

# Decorative

# 40

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INSPIRED  
INTERIORS

# HOUSE OF THE YEAR APARTMENT OF THE YEAR

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FURNITURE

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# HOUSE OF THE YEAR

A HOUSE THAT RESONATES WITH THE WARMTH OF SHARED FAMILY LIVING IS THE WINNER OF THE BELLE HOUSE OF THE YEAR FOR 2000. ARCHITECT ED LIPPMANN HAS COMPLETELY REBUILT A SMALL, SEMI-DETACHED COTTAGE FOR HIS FAMILY. IT BEAUTIFULLY CAPTURES THE ESSENCE OF LIVING IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIA.

TEXT BY DAVID CLARK,  
STYLED BY JEAN WRIGHT,  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY GEOFF LUNG.



**THIS PAGE** THE OPEN INTERIOR OF ED LIPPMANN'S OWN HOUSE IS SOFTENED BY THE USE OF TIMBER PLYWOOD SHEETS TO LINE THE FLOOR, WALLS AND CEILING. THE KITCHEN BENCH IN THE 'FAMILY END' IS MOBILE AND CAN BE WHEELED TO THE OUTSIDE COURTYARD.



Look at some of Ed Lippmann's earlier houses and you see the work of a pure modernist at hand. They are logical expressions of steel frames, glass walls and sharp surfaces – machine-like structures that represent the harder edge of modernism for some people. As an architect, Lippmann has developed a clear skill with the medium. It's not surprising, given his early work experience in Marcel Breuer's New York office and his university thesis on the work of Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano and Norman Foster, architects who for Lippmann were at the forefront of modernism in the technological age.

But there is something unexpected about Lippmann's own family home, a semi-detached cottage in Sydney's eastern suburbs. It is softer, with layers of warmth that represent a departure from the hard edginess of his previous work. Perhaps it's the form of the building – quaint with a contemporary edge. Lippmann demolished and rebuilt his side of the semi, but from the street it's similar to what was there before. The main roof and curved verandah roof still mirror the



**ALTHOUGH THE HOUSE HAS A STEEL FRAME AND STAIRCASE, ED LIPPMANN HAS SOFTENED THE TEXTURE BY USING PLYWOOD PANELLING INSIDE AND OUT**



**OPPOSITE PAGE** PERFORATED ACOUSTIC PLYWOOD PANELLING MAKES THIS SMALL FAMILY HOUSE LESS NOISY. **ABOVE** THE GROUND-LEVEL BATHROOM IS A CURVED CAPSULE WITH A WHITE TILED INTERIOR AND MACASSAR VENEER EXTERIOR. **ABOVE, RIGHT** THE STAINLESS-STEEL STAIRCASE USES LANDSCAPE DRAINAGE GRATING AS TREADS. THIS GIVES IT A TRANSPARENT QUALITY, LETTING LIGHT FLOW THROUGH.

adjoining house, but where one half is a timber building clad with weatherboards, Lippmann's side is a steel frame clad with sheet material, a more modern expression of its older reflection.

The departure from Lippmann's normal modus operandi is in his choice of materials. The front verandah is screened by broad timber venetians, where a few years ago he would have used aluminium. Instead of sheet metal or glass, timber plywood clads the building, both inside and out.

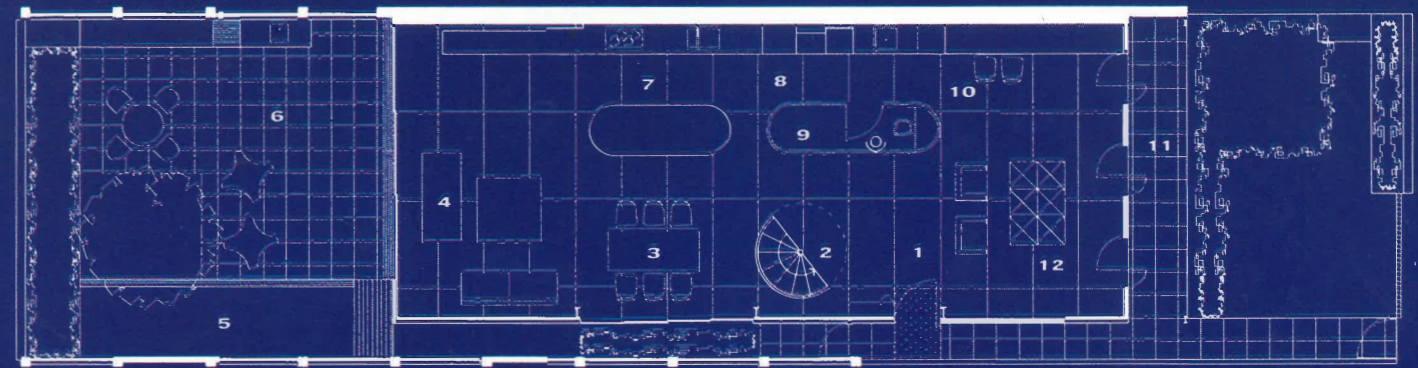
"I'm exploring more natural materials than before," he says. "I'm moving away from the idea of modernism as graphic compositions of white walls and hard surfaces. The steel framework is still there and the glass and transparency and technology, but also the idea of having texture and warmth and human responses to materials – trying to find out what constitutes 'feeling good' for a person in a space."

The plywood-lined interior feels particularly good in this house. In what is essentially an open space that flows out to a rear courtyard and up to a mezzanine level, the flooring is of plywood in one- by two-metre sheets, and the walls are perforated sheets of acoustic plywood. This not only reduces noise levels in an open space, it adds a natural, textural quality to the interior that might otherwise have been cold and less welcoming.

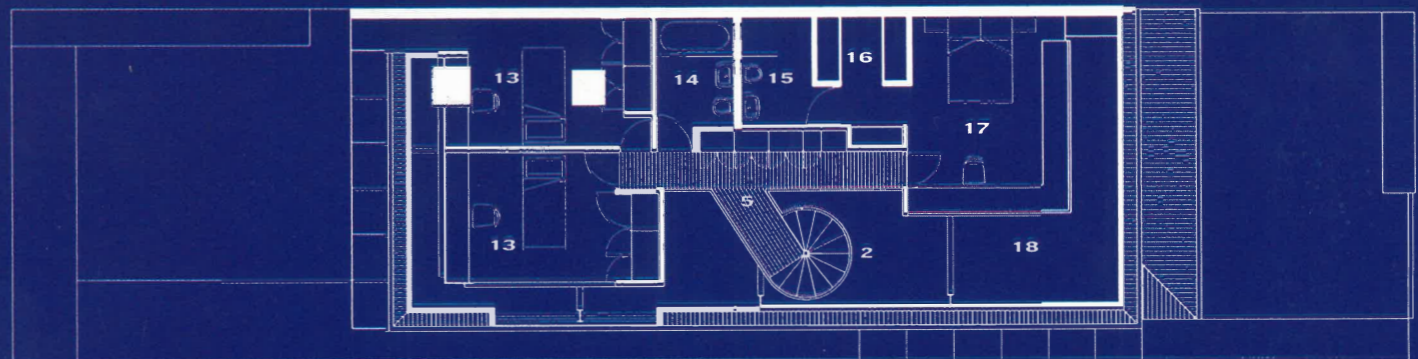
To fit a family of five on a small site, Lippmann excavated down just 300 millimetres in order to squeeze an extra layer of mezzanine bedrooms cosily tucked under the sloping line of the roof. Automatically controlled skylight windows provide views >



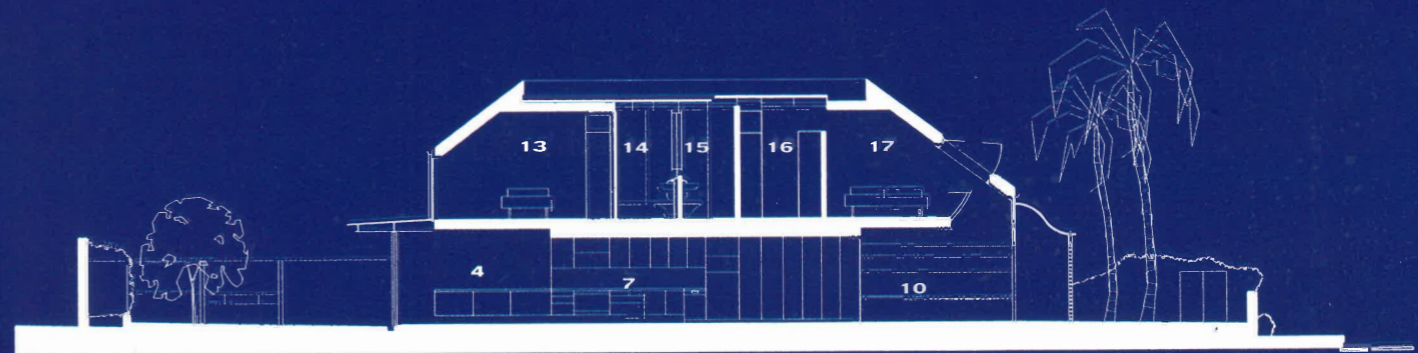
THIS PAGE THE DINING TABLE AND KITCHEN WITH THE MOBILE UNIT REMOVED. THE MAIN KITCHEN BENCH WAS FITTED ALONG THE PARTY WALL.



GROUND



MEZZANINE



SECTION

- |               |                        |
|---------------|------------------------|
| 1 ENTRY       | 11 VERANDAH            |
| 2 STAIR       | 12 LIVING              |
| 3 DINING      | 13 CHILDREN'S BEDROOMS |
| 4 FAMILY      | 14 BATHROOM            |
| 5 PLUNGE POOL | 15 ENSUITE BATHROOM    |
| 6 COURTYARD   | 16 WARDROBE            |
| 7 KITCHEN     | 17 MASTER BEDROOM      |
| 8 LAUNDRY     | 18 VOID                |
| 9 GUEST WC    |                        |
| 10 STUDY      |                        |

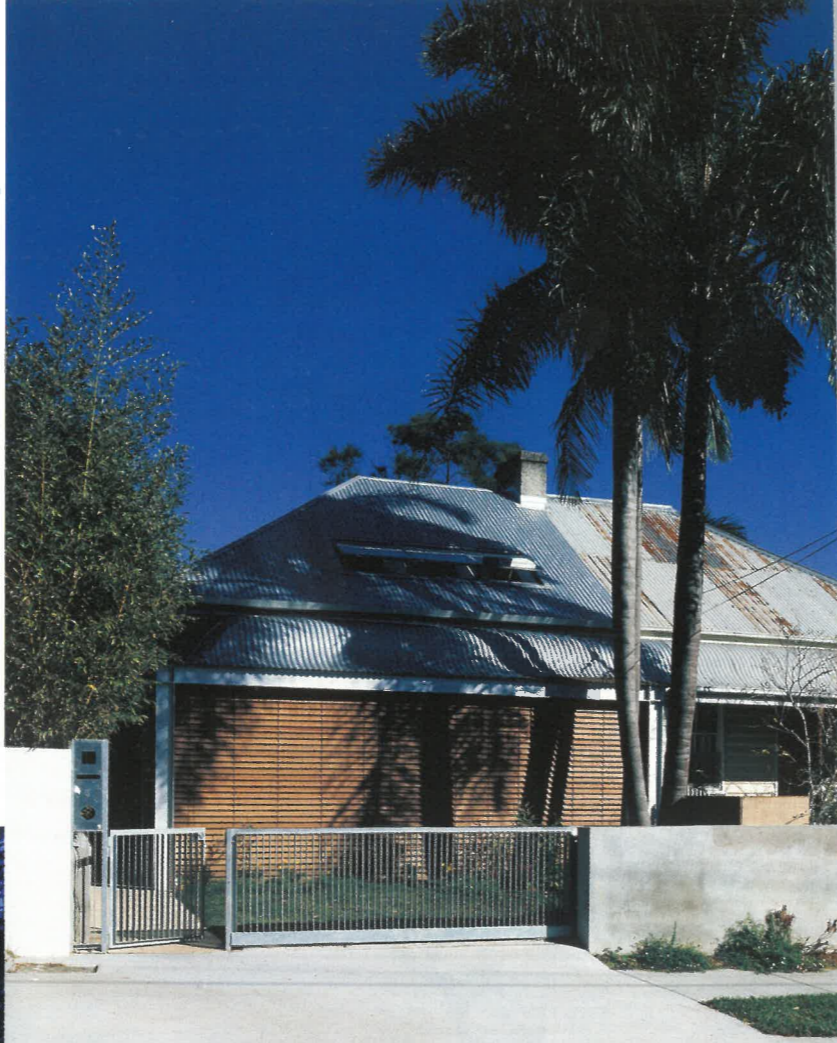
**ED LIPPMANN HOUSE PLAN**

I'M TRYING TO DEVELOP A MORE LUXURIOUS,  
**ORGANIC QUALITY**  
 TO AN ARCHITECTURE WHICH IS STILL  
 STRUCTURALLY LOGICAL AND CLEAR  
 BUT HAS THIS ADDED DIMENSION OF  
**HUMAN COMFORT**

and ventilation. The bedroom spaces are not high, but they give a sense of containment and quiet ("Especially nice for the children," says Lippmann). The low-ceilinged upper level contrasts with the lower living spaces, which have the advantage of a more dramatic height in places.

The ground floor is an open-plan living area, with a side entry, and is loosely divided into an "adult end" near the street and a "family end" opening out to an enclosed rear courtyard. Here, Lippmann's trademark glass walls are evident in the form of a set of stacking frameless glass doors that slide to one side.

There are no internal walls downstairs. The only built objects punctuating this space are a capsule of curved Macassar ebony, containing a white mosaic-tiled toilet and shower, and a steel spiral staircase leading to a bridge that opens onto the upper floor. This contains another bathroom and bedrooms; the main bedroom



**THIS PAGE**  
 THE MEZZANINE  
 BEDROOMS OCCUPY  
 THE SPACE UNDER  
 THE ROOFLINE AND  
 HAVE AN INTIMATE  
 RELATIONSHIP WITH  
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 ELECTRONICALLY  
 OPERATED SKYLIGHTS  
 PROVIDE VIEWS  
 AND VENTILATION.



(with ensuite) sits above the adult end, and the children's rooms lie over the family end.

The long party wall adjoining the neighbouring house is given over to a wall of joinery, storage and kitchen facilities in the family end. Behind the bathroom is a laundry, and in the adult end there are a desk and shelves that make up a study. Part of the kitchen contains a mobile bench which can be wheeled out to the courtyard when entertaining or cooking on the barbecue.

The sense of order and materials that have always been a part of Lippmann's architecture are still here. The steel-framed structure shows through occasionally; the glass walls are there in parts. Within the four-metre grid of the steel structure, the plywood panels are set out on a one-metre grid and the kitchen cupboards on a half-metre grid. The electrically controlled skylights were made specially to fit into the grid system.

But Lippmann seems to have discovered something new for himself, an old and fundamental idea that somehow got suppressed in the economic rationalism of late modernism. It's the idea that space, in relation to the people who inhabit it, has consciousness and a tangible impact on a human being.

"Perhaps I'm maturing," says Lippmann, who is in his early forties, with two children younger than 10 and a third recently born. "A lot of modernism is perceived to be clinical and unlivable and cold. As an architect, I can appreciate its strength, but I am also beginning to understand that, from a human perspective, it's not always comfortable to be in. So, in my own work I'm trying to develop a more luxurious, organic quality to an architecture which is still structurally logical and clear but has this added dimension of a sense of human comfort. That's where I'm heading."

FOR FURTHER DETAILS, SEE FACT FILE.



**THIS PAGE** THE PLUNGE POOL IN THE COURTYARD APPEARS TO FLOW INSIDE THE HOUSE. IN FACT, A SHEET OF GLASS SEPARATES IT. **ABOVE, RIGHT** FROM THE STREET, THE HOUSE IS NOT DOMINATING, MAINTAINING THE FORM OF THE SEMI-DETACHED COTTAGE THAT WAS THERE BEFORE IT.