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BATHROOMS

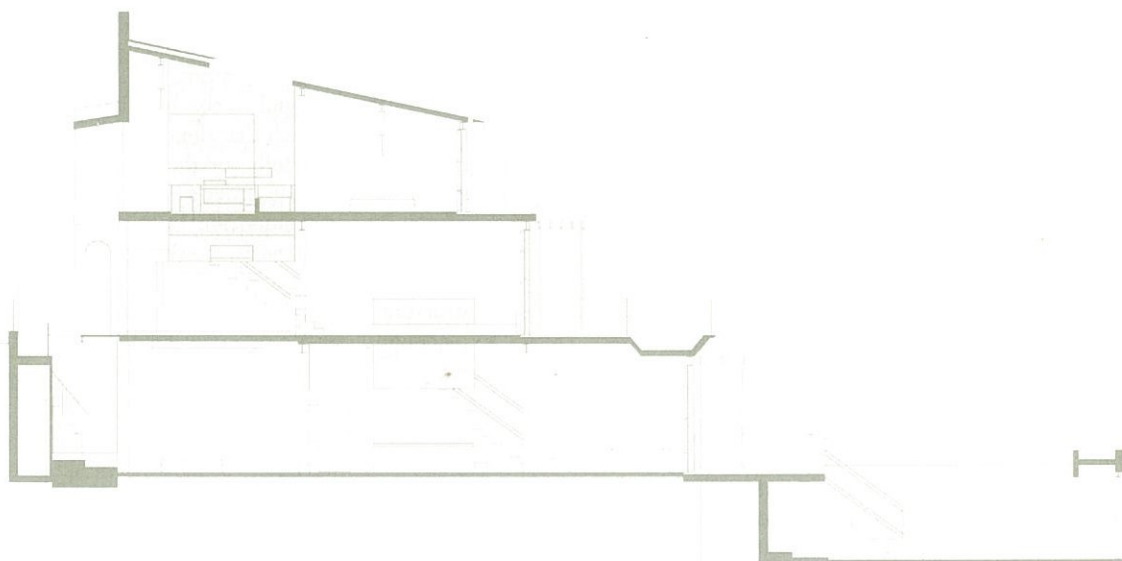


ASPECT • BARK • DEM • INDYK • KISTER • LANE • NOBBS RADFORD
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RESTRAINT

A restrained palette of steel, glass, concrete and



and subtle colour

timber produces an air of serenity in this three-level dwelling by Indyk Architects.

PREVIOUS PAGES, LEFT: The concrete and timber stair hugs the party wall of the terrace and links all three levels. RIGHT: The middle-level dining area features a built-in leather upholstered banquette, designed by the architect. Polished and waxed concrete floors merge seamlessly with the north-facing terrace. THESE PAGES, BELOW LEFT: The bathrooms have been treated as opulent retreats, each with finely-crafted jarrah storage units. BELOW, RIGHT: The study occupies the central zone on the ground floor, with built-in furniture along both the party wall and stair wall. OPPOSITE PAGE: An evening view, from the ground-floor bedroom looking through to the living room/study. The walls have a burnished plaster finish, in which the colour is integrated into the plaster itself.



AH, THE SERENITY. IT COMES IN different forms for different people. For the occupants of this terrace house in Sydney's inner east, it happened when Shelley Indyk, of Indyk Architects, remodelled their home by introducing an arrangement of calm, soothing spaces with a unique connection to landscape.

Having begun life as a typical Victorian terrace with a series of inward-looking cellular spaces it was time for a makeover to respond to contemporary living. Nothing unique there – everyone in town is in the midst of a renovation frenzy. However, unlike many other projects, where small spaces are bombarded with an abundance of disparate materials, Shelley's sophisticated approach was to use a restrained palette of concrete, steel, glass and timber.

Advantageous siting has been achieved by perching the house on an elevated, sloping block looking north across a valley to a park on the opposite hillside. Apart from the solar advantages of the northern aspect, which lets sunlight deep into the living spaces, the architect has framed views of the adjacent parklands. With the clever manipulation of space and openings, the view from inside the house is entirely of green space. And this is not just an intimate courtyard kind of green space but, rather, a middle distance view with no other buildings visible. It was important for Shelley to extend the expanse of space and the park views into the house so that the occupants could retreat from the densely-populated suburb to the calm inside.

Only the front of the house was retained – all the action happens beyond. From the street the only indications of intervention are the

elegantly detailed steel security gates and the timber-slatted meter cupboards. Facadism one might think, but not entirely inappropriate. Beyond the facade, the existing timber floors had warped and dipped and the house was a run-down warren of confused spaces.

Council initially demanded retention of the existing masonry structure and crosswalls as integral to the building, a departure from the streetscape stage-set approach that dominates contemporary planning. But Shelley argued successfully for the need to remove most of the existing masonry crosswalls in order to create long north-south rooms that would enjoy cross ventilation, and open the interior to the northern aspect. Removing the crosswalls, however, also removed the lateral support for the party walls, so Shelley and engineer Robert Herbertson devised a structural diaphragm of concrete slabs and steel portal frames bolted to piers on the existing party walls. With the party walls stable, Shelley was free to adjust floor levels and open up vertical spaces.

The house is arranged over three levels with the main living spaces located at street (middle) level. The main bedroom and ensuite are housed upstairs, while downstairs is a secondary living space, study and bedroom. All floors are linked via a linear stair slotted against one of the party walls. Large vertical timber elements transcend floors and morph from balustrades to bench seating. All the levels are cross ventilated and open on to terraces to the north.

The client wanted a concrete and glass house, and that's exactly what they got. All new floor slabs have been inserted and the burnished finish has been waxed and polished. Concrete extends out on each

THESE PAGES, OPPOSITE: A jarrah bulkhead houses lighting and conceals plumbing elements in the kitchen. The waxed and polished concrete floor and the exposed steel upright are emblematic of the honest approach to materials that continues throughout the building. BELOW: Working with the constraints of a narrow block, Shelley positioned the kitchen appliances under the stair. Stainless steel and concrete dominates, with timber elements for textural balance.



floor to the north to form terraces. However, what sets this house apart is that the undersides of the slabs have also been left exposed, again waxed and polished. A more conventional approach would have seen suspended plasterboard ceilings throughout. The benefits are that the floors and ceilings are both read as simple horizontal planes and the sense of the material, concrete, is ever present.

Of course, this sort of experience does not come easily. A high level of design in the setting out of services and lighting was required. Bulkheads have been installed to cover plumbing lines but conduits and light fittings have been cast into the slabs and aligned with joints. Downlights are cast into the stepped concrete soffit of the stair. Under the stair a steel-framed desk is suspended from the wall.

The northern facade opens, on each level, to the terrace and views via a counterbalanced overhead door. Three metres wide and three metres high, the massive glass door transforms the scale of the space and lends an element of ritual to the opening up of the house. Shelley likens the opening of this aperture to that of a camera shutter. When open overhead, the door creates a large horizontal plane that draws the eye out to the landscape without obstruction. The advantage of this form of opening is that, when closed, there are no vertical stiles to obstruct views. As these doors are typically used in industrial situations, the mechanism can be fairly crude. In particular, the counterweight is a rough unrefined chunk of metal which contrasts with the sleek glass and timber-framed case that was designed for its housing. This honest approach to materiality is consistent with the architecture.

Jarrah has been used for all the joinery, which was essential for giving the dwelling its visual warmth. Similarly, bathrooms are conceived as opulent retreats, like jewelled boxes. Fully tiled in ruby-coloured mosaics, the roof of the ensuite bathroom opens to the sky by remote control – the ultimate bathing experience. In this windowless room, opaque glass walls have been installed at both ends for necessary illumination. Though narrow, the room feels light and expansive.

The middle-level terrace terminates at a wide fishpond that is fed by roof water runoff. A neatly detailed integrated track from the roof follows the party wall to the water with overflows continuing down into the stormwater system. A fixed bench straddles the pond, and is described by the owner as her favourite place in the house. Having started with six goldfish there are now thirty flourishing residents that have survived the appetite of the family cat.

The kitchen at the front of the house is separated from the adjacent entry by a sculpted concrete upstand. Stainless steel benchtops and jarrah veneer cupboards contribute to the rich palette. As an indication of the crafted approach, every piece of veneer was handpicked by the architect. Overhead, a jarrah bulkhead defines the kitchen zone and conceals the plumbing above.

Shelley describes this as her purest residential work to date, a statement that is easy to understand when one experiences the masterful handling of the restrained palette and the manipulation of space. In fact, she was so happy with the way the project turned out that she wanted to move in to the house herself. Tell her she's dreaming. **BG**