



Rear elevation of the pavilion extension viewed from the west. PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT BURROWS

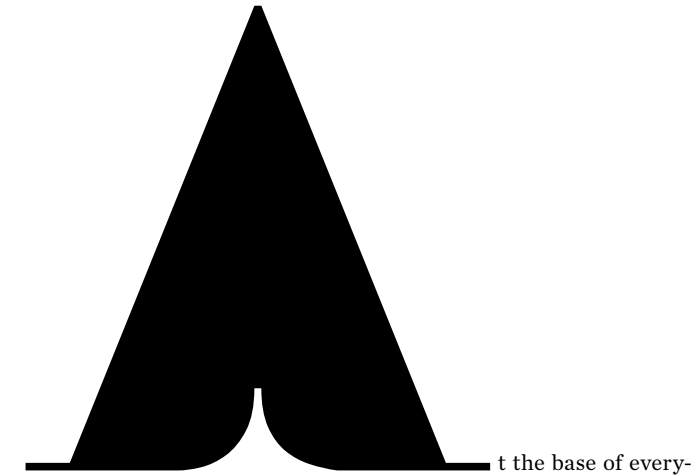
# ALL THE CLIENT IS ASKING FOR IS A GREAT HOUSE TO LIVE IN

ARCHITECT SHAUN LOCKYER RESTRAINS HIS INTELLECTUAL ASPIRATIONS AND KEEPS IT SIMPLE, GOING BACK TO THE INITIAL BRIEF FOR THIS NON-TRADITIONAL NEW FARM EXTENSION.





The kitchen and outdoor living space viewed from the living room. PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT BURROWS



At the base of everything that interests me in architecture is the dynamic between light and dark. Lightness and darkness only exist with each other through form. The contrasting forms of an existing cottage with a new extension to the rear, designed by Shaun Lockyer, evoked childhood memories and reminded me of visits to buildings by Louis Kahn and Tadao Ando – two masters renowned for their use of light.

Located in the trendy inner city suburb of New Farm in Brisbane on a narrow small lot with adjoining neighbours in very close proximity is a modestly renovated cottage. Modifications to the cottage are minimal. White weatherboards, raw block work retaining walls and dark timber highlights form a subtle and understated palette. The extension is a simple punctuated extrusion clearly juxtaposed from the cottage in form and colour. The new is black, the old is white. The new is full of light, the old is dark. The new reveals the architect's allegiance to Modernism through its concern with form and detail, the old forms part of the local vernacular.

A reconfigured entry sequence to the side of the cottage creates a close encounter with the adjoining property before arriving at the principal entrance into the dwelling. Rational planning has both horizontal and vertical circulation paths located here also. Upon entering, a black kitchen is glimpsed through a dark timber screen. This is juxtaposed with a filigree of light and shadows created through a louvred stair well connecting both upper and lower levels. The open stair risers create a play of light and shadow on unadorned vertical white walls. As Kahn once said: "A stair isn't something you get out of a catalogue but a very important event in a building" (Louis Kahn, 1975, *Light is the Theme*, p21). Moving up and down this stair affords detailed glimpses of the adjoining Queenslanders; accepting and embracing the immediate context.

The new extension incorporates the primary living spaces, kitchen, living, dining with main bedroom above accessed via an internal deck connected to a loft space located within the nexus of the dwelling. In the new living area I was reminded of childhood days spent playing under our raised Queenslander in midsummer. Clearly the internal materials of wide French oak floor boards, spotted gum decking, black two-pac kitchen joinery and jet black granite island bench with smooth white plasterboard walls are finishes not generally found in the average worker's cottage or house on stilts. However, it was the combination of exposed floor joists over head, ability to open or close glass sliding doors in response to changing weather conditions, louvres funnelling breezes across the space and use of internal decking boards and timber screens that evoked a similar sense of space.

Black, not normally associated with the local Queensland ver-

#### PEER OPINION: SHAWN GODWIN, BASE ARCHITECTURE, QLD

Faced with an atypical worker's cottage on a small lot this dwelling needed to be revived and be given a new lifestyle. Typically the most challenging elements of such projects are the journey to, around and through the existing features that are required to be retained. In this case the success starts from the front boundary in its enticing portal, which frames the new arrival. The journey down the side creates intrigue and leads the viewer to the zone of inception between new and old, which eliminates the necessity for unwanted cramped hallways that further splits the functions of the house; that of entertaining and sleeping.

A mix of revived old materiality and new textural elements softens the usual harshness of the common renovation and seamlessly blends the experience of the visit. Whilst the original dwelling and its spaces were borne out of the scarcity of materials and the notion of bare essentials, it is now given the chance to belong to a bigger picture, which is reflective of the new occupants' lifestyle that is centred around entertaining, outdoor living and openness.

cular, was exactly what Lockyer proposed for all the kitchen finishes including joinery, walls and ceilings. The client pulled rank and accepted only the joinery and island bench. This mass of darkness is extremely successful as it heightens the fall of light across opposite and adjacent white plasterboard walls. I concur with Ando's observation that, "Modern architecture has produced a world of exceeding transparency – a world of homogenous light, bright to the exclusion of all else, devoid of darkness" (Francesco Dal Co, 2000, *Tadao Ando Complete Works*, p470).

Two items perplexed me, however: the rather masculine overscaled door handles and the wrapping of materials ninety degrees onto adjacent surfaces. In some cases this works, but not always.

What Lockyer has managed to achieve through this extension is to heighten the everyday. His clear glass window splashback beautifully frames a portion of weatherboards and downpipe of the neighbouring facade. Simple questions asked of the program have also allowed for everyday activities to be cherished. 'Why should a kitchen not open onto the deck instead of the dining room? Why not enter from the side? Why not open an ensuite into the void over a living room? Why can a veranda not be a study?' These questions asked by the architect have resulted in an experiential architecture, not a theoretical one, and is marked by a self-assured and sensual presence, shaped by light, shadow and form.

#### CONTRIBUTOR: **KERRIE CAMPBELL**

is a Brisbane-based architect specialising in boutique office fit outs, residential extensions and exhibition design, including the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial, now showing at GoMA.



CLIENT STATEMENT:

## How to silence the cynics

The house in Villiers Street presented a challenging opportunity that demanded a specific kind of design experience. I had worked with Shaun Lockyer of Arkhefield Architects on two small lot houses in Bulimba (right) a few years back and had enjoyed his ideas and how he worked with me. The devices explored in the design to open up the space, both in plan and in section, are very successful. Simple things like breezes and light are really tangible and make living in the house a joy.

I wanted to be challenged and I have been. Shaun was very keen on the black and pushed the idea of a strong masculine scheme which I backed. A lot of my friends seemed doubtful about some of the ideas when I explained them initially but the result speaks for itself and has silenced the cynics. The end result is cool, calm and fantastic to live in. The seamless relationship to the outdoor space, the experience of space and the way in which privacy has been achieved are all great successes of the design and I am conscious of their impact on my enjoyment of the house.

The process was a really healthy and enjoyable one. Being both builder and client, I was able to work things out with Shaun on-site and just make it happen. There were no debates or arguments; just a collaborative approach to making the best possible outcome in the most effective and efficient way. I am thrilled with the outcome and glad that the quality of what has been done here has resonated with others as well. I still enjoy seeing the sense of surprise on visitors' faces as they come into the new space, as most would simply not expect something like this to sit quietly on the back of a modest little worker's cottage. I love coming home.

**Nick Barr**



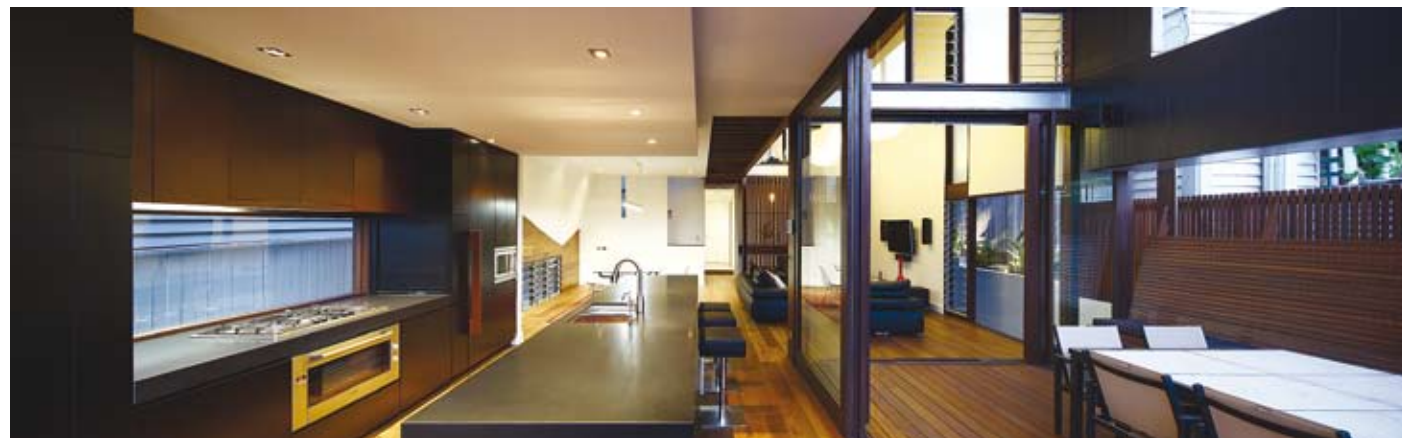
Bulimba (rear view): The client's past work with Lockyer. PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT BURROWS



The living room, within the double-height space, viewed from the dining room. PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT BURROWS



Sectional view revealing the relationship between the indoor and outdoor living spaces. PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT BURROWS



Sectional view of the kitchen and outdoor living space. PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT BURROWS



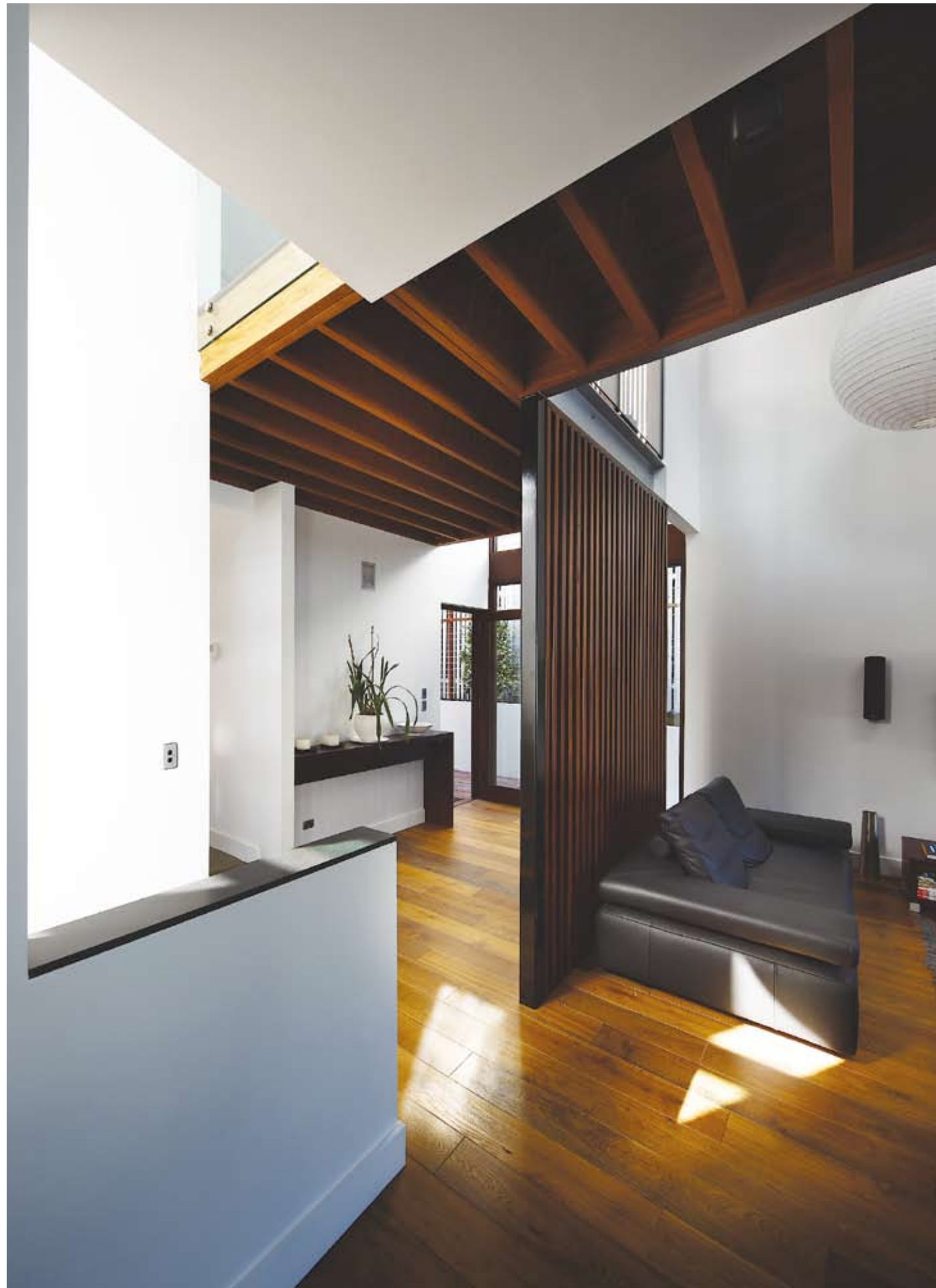
New Farm c1904. COLLECTION STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND

LOCATION NOTES:

### THE GENTRIFICATION OF NEW FARM

The convenience of a riverside suburb just 1.5km from the city centre signed the deal on New Farm becoming Brisbane's recent new home to the trendy, young and wealthy inner-city set. The suburb traditionally housed workers from the shipyards and ballast quarries along Kangaroo Point, and is known for its strong Italian community, as well as its late 1980s anti-establishment culture. New Farm's urban renewal sees the suburb increase in density and diversity with new builds contrasting with its established built heritage.





Interior view of the entry area and timber undercroft. PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT BURROWS



En suite bathroom with open plan robes. PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT BURROWS



The entry looking through to Villiers Street. PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT BURROWS

INSPIRATION NOTES:  
**WRAPPING AND FOLDING**

The conceptual and practical devices behind Villiers Street lend themselves to the idea of wrapping and folding, which suggests the ancient Japanese art of origami. This project may not be made of paper, but it does challenge what is perceived as a floor, wall or roof, and raises the question of how material application in unconventional ways is critical to challenging expectation.

The client was certainly challenged, on more than one occasion, and who wouldn't be: Timber floors wrap up walls. Plasterboard twists. Decking boards are used inside. Raw block in stack bond is used to address entry. Off-form concrete supports a timber weatherboard house. And on top of all this, the architect wants to paint the interior black. It may seem an unusual colour choice, but in this project its intent was to anchor the space and provide a grounding juxtaposition to the wraps and folds, which can also be seen in the project below.

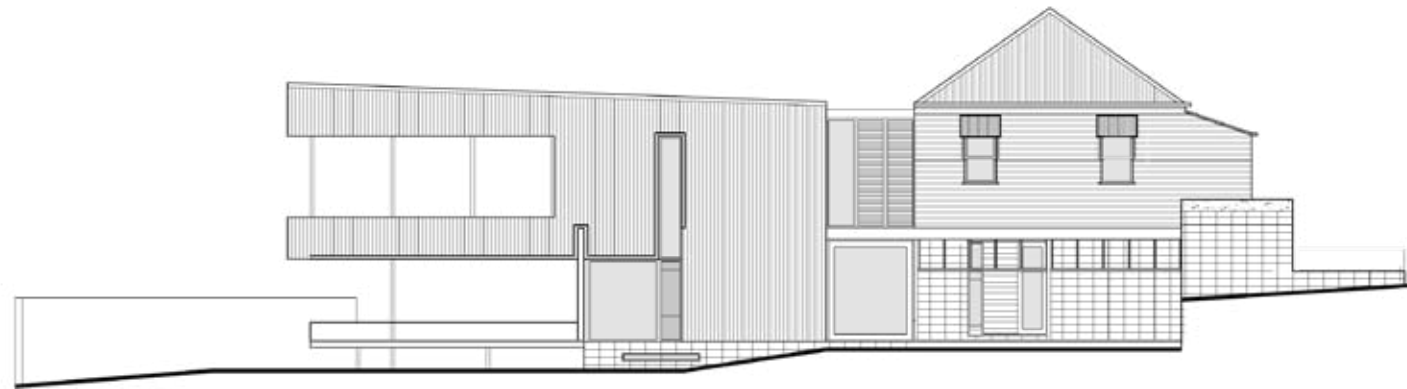


The 'folding' stair of Oxlade Drive. PHOTOGRAPHY ARKHEFIELD



Oxlade Drive's 'wrapped' exterior facade. PHOTOGRAPHY ARKHEFIELD





Southern elevation through entry colonnade .



Northern elevation.

**KEY MATERIAL INFORMATION:**

**BATHROOM** Nostromo wall mounted mixer (basin tapware), Tonic motion shower mixer (shower tapware), Waterslide spin round 250mm shower rose with Quadro 300mm long arm (showerhead tapware) all from Rogerseller, Vitreous China Cube 500 from Caroma (basin), Freestanding Zuri quartz 1600bath from Rogerseller (bath), Black vitrified mosaic from Majer Tiles (tiles)

**CLADDING** Shadowclad plywood and weatherboard

**DECKING** Spotted gum hardwood

**FLOORING** Prefinished French oak wide board fixed tongue and groove strip over plywood base, salvage

**KITCHEN BENCH AND GABLE** Indian Jet Black 20mm granite natural stone slab from WK Marble and Granite

**KITCHEN TAPWARE** Café Gooseneck kitchen mixer and pullout spray in polished chrome from Rogerseller

**KITCHEN WALLS** Satin two-pac paint finish, Dulux Black PGLA9

**UPPER LEVEL CARPET** Cavalier Bremworth Trojan Twist in Corinth

**LANDSCAPE** Boral honed pavers

**MASONRY** Hanson Volcanic Ash face blockwork, Boral Grey Block rendered blockwork

**STAIR** Spotted gum

**WATER TANKS** Squat Q-Tank 5000 litre

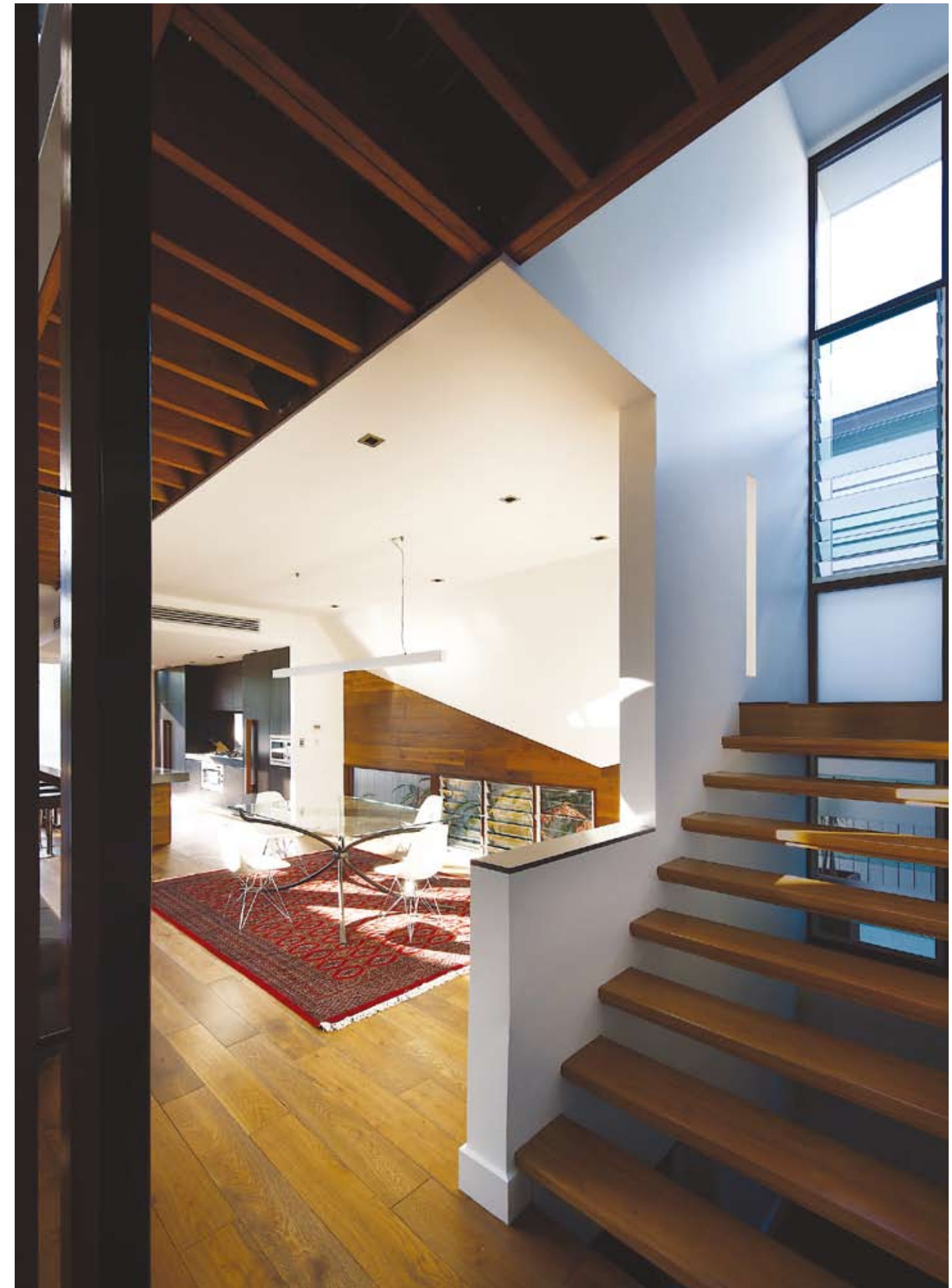
**WINE RACK** Eurocave Modulocube evolving storage system in solid beech

**PROJECT TEAM:**

**ARCHITECT** Arkhefield Architects  
**PROJECT ARCHITECT** Shaun Lockyer  
**INTERIOR DESIGNER** Aimee Turner  
**SENIOR ARCHITECTURAL TECHNICIAN** Justin Boland  
**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER** Anthony Cronau (Morgans)  
**LIGHTING** Arkhefield Architects  
**BUILDER** Nick Barr, Limitless Constructions  
**LANDSCAPE** Owner/builder



The rear of the Villiers Street residence prior to the extension. PHOTOGRAPHY ARKHEFIELD



Interior view of stair and dining room. PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT BURROWS





SHAUN LOCKYER HAS LONG TIPPED HIS HAT TO THE WORK OF ELIZABETH WATSON BROWN, SO WE INVITED HER TO SIT DOWN WITH HIM AND DISCUSS THE CRAFTING OF VILLIERS STREET.

**Elizabeth Watson Brown:** *It's a very contemporary space in terms of the way everything interacts, but it's incredibly respectful of the original structure. Was that a conscious decision?*

**Shaun Lockyer:** Yes, we wanted to respect and to acknowledge the original cottage. Even to the extent that the planning and the location of walls within the existing cottage has set up an axis through the house that is experienced very much in three-dimensions. This is through the expression of the flooring on the ground floor and then the passage, or the bridge, on the first floor.

**EWB:** *With the bridge element I am reminded of what the original under floor structure of the house would have been, so it's as though you have peeled away the original construction of the house. Even more than the materiality, you have achieved a conversation between the old and the new.*

**SL:** In terms of the dialogue about designing houses, where access to money and materials are becoming more and more of an issue, it's about trying to include devices that allow a person to have a better quality of life. Designing a space without it becoming massively expensive and complex is something that I find a challenge.

**EWB:** *The house is really making the absolute most of being able to occupy the site right to the edges. It embodies some of the old-fashioned values of modesty, unpretentiousness and honesty.*

**SL:** As an architect you have certain devices to deal with certain kinds of issues. You come to each project wanting to be inventive, wanting to be unique, wanting to find ways that respond particularly to that client, particularly to that site and to the whole experience of living in that environment. But there is also a serendipity. One of the things that I've really enjoyed about this project is the experience of working with a client who is also a builder and not overly reductive through the building process.

**EWB:** *So much of this is about the crafting. The client has got such a great depth of ownership.*

**SL:** I've found the experience of doing something well in architecture is about the experience of connecting with people and it's connecting with clients, builders, consultants – everybody.

**EWB:** *The conversation that you're having with that client, and the trust that you have, makes it possible for it to operate that way. It's entirely appropriate and actually probably the best way to deliver [a project] like this.*



Na's House by Elizabeth Watson Brown Architects. PHOTOGRAPHY ANDREW YEO



Elizabeth Watson Brown Architects' House of Orange. PHOTOGRAPHY BILL ELYETT

**SL:** I'm finding more and more that if I could choose a process, if I could say to a client, 'Look this is the process that we think will deliver you the best outcome', it would be exactly this sort of process.

**EWB:** *What I found particularly intriguing [about the house] is the whole organisation of the entry point; it's subtle, but it's a radical move. I'm interested in how that came about in terms of the way you conceived it. What were the main drivers, what were the main influences?*

**SL:** The entry sequence, while not necessarily unique, is something that I think sets up a particular kind of experience. Entering at this nexus between old and new is quite an interesting idea and there is a certain dialogue; a relationship between the spaces.



The entry sequence from Villiers Street. PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT BURROWS

In the act of taking a Queenslander that exists in the context of sitting in the landscape, where cars weren't even part of the concept and the house is accessed traditionally from the middle, there's a very strong symmetry that exists in the house. As soon as the decision is made to break that relationship with the traditional connection to the earth then I think from a contemporary architecture point of view, one is forced to be overt about that change.

We tried to preserve very carefully that sense of the Queenslander's relationship to the ground. We only marginally lifted the house so the way one perceives the original cottage relative to the ground, is not entirely different to the original house, and that sense of undercroft and air underneath the original house is intact.

Because we couldn't manoeuvre two cars around a single stair-

case it forced us to either enter up onto the elevated platform from the front of the site or traverse the site as part of the entry sequence, rather than having it all as just nebulous space inside of the house. In doing this we take all that meaningless space inside of the house and actually turn it into something that's meaningful. I think that conscious move to break the original relationship with the entry is the thing that for most people almost defines this space.

There's also the relocation of the kitchen, rather than it being in the heart of the house with the living area occupying the space around it there's a sense of the kitchen being in the middle of the living zone, which happens to incorporate outside and inside. We're occupying an outdoor living space and its relationship to the kitchen is as significant as direct as the indoor dining room.

**EWB:** *You give the client the ability to calibrate their own environment. We're looking at walls that slide right away. The client then has control of their own environment and they can reconfigure it so it's not a contained box that has absolutely no nuances to it. That is a really nice reinterpretation of the traditional Queenslander's engagement with the outside.*

**SL:** There's that whole discussion of what's comfortable to live in; people often lament the joy and romance of the Queenslander, but, on the other hand, in a sense it's almost like an occupied camping structure because it's like a tent. It's like a timber tent, so in winter it's cold and in summer it's warm, but you're there in the elements.

While we have done far more sophisticated things in the extension than what would have been done in the original cottage, there's still very much a sense of the house simply being a device that allows you to mediate between the climate on a day-to-day basis.

CONTRIBUTOR:  
**ELIZABETH WATSON BROWN**  
Principal of Queensland-based Elizabeth Watson Brown Architects, Watson Brown is known primarily for her residential projects. House of Orange won a Regional Commendation in the 2008 Queensland State Architecture Awards in the Small Project Architecture category.