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BACK TO

WITH THIS LIGHT AND SKELETAL PROJECT, A THREE-LEVEL TERRACE, ED LIPPMANN GOES BACK TO THE ROOTS OF HIS SYDNEY PRACTICE.

BASICS



ANALYSIS

Innovation is a pursuit which has preoccupied me since I commenced formative architectural training. The modest early projects which I managed to get up were alterations and additions – often in dense and historic areas in the inner city of Sydney. In the 1980s many of these projects met with strict resistance from both the local council planning codes and heritage guardians, as modernism was far from being in favour. I often found myself in the Land and Environment Court, as I never favoured the post modern approach which was the trend at the time. The fashion was for mock versions of outdated architecture and interiors – Victoriana and other historic stylistic idioms – either meshed into “contemporary” architecture, or just recreated.

I was far more interested in exploring and developing the new technical potential, the capabilities of lightweight materials, open spaces, natural light and ventilation. I believed that such environments would better serve our needs and desires. To my thinking, architecture was not a fashion. For many years low

“...TRANQUILITY IS ECHOED IN THE EXTERNAL COURTYARD POND WHERE LARGE CARP HAVE BEEN CULTIVATED BY THE OWNER...”

budget projects were my staple professional diet. It was often a struggle to make the most of minimal means, overcoming bureaucratic obstacles, tight requirement schedules and budgets, and still come out the other end with an architectural synthesis which was functional, visually compelling, and relevant. That tough early training was very good for a young architect to cut his teeth on.

Since then, and on the strength of some notable design competition successes, I have moved on to bigger things - public projects which afford greater architectural freedom and social purpose. These buildings are less idiosyncratic in that one works with public authorities responsible for making decisions on behalf of the community, rather than specific or pedantic end users. The King George V Recreation Centre in the Rocks, RTA Footbridges and the Andrew “Boy” Charlton Pool (soon to be completed) are example projects. These have also served to focus on the need for responsibility.

With the change in scale of my practice, it is unusual to accept residential commissions of the size of this Paddington terrace house. Perhaps it was a return to my roots. It will probably be the last such house for a while to come – due in part to the tightening of Woollahra Council’s planning codes. As with the early work, the budget was tight, although more generous than the early projects – \$350,000 to be precise.

The client was actually a qualified architect, who approached me in 1998 with his own design and asked if I could get it built for him. He did not have the time. He had given up architecture in favour of a more lucrative career as a restaurateur, and recognised that he didn’t have the experience to pull it all together.

Nevertheless, it took some time to persuade Frank to adopt my design and to jettison his own. As my LEC lawyer recently observed, being an egocentric megalomaniac is practically a requirement for eligibility of an architecture degree. Frank was no exception.

Over time, we developed a good working relationship. He accepted my scheme for his 4 metre wide terrace house. As I had come to expect, there was the obligatory Land and Environment Court appeal to get the three storey glass facade approved and, despite the usual vicissitudes of the building process, we finally got it built.

The three level house has two bedrooms with generous living spaces, natural lighting and ventilation. The light is controlled by aluminium louvres while a gigantic operable glass roof allows for the extraction of the hot air via the stack effect through the layers of dematerialised flooring. The steel frame allows for the disappearance of any internal loadbearing elements and gives the structure a light skeletal quality. The glass roof and north facade offer a much closer relationship and enjoyment of the external environment – the enjoyment of the changing seasons and times of the day and night (and lets not forget moon and stars).

The performance of a glider can be measured by its aerodynamic form, resisting the friction of movement through air, its weightlessness and balance. I have often considered good architectural design is to do with the minimisation of the superfluous – the streamlining of form and structure. Nevertheless, in architecture it is necessary to identify the qualities of space and design, which evoke human responses beyond utility.

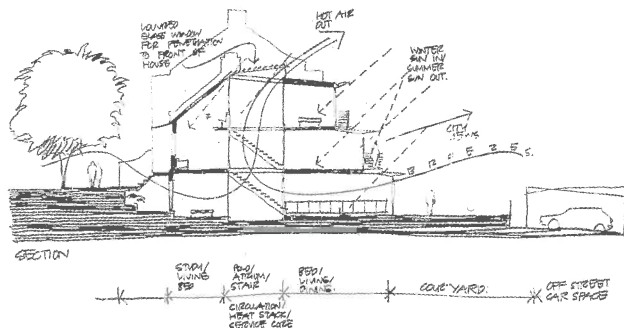
In recent years I have come to appreciate these subtle impulses of space, orientation and organisation which are subliminal but very powerful in our engagement with the environment. These principles were understood by the Chinese Feng Shui masters (not the Womens Weekly variety!) and particularly the exponents of the ancient Sthapatya Veda.

However clever the technical solutions may be, the failure of some modern design may be a failure to deliver environments which promote a sense of well being or engender an experience of what the Indian Vedics referred to as Samadhi.

The advanced technical potential of western science and technology underpinned by an understanding of the nature of space is a potent combination for meaningful, rich architecture which is multi layered – both of its time and timeless. It is a great pleasure for me to hear people (not necessarily designers) say: “I never really thought I liked modern architecture, but this space feels good.” They are not responding to the Vola taps, Lingotto lights or electrically operated glass roof (because these

are not people trained to appreciate these iconic products). They are reporting the subliminal spatial qualities which give rise to a heightened experience of consciousness. Its not to do with styling or branding but with getting the fundamentals right, creating a dignified auspicious environment befitting and respectful of human occupation.

Water can be heard trickling through this house right below the large skylit atrium. The tranquillity is echoed in the external courtyard pond where large carp have been cultivated by the owner. The use of naturally oiled timber floors and cantilevered stairs is intentionally juxtaposed with the more “synthetic” aluminium and stainless steel grates which have their own, though quite different tactile qualities. Modern materials and transparent fluid spaces are organised within a framework of spatial natural order. They are the elements of a mature architecture not merely the fascination for the “new.”





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DISSECTION

Operable Skylight The innovative operable skylight overhead the stairwell is constructed of 360cm long, 80cm wide and 12.38mm thick toughened glass. The electric ram operation allows the skylight to open up to the heavens with the touch of a button; an automatic close rain sensor is thus also necessary. This important source of light and air was installed by Hedley Roofing, trading as Brights Skylights **t** (61 2) 9500 0080 **f** (61 2) 9529 3119 **e** brightsskylights@ozemail.com.au

Louvres Clear, anodized aluminium sun louvres placed over all roof glazing are fixed and operable, by Hi-Light Industries. Product HA405 over balconies, and SS203/60 over interior spaces are both designed around specific local climate conditions, and allow light to enter the home at a highly controlled rate. Hi-Light Industries **t** (61 2) 9648 3199 **f** (61 2) 9648 5495 **e** hi-light@hi-light.com **w** www.hi-light.com

Handrails The patterns cast by the rails and the cantilevered staircase onto the adjacent side wall enhance the simple beauty of the interior; changing in a graceful and mechanical way, similar to the louvres, the operable skylight, and the sliding doors. The handrails are circular stainless steel section on bent rod, welded to steel stanchions with stainless steel wire midrails. Construction by Q&A Engineering (previously Nowra Engineering): **t** (61 2) 4423 1644 **f** (61 2) 4423 1644

Window Coverings Fine, translucent, roll-up blinds by Helioscreen are a solution for light control within the spaces. Helioscreen's fiberglass fabric, made from glass yarns, is designed to prevent the penetration of disturbing levels of heat and light, without reducing visibility towards the outside. The colour spectrum of the daylight remains vivid and natural while preventing people looking in. Available in a range of 90 colours and designs, the screens are designed for exterior and interior use. In this case, Sheerweave 2000 is used inside the glass doors which lead to the exterior balconies of the house. Helioscreen **t** (61 2) 9453 0733 **f** (61 2) 9453 0744 **w** www.helioscreen.com.au **e** helioscreen@connect.net.au

Internal and External Pond The interior and exterior ponds are the decorative feature of the house. Both ponds are constructed from cast concrete with concealed pumps. The internal pond is lined with white and grey river pebbles, providing a place for positioning flowers, candles, or items of the occupants desire. The linear fountain in the outdoor pond releases a fine, horizontal stream of water, and is by Pride Pools **t** (61 2) 9436 2711 **f** (61 2) 9436 3966

Joinery The generous kitchen space contains a long stainless steel unit by Bingara Interiors; including sinks, the dishwasher drawer, bench spaces and storage. Integrated is the concealed illuminated backwall, lit behind eggcrate diffusing. The polyurethane bedroom and study joinery is also by Bingara Interiors **t** (61 2) 9725 4722 **f** (61 2) 9826 8511

“...A GLASS ROOF OFFER A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT – THE CHANGING SEASONS, TIMES OF THE DAY AND NIGHT (AND LET’S NOT FORGET MOON AND STARS)...”

Sanitary Ware Astron Satin Chrome Tapware is consistent throughout the house. The Bette bath is from Taps, the flush fitted shower head by Alan Patrick, and the Lab sink, wall hung toilet pans and concealed cisterns are by Caroma. Details for Taps Design **t** (61 2) 9332 4800 **f** (61 2) 9332 4030 **w** www.tapsdesign.com.au **e** sales@rogerseller.com.au. Alan Patrick details: **t** (61 3) 9654 8288 **f** (61 3) 9650 5650. Caroma at Source 490 **t** (61 2) 9361 6700 **f** (61 2) 9380 8429 **w** www.caroma.com.au **e** caroma@source490.com.au

Kreon Uplighting At the Northern (rear) end of the building, the Kreon mini round uplights are warm and delicate, defining the interior from the outer patios. Kreon mini footlights illuminate the stairs. Kreon is supplied by dedece **t** (61 2) 9360 2722 **f** (61 2) 9360 9022 **w** www.dedece.com

Regianni Downlighting Regianni lights, solely imported by Euroluce, are renowned for absolute quality. Regianni revolutionized low voltage/halogen lights; they last longer and provide a daylight effect within interior spaces. Small downlights are used neatly throughout the house, supplied by Euroluce **t** (61 2) 9743 6099 **f** (61 2) 9743 6046 **e** lighting@euroluce.com.au

Lingotto Lighting Renzo Piano designed the Lingotto light for Iguzzini. Three versions are available of the design – the floor lamp, suspended fitting and wall luminaire; the latter used in the upper level area of this project. It is part of a commercial range; constructed from a cast aluminium body, a reflector made mostly of superpure aluminium sheet, and diecast alu-

minium holder frame with a silicone gasket, attached to the optical assembly by means of nickel plated screws. The light is available from ECC **t** (61 2) 9380 7922 **f** (61 2) 9380 7642 **w** www.ecc.com.au **e** ecclighting@ecc.com.au

Paint The colour within the space is minimal, but essential in the overall concept of the house. Utilised is white and a pale, cool mint on features: this colour winds up through the spaces of the house: from the outdoor 'Naylors Blue' trees, and ponds on the lower level, the main sofa at mid level and the screens on the private upper level. Paint was Dulux; Customer Service details **t** 132 377 **f** 1800 800 864 **w** www.dulux.com.au

Flooring Pale Epoxy paint creates a gloss on the concrete floor in the downstairs area. Upper levels consist of Blackbutt wood available from quality timber suppliers, finished with Wattyl Tung Oil. The wood is secret nailed over the timber floor joists and between these levels, the Blackbutt stair treads are nailed to steel stair supports. Wattyl maintenance and information **t** 1300 366 691 **w** www.wattyl.com.au

Daybed and Armchairs 1930's quality design is the choice in furniture in the entrance area. Featured is the "Barcelona" daybed designed by Mies Van Der Rohe, constructed from chrome plated steel legs, a mahogany finish timber base, and cushioning covered in dark brown leather. Nearby, sit two Le Corbusier "Baculant" armchairs from the same period, with chrome plated steel legs, leather arms and pony skin seats and backs. Both luxury items are from Mobili **t** (61 2) 9328 6366 **f** (61 2) 9327 8452 **w** www.mobili.com.au **e** mobili@mobili.com.au

Dining Chairs and Modular Lounge The choice in furniture reflects the simple aesthetic style throughout the house. Italian designed and made, the Margarita Dining Chairs are by Carlo Colombo and constructed from aluminium and clear plastic (they also come in blue). The Belle Modular Lounge in Ginger Suede is a comfortable and inviting piece, retaining the clean lines and pale mint colour so consistent throughout the house. Both items are available from Design Warehouse **t** (61 2) 9360 4144 **f** (61 2) 9699 1281 **e** designw@pip.com.au

Dining Table Constructed from a polished stainless steel frame and Carrara marble, the long dining table is a feature of the downstairs area. The table was custom built by Korban/Flaubert Design **t** (61 2) 9557 6136 **f** (61 2) 9557 6136 **w** www.korbanflaubert.com.au **e** info@korbanflaubert.com.au

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