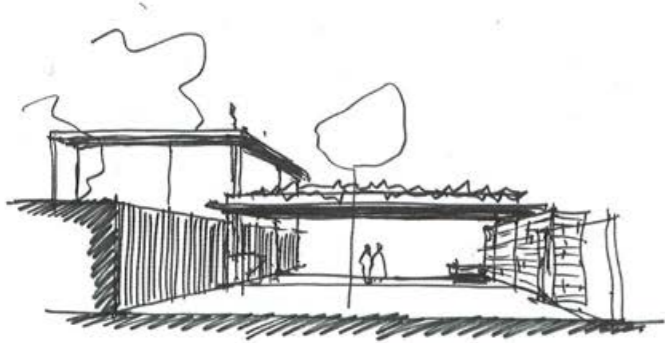


Hunters Hill HOUSE by Arkhefield

• SYDNEY, NSW •

A thought-provoking and inspiring architect-client relationship has led to the achievement of a happy and profoundly comfortable family home.

Words by Genevieve Lilley
Photography by Angus Martin



01 The home references stone houses built in the suburb in the 1800s its ability to breathe is unlike many of its modern neighbours.

02



02 Long views through the interior and into the landscape are provided throughout the home.

03



03 Most rooms have an indoor and outdoor component; a connection with the elements was an important part of the brief.

04 A banquette seat provides an ideal spot to relax and appreciate the home's connection with its surroundings.

05 The kitchen features a thin window strip at the junction between wall and ceiling, creating a panoramic treetop vista.



04



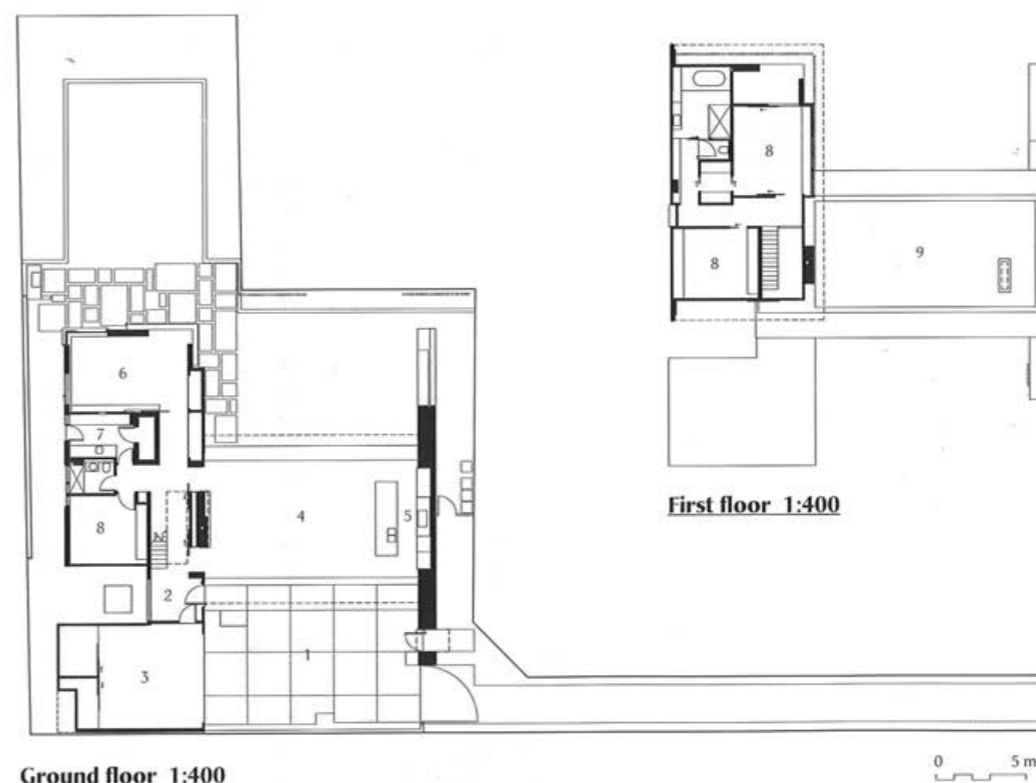
05

When architects work in cities other than their own, they bring with them a sensibility that benefits their client, who presumably sought them out for this. Their sensibility also benefits the design community in general, reminding those who work in the "host" city of the habits that are formed, often subconsciously, by continuing to work in the one area, surrounded by similarly focused peers.

In the case of this project, on a battleaxe block in Sydney's Hunters Hill, Brisbane firm Arkhefield provided skills and empathy that its clients had not been able to find elsewhere. The clients had bought the site a decade before and lived in the 1981-built house on the land since – sufficient time to dream about their family

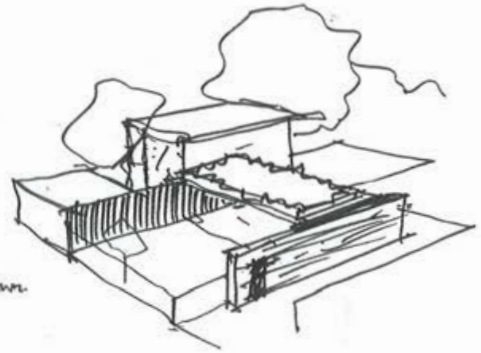
home, and to understand the idiosyncrasies of the light, breezes, aspect and neighbours. They had interviewed a number of firms across Sydney and Melbourne and finally were drawn to Arkhefield because of its strong preoccupation with interiors. Alongside the practice's architectural work, Arkhefield has completed some thirty to forty interior-only projects, which have consistently been strong and rich. In this firm, the clients felt they had found architects who "understood them" and who were not preoccupied with the white box.

The collaboration began vigorously. The clients came to the meeting table with an A3 book filled with their favourite images – of Geoffrey Bawa and Marcio Kogan houses, of houses with a rich



- 1 Sun court
- 2 Entry
- 3 Garage
- 4 Living/dining
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Workroom
- 7 Laundry
- 8 Bedroom
- 9 Planted roof

06 The living/dining area opens completely to the outdoors, with a sunny courtyard to the south and a more shaded grassed area to the north.



Archives

palette of materials. Perhaps as a function of the clients' parentage (one of the clients has northern Italian origins, the other is part Sri Lankan), they wanted a house that was enduring, timeless, relaxed and open to the elements where possible. The poor build of their existing house (1981 was an era characterized by quick developments for maximum return) only strengthened that resolve.

The clients have one child; they are a close family and wanted a house that, while beautifully finished and texturally rich, was a relaxed home that looked like it had been there for decades. Arkhefield associate director Graham Nottle explains that he enjoyed the design process in which "the clients wholly respected the architects' opinion while happily debating points." Disagreements became debates only about the finer points of certain details.

The result is an astonishing house. Each room has a direct connection to the landscape; indeed, most rooms feel like they have an internal and external component. Even the first-floor bedrooms look out over the green roof of the living space below. The spaces are simple, lined with raw materials, but they are warm, generous. Less than a third of the internal surfaces are plasterboard – other areas have raw material finishes: timber, stone, concrete.

The house is approached down a thirty-metre driveway, and at each turn in the house, another long view appears. The whole of the site is used; the occupants inhabit all areas between the





07 A palette of timber, stone and metal makes up the majority of the interior finishes.

boundary fences. The massing of the house respects the immediate neighbours – where the adjacent house is two storeys high, the subject house is too. Where the opposite neighbour’s house is only one storey, the new house is also one storey. The northern boundary is heavily treed and remarkably dark – the architects therefore suggested that the southern boundary be used to collect light and reflect it into the house. The detail of a southern clerestory is incredibly important to balancing light in the house, offering views of the “enormous sky” and in the summer months allowing the northern view to remain green and lush as a retreat.

The suburb is characterized by beautiful stone houses built by French stonemasons in the late 1800s. This house belongs to that genre – its massing, dignified form and ability to “breathe” are unlike many of its modern neighbours. The fact that there are no



08

08 The home is beautifully finished and texturally rich, but relaxed and comfortable to be in.

water views from this site means the house had to define its own landscape environment and is not burdened with glass walls placed to maximize harbour glimpses.

The architects comment that it’s easy to design a wonderful house for a wonderful client. This project shows how the dedication of a careful, thoughtful client, bringing rich ideas to an open debate-rich table, can help produce an outcome that will undoubtedly remain for a long time. One hopes it joins the many houses around it that are lovingly maintained for one hundred and fifty to two hundred years, at least. It is an admirable contribution to the area and to the debate about what a “good house” in residential Sydney should be. The project proves that a house doesn’t need to be conspicuously expensive, or on a conspicuously glamorous site, to achieve a happy and profoundly comfortable family home.



09

09 The bedrooms on the first floor look out over the green roof of the living space below.

Architect

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Practice profile

An established architecture and interior design practice based in Brisbane. Projects span multiple sectors, from commercial and workplace to cultural and residential.

Project team

Anne Sulinski, Graham Nottle, Erin Wheatley, Jaye O’Dwyer, Monika Geldenhaus, Katie Leadbetter, Jemima Rosevear

Builder

Maincorp Construction Group

Consultants

Structural engineer: Partridge Partners
Hydraulic engineer: Whipps Wood Consulting
Building certifier: Paul Fitzgerald
Cost consultant: Estimate 2000
Landscape architect: 360 Degrees Landscape Architects
Arborist: Glenyss Laws
Surveyor: Brian Tucker
Planning consultant: Burrell Threlfo Pagan

Products

Roofing: Colorbond steel roof in ‘Shale Grey’
External walls: Sandstone cladding; Australian Architectural Hardwoods recycled spotted gum cladding and screen; off-form concrete; rendered fibre cement painted Dulux ‘Whisper White’ and Colorbond ‘Woodland Grey’; steel painted Dulux ‘Mid Grey’

Internal walls: Sandstone cladding; Australian Architectural Hardwoods recycled spotted gum cladding and screen; off-form concrete; plasterboard painted Murobond ‘Chino’
Windows and doors: Toskas Joinery New Guinea rosewood frames and blackbutt sills
Flooring: Polished concrete with Concrete Colour Systems ‘Apollo’ pigment; distressed oak timber floor from George Fethers and Co
Lighting: Recessed modular Scotty lights, Lotus downlights and SL Mini surface lights from JSB Lighting; Graypants drum and drop pendants from ECC Lighting and Furniture
Kitchen: Miele dishwasher and rangehood; Gaggenau oven; Siemens cooktop; Westinghouse fridge; Sussex Voda tapware; Oliveri sink

Bathroom: Devon and Devon Fusion bath, Fantini Fukasawa tapware, Rogerseller shower roses, Villeroy and Boch Subway toilet, Omvivo Latis basins, all from WC Bath and Shower
External elements: Existing stone fence rebuilt; Airport Doors counterweighted glide-up garage door; Gate Drive Systems Australia swing gate; Tovo garden lights; external wall lighting by Arkhefield
Other: Real Flame fireplace from Impressions; Silent Gliss curtains from Oz Shade

Floor area
334 m² floor

Time schedule
Design, documentation: 19 months
Construction: 16 months