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Arbour House

New Farm, Australia

FIRM

[Richard Kirk Architect](#)

TYPE

[Residential](#) › [Private House](#)

YEAR

2009

Arbour House, located on the Bulimba Reach of the Brisbane River, is a study in siting and intricate articulation to yield views and landscape connections. The long thin 13 meter wide site is located between two key public spaces, namely an established historic arbour of fig trees and a public riverfront boardwalk. The site which once formed part of the surrounding multi-residential enclave is now distinguished by a new single detached dwelling. Unlike other riverfront houses, the new dwelling is sited a respectful distance from the rivers edge, preserving an 80 year old Poincianna tree and historic public views from the boardwalk of the adjoining heritage listed dwelling. The large setback creates a platform for a private garden under the shade of the canopy of the Poincianna tree. The level of the platform and the height of the Poincianna tree and the Arbour established the two datums for the setout of public and private spaces of the dwelling. The public riverfront living levels are adjacent to this space whilst the rear living spaces are elevated above the garage to look into the canopy of the Arbour. The private bedroom spaces of the upper level are raised to a height to afford views of the tree canopy and river yet privacy from the public river boardwalk. The dwelling adopts a courtyard typology with two pavillions linked by a large double height stairwell and external courtyard. The form is conceptualised as an object carved from a solid volume of the allowable building area with the courtyard providing a protective volume from which to cross ventilate each of the spaces of the house and to allow the different spaces of the house connection but also discrete and subtle separation – the family home as a village. The long section of the dwelling is key – the front pavilion folds and adjusts to its riverfront landscape while the rear pavillion is raised higher to enjoy views onto the canopy of the surrounding arbour and facilitate a cross view through the long site to the river. The dwelling orientates itself around a large external courtyard. The courtyard articulates the form of the dwelling and creates a heroic moment from which to enter. The northern face of the building form is articulated by rotating the external walls 15 degrees. The walls peel away from each other resulting in thin vertical fissures which allow northern light and breezes to filter through. The vertical fissures afford the significant rooms of the house a private visual connection to views down the longest reach of the Brisbane River. The materiality of the dwelling is defined by an exterior and interior skin. The external zinc clad skin acts as a robust barrier to the elements wrapping and folding to protect the inner skins that are generally made of recycled bespoke timbers employed as facade systems and cladding layers. The internal skin is comprised of a number of recycled timbers selected for their durability and colour. The timber is tailored like a bespoke piece of joinery to the specific requirements of the spaces and the spaces are treated in a similar manner whether internal or external.