

HOME & AWAY
Design trends
JENNY BROWN



Home-studio combo hits right notes

Creative, open-minded clients and inspired architects are a recipe for some wonderfully original house and studio projects.

in MELBOURNE

There are so many ingenious yet entirely practical elements in a house-studio combination that Breathe Architecture's Fairley Batch created in a Northcote heritage neighbourhood, and each deserves examination.

The sweet form of the double-storey, four-bedroom house, and the front window placements and proportions, were, for instance, inspired by an old bluestone cottage down the road. Instead of stone, however, the facade, "Stonewood", is made of silver top ash tiles – laid like stonework atop steel framing. And that's the simplest clever effect to explain.

In a house built for the family of a composer (who uses the refurbished, detached studio as her

recording and editing facility), the living/dining/kitchen/laundry and second bathroom, as well as a dedicated music room, are all set downstairs on the concrete slab.

The bedrooms, including the master suite with a side balcony, are upstairs. The wooden lining boards of the 1.5-metre x 10-metre outdoor alcove have been charred for effect and low maintenance. To the architect, the formatting of this intriguingly angled space suggests "a lean-to, typical of inner-city heritage housing".

But take a closer look at the house's north-facing street frontage. Because the clients requested a home that could be made extroverted or introverted as mood or weather dictated, Fairley Batch has come up with an amazingly kinetic scheme of moveable screens that can open or close down the bedroom windows and, more dramatically, the



Clever effect: The facade features silver top ash tiles, laid like stonework on steel framing. Photo: Andrew Wuttke

lower living frontage almost the entire way across the deck.

In other words, the walls of the lower facade are also doors that the architect describes, modestly, as

"operable screens. What it means is that the face is always changing with the opening and closing of the various screens". Internally, more side-shifting door/walls of wood

open and close down the spaces.

"The pivoting screen device was so great for this site that I originally called it 'the open and shut house'," says Batch says.

in SYDNEY



Retreat: This Forest Lodge home's courtyard was inspired by Japanese design. Photo: Katherine Lu

The purchase of a disused 5.5-metre x 17.5-metre rear council laneway allowed the owner of a Forest Lodge property to expand a single-level dwelling with a rear artist's studio into a cohesive and uncannily verdant urban compound with two separate residences and a small new painting studio set in the lane.

Although the property is boxed in by apartments, architect Stephen Rofail says that when

he first stepped in and saw the lush garden, "my goal was to create an inward-focused forest retreat where, once you stepped inside, you would never believe you were surrounded by multi-storey buildings". He says his inspiration "steered towards Japanese-style courtyard houses, with the forest becoming the common garden".

Rofail realised that making coherent the three separate buildings relied on them becoming conversant, "pavilion-style structures, with gabled roof

forms that create a hierarchy of spatial relationships with connecting focal points".

The ribbed ceilings and the apex gables, with their glazed ends for light and ventilation, was about making the roof structures "not look too monolithic. I was trying to create delicately shaped, finely detailed roofs that respected and replicated the intricate beauty of the tree canopy".

Another aspect of the responsive aesthetic is shown in the cedar-trimmed windows and

doors that create interesting geometries. He explains "the sliding and bi-fold doors to the living and dining rooms create a cedar ribbon that makes the roof above float seamlessly".

Commencing the project with no preconceived ideas, the artist-owner now loves her oasis. And Rofail is "particularly fond" of the dining area, which, when the doors are open, "feels" like a garden pavilion. He also points out how the steel awning sheltering this room "folds down the side wall like origami".

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