

Marrickville COURTYARD HOUSE

by David Boyle
Architect

• SYDNEY, NSW •

Located on one of three blocks created in the subdivision of a large corner site, this new house is cleverly planned around a sunny courtyard.

Words by Genevieve Lilley
Photography by Brett Boardman

As a passer-by, you might not initially notice this house by David Boyle Architect. There are lots of little cottages on its street in Marrickville – some brick, some timber-clad, some rendered. There are sheds and verandahs and an impressively wide range of decorative fences and gates. It seems that many of these structures are homemade – like built versions of craft stalls at a local fete.

Then it becomes clear that there is a house on this street that is a bit different. It has red steel poles like the neighbour's carport, but the timber cladding is vertical rather than the usual horizontal. The front porch roof pulls away at the front wall, and the wall is angled slightly as it gets closer to the huge street tree.

From this point, once the front door is opened, everything about this visually modest and spiritually generous house is extraordinary, and everything makes sense. David's calm, gentle way of explaining it belies the skill he and his team have in tweaking, pulling and dragging the very best out of a project.



01 The house is planned around a sunny landscaped courtyard at the front of the site.



The client came with development experience, pre-development-application advice from the local council and a standard large corner site for subdivision. The vast house facing the adjacent street was subdivided, and the rear yard, nearly all concrete surrounded by decaying sheds and garages, became a third site. This piece of land, accessed from the side street, became the plot on which Marrickville Courtyard House was built. The land has a long street frontage but is not very deep.

Initially, planning advice was that the new house should be built along the frontage with a garden tucked behind it, as is traditional in the neighbourhood. But this design was refused by the council. In a funeral post-decision meeting with the planners, David quietly suggested that forms more similar to the adjacent five- to six-metre-wide houses might be considered. The project blossomed from there.

And so this house is U-shaped. On the outside of the U are all

the back-of-house functions – a carport, a drying yard, space for the bins. On the southern boundary, where garage buildings used to abut the boundary line, the old boundary walls were kept and the new house sits hard against them. These boundary walls were only 2100 millimetres above floor level. The architects kept this lower height for a portion of the kitchen space, and then the flat ceiling over the benchtop and corner pantry rises dramatically to a much higher vaulted ceiling, bathed in oblique sunlight. The banal constraint has “caused” a delightful result.

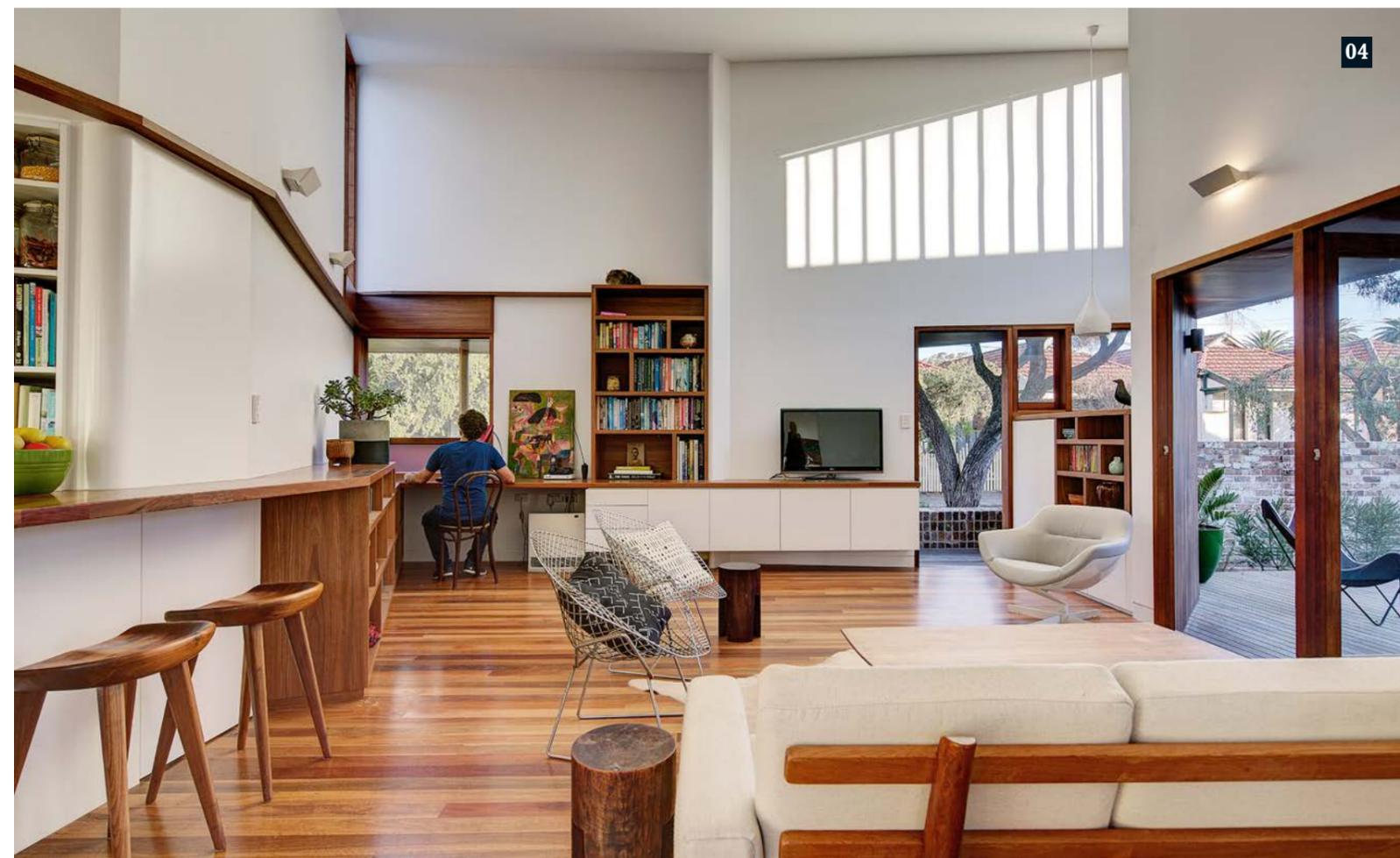
The main living space, prosaically the big combined kitchen/dining/living room of every new house, has a display area that welcomes visitors, a space for bags and keys near the door, bookshelves and a study area facing the street, a warm north-facing sitting area, more bookshelves, the kitchen (with its myriad ceilings), a sunny rear deck for breakfast, and herbs in the rear garden two steps away.

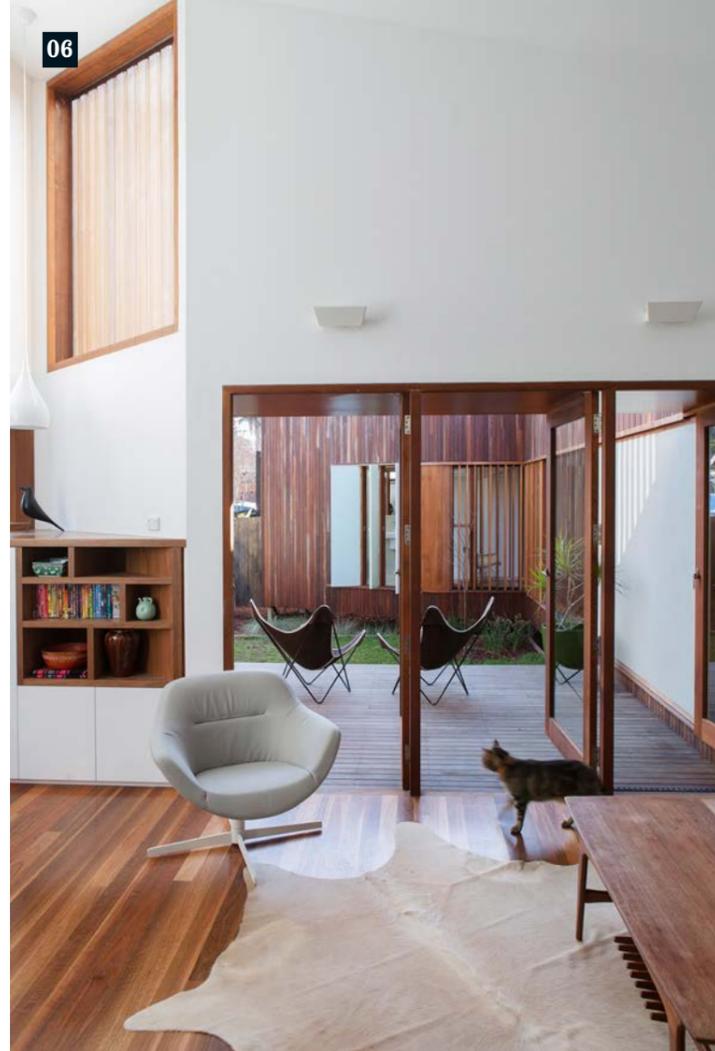


02 The house is a U-shape around a front courtyard hidden behind a modest brick wall.

03 The living area is one large space, broken down using joinery and ceiling heights.

04 Timber joinery, window frames and floors are paired with white walls. Artwork: Huyen Trang.





05 The front porch roof pulls away at the front wall, and the wall is angled slightly as it gets closer to a street tree.

06 The sitting area of the main living space opens to a generous north-facing deck in the front garden.

07 Carefully placed screens on the ensuite open to the courtyard for natural ventilation, while maintaining privacy.

08 The ensuite features a curved shower, with glimpses of light coming through a high-level window.

The variety of “rooms” within this room means this volume bears no resemblance to the dreary white boxes with bifolds in the back of every real estate magazine.

The sitting area of the main living space opens to a generous north-facing deck in the front garden, and this sunny landscaped hideaway is shielded from the street by a modest recycled brick wall. From the deck, the view of the street is removed but the canopy of the street tree can still be seen fanning over the garden, protecting the occupants from the western sun.

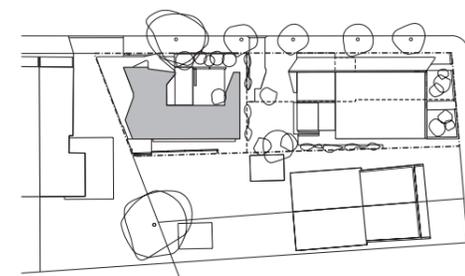
Two rooms (either side of a bathroom/laundry) are ambiguous – their doors slide back to the hallway that flanks the deck. One is used as a music room, one as a guestroom, sometimes a writing room. These rooms can variously be the central creative hubs of the house or can be spaces where friends can retire to.

The last arm of the U is the main bedroom and bathroom, pushed close to the northern boundary. The ensuite, on the north-west tip of the plan, has a profoundly beautiful curved shower, with

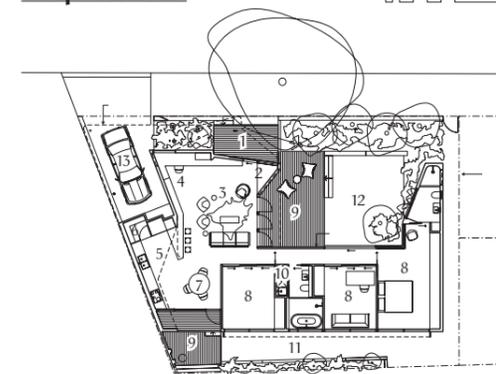
glimpses of light coming through a high-level window to the north and fresh air coming through carefully placed operable windows behind screens to the courtyard. From the living room, this wing seems like a screen only, wrapping around the new garden. For a block hived off the bottom of a big back garden, it gives no sense of what else is around. There is no overlooking of others, nor does one feel overlooked.

The house is beautifully finished but feels very relaxed. It has a rich variety of spaces but none is designed to impress. It feels huge but sits on a relatively small site. It is built to endure, though none of the component materials is extravagant.

To have David Boyle explain this house as a response to the streetscape, a response to the brick boundary wall and a shield from the other dwellings on the formerly large block, makes the process seem so logical. One might mistakenly think this project was simply destined to be as it is, that there was no craft in it at all. Rather, it is the result of a master-craftsman at work. 



Site plan 1:1000



Plan 1:400



Section 1:400

- 1 Verandah
- 2 Entry
- 3 Living
- 4 Study
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Pantry
- 7 Dining
- 8 Bedroom
- 9 Deck
- 10 Laundry
- 11 Kitchen garden
- 12 Courtyard
- 13 Carport

09 The flat ceiling over the kitchen benchtop rises to a much higher vaulted ceiling over the living space.



Architect

David Boyle Architect

17 Como Parade
Pretty Beach NSW 2257
+61 2 4360 1838
info@davidboylearchitect.com.au
davidboylearchitect.com.au

Practice profile

A small practice with a focus on poetic design solutions and integration of craft and sustainability across bespoke single houses, small-scale subdivision developments and multiresidential architecture.

Project team

David Boyle, James Fraser,
Marie Bergstrom

Builder

Albatross Constructions

Consultants

Engineer: BVG Consultants

Landscaping: Gardenbliz

Cabinetmaker:
Kitchen Trends

Products

Roofing: Lysaght Custom Orb and Klip-Lok roofing, Half Round gutter and custom flashing in Zinalume

External walls: Woodform Architectural spotted gum cladding and Western red cedar in Cutek Extreme finish

Internal walls: CSR plasterboard in Dulux 'Vivid White'

Windows: Acacia Joinery Western red cedar windows, sunscreens and doors in Cutek Extreme oil finish; blackbutt sills

Flooring: Boral spotted gum boards in Polycure Naturoil modified oil finish

Lighting: Omikron NAHA wall light; Gubi Semi pendant; &Tradition Spinning pendant; Artemide Castore pendant and Dioscuri wall light; Foscarini Aplomb pendants; Ambience Lighting Wedge uplights

Kitchen: Smeg oven and undermounted rangehood; St George gas cooktop; Fisher & Paykel integrated refrigerator; Miele integrated dishwasher; Oliveri sink; Sussex Scala Square sink mixer; solid spotted gum benchtop in 30 percent gloss polyurethane; Inax Format ceramic tile splashback from Artedomus

Bathroom: Caroma Marc Newson wall-faced Invisi Series II toilet suite, wall-hung basin and tap and shower sets; Rogerseller Amelie bath; Inax Yohen Border tile and Format tile from Artedomus; Concrete encaustic floor tiles from Earp Bros

Heating and cooling:

Custom Western red cedar screens and awning

External elements: Spotted gum decking; recycled ironbark railway sleeper steps, seats and garden beds

Other: Custom spotted gum living room joinery; Western red cedar picture rails; Hans Wegner sofa; Bertoia wire chairs; Parker coffee table; African solid timber stools; Eero Saarinen Tulip dining table with vintage chairs; Eames Molded Plastic Rocker

Area

Site: 278 m²

Floor: 123 m²

Time schedule

Design, documentation:

2 years, 6 months

Construction:

11 months

(including the other two houses in subdivision)