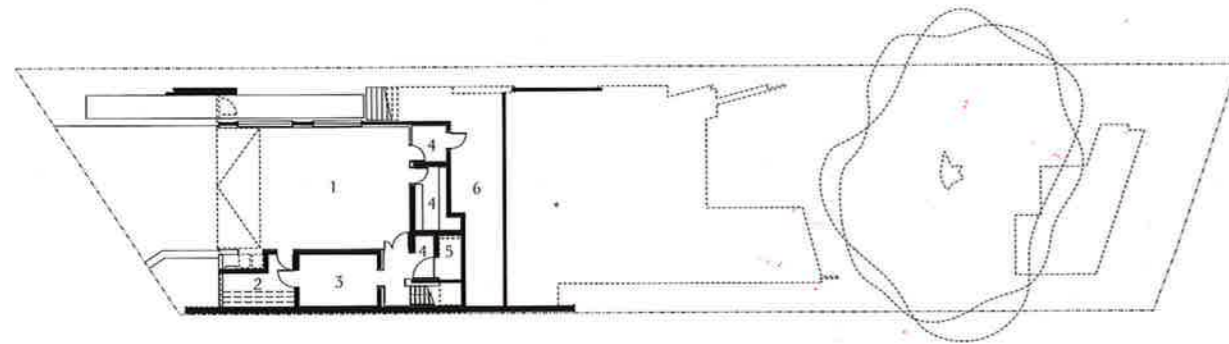
Interiors are nevertheless materially beautiful. Bespoke recycled timbers are crafted as giant pieces of joinery throughout. Proprietary elements, such as light shades, are eschewed. Folding timber planes instead create the landscape and focal points that relate to the site. The living room walls are angled at fifteen degrees to capture the northern light. Their tall timber mullions divide sections of opaque glass, which reflect the pattern of the landscape outside – borrowed scenery of the best kind. [E]



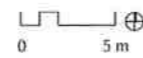
Second floor 1:400



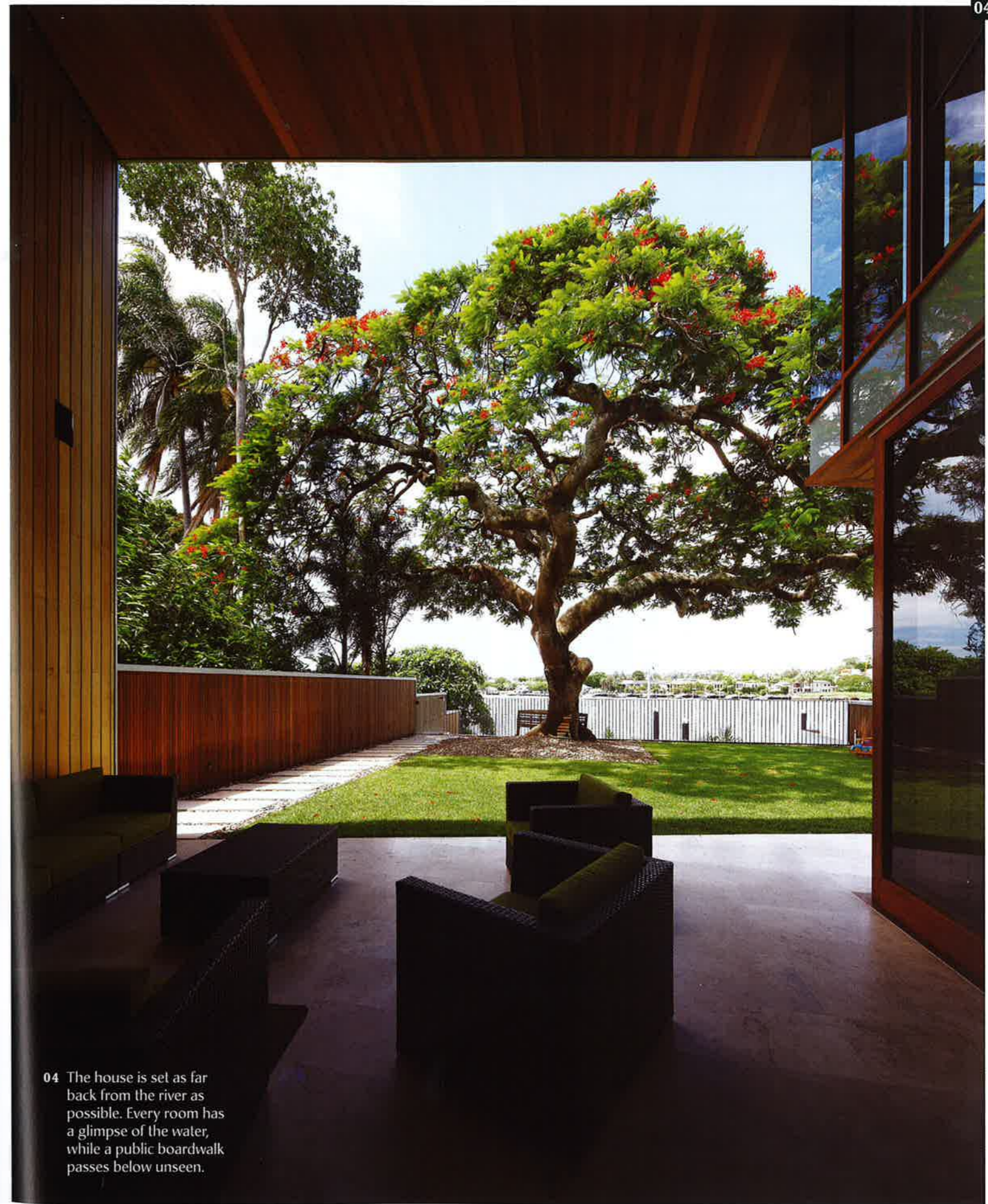
First floor 1:400



Ground floor 1:400



- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1 Garage | 12 Kitchen |
| 2 Drying court | 13 Meals |
| 3 Laundry | 14 Terrace |
| 4 Store | 15 Living |
| 5 Cellar | 16 Dining |
| 6 Workshop | 17 Pool |
| 7 Family | 18 Bridge |
| 8 Bedroom | 19 Robe |
| 9 Bathroom | 20 Void |
| 10 Entry | 21 Play area |
| 11 Study | |



04 The house is set as far back from the river as possible. Every room has a glimpse of the water, while a public boardwalk passes below unseen.

05 Interiors are kept uncluttered so that priority can be given to the views.



Architect

Richard Kirk Architect

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Practice profile

Established in 1995, this practice has completed a diverse range of projects from furniture to masterplanning.

Project team

Richard Kirk, Yee Jien,
Joe Adsett, Kieron Gait,
Mark Spence

Builder

RBC Construction

Consultants

Structural engineer:

Bornhorst and Ward

Hydraulic engineer:

Cushway Blackford

Lighting and interiors:

Richard Kirk Architect

Products

Roofing:

Lysaght Spandek
External walls: Rheinzink;
recycled tallowwood battens;
western red cedar wall
cladding and soffit lining

Internal walls:

American
white oak panelling;
recycled blackbutt wall
lining; plasterboard, painted;
Hemlock timber linings

Windows:

New Guinea
rosewood timber frames
Doors: American white oak
vener doors; Lockwood
stainless steel hardware

Flooring:

Recycled blackbutt
Kitchen: American white oak
joinery; custom stainless steel
benchtops and integral sinks;

Miele appliances; Zip chilled
tap; KWC Eve kitchen mixer

Bathroom: Laufen Palomba
basin; Hansa Vantis bathroom
mixer; travertine tiles

External elements:

Travertine paving

Floor area

660 m²

Time schedule

Design, documentation:

18 months

Construction:

21 months