

AUSTRALIAN RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

HOUSES[®]

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ISSUE 104 \$12.95
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Woollahra TERRACE

by Sam Crawford
Architects

• SYDNEY, NSW •

To prepare it for the next stage of its life as a family home, this two-storey 1870s timber cottage has been revived and reorganized with a single-storey addition to the rear.

Words by David Welsh
Photography by Brett Boardman

How we remember architecture is something that is seldom discussed, at least in the context of alterations and additions. Often the heritage value of a building is seen through the lens of that memory, and the building's value is attributed accordingly.

When you put on the beer goggles of a real estate agent's "sell," where florid descriptions like "all the charm and rusticity of a fairytale cottage," and "no pretensions to stark modernization here, just pure gentle character" are commonplace, things can become very blurry indeed.

When Suraj and Anita acquired their fairytale two-storey timber cottage in Woollahra, Sydney, they approached Sam Crawford Architects to look at how they could achieve the best for the property. The couple chose Sam after Anita's parents had successfully worked with his practice on their own house around the corner.

Once the detailed analysis of the existing house began, it became clear that "character" was code for general decay and disrepair – with rot and termites having taken their toll on the house over more than a hundred years of existence. Moreover, issues

surrounding waterproofing and fireproofing the house to bring it up to contemporary building regulations meant that a great deal of the existing house needed to be rebuilt.

In interpreting the brief to create a contemporary family home, the architects walked the tightrope between what should be kept and what could be changed. Of critical importance was how the original timber house contributed to the feel of the street. With this in mind, the front two rooms were essentially retained in their original proportion and beyond these rooms the building was completely reconsidered. The critical element in making the house work effectively was getting the circulation right – principally the vertical circulation. A new front entry was introduced by using the external side passage on the eastern side of the house, protected by a folded-steel canopy and a breezeway beneath. This freed up the original downstairs front room to be used more flexibly – it was the entry to the old house and had always been limited to being used as the living room. Now it could be used as bedroom, study, living room or playroom.

A light, oiled steel-and-timber stair enables a free flow of air



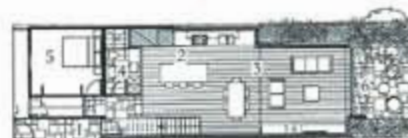
01 The new concrete ceiling is set higher than the original ceiling to shift focus onto the new living space.



Second floor 1:400



First floor 1:400



Ground floor 1:400



02 Although modest in dimensions, the living space feels generous due to its openness and connection to outdoor spaces.

and light from the new front entry down through to the new living spaces. Behind the original line of the two-storey house, a new single-storey element with a concrete ceiling has been added. Set at a higher level than the original ceiling, the new concrete ceiling not only gives the new living room some additional thermal mass, it also shifts the spatial arrangement of the house to focus on the new living and dining rooms. Setting the living space back from the western side boundary enables the landscaped courtyard, designed with Melissa Wilson Landscape Architects, to wrap around two sides of the new room. Viewed from a low-slung window, the garden feels bigger than it is. Ground-hugging plants wrap around the side of the house, and sandstone blocks salvaged from the demolition of parts of the original building fabric evoke the feeling of a Japanese garden, albeit in an antipodean context. Most importantly, this gesture gives the work a feeling of generosity by eschewing the all-too-typical land grab for a few extra square metres in favour of an additional source of natural light. The effect makes a huge difference to the way the spaces look, feel and operate.

The concrete roof structure of the living room also holds a roof

garden immediately above. This arrangement works wonderfully to buffer the new bedroom behind it from the neighbours immediately beyond. The garden, less than two metres deep, provides an effective foil from outside gaze. A timber window seat, built into the wall out to the garden, adds another aspect to the new work, providing a quiet contemplative space to sit and enjoy a sunny moment.

Between the new main bedroom at the rear and the refurbished original front room, an unexpectedly large bathroom, lit by a tapering skylight, adds another aspect to the house that belies its small overall footprint. Again it's about using light in a clever and unpretentious manner to transform a relatively compact area into a comfortable spatial experience.

The memory of the old house, dusted off and restored, provides a platform for the next stage of its life as a family household. A fairytale ending has been realized at the hand of the design team, and the result is an example of how we can adapt our existing built environment to provide inspiring spaces to live – not just now, but well into the future. 00

- 1 Entry
- 2 Kitchen
- 3 Dining/living
- 4 Laundry
- 5 Bedroom
- 6 Courtyard
- 7 Rooftop garden
- 8 Attic store

03 Bifold doors open onto a landscaped courtyard with a Japanese feel, albeit in an antipodean context.

04 To keep the timber cottage's street presence, the two front rooms have been retained and refreshed.

05 A new front entry was introduced by using the external side passage on the eastern side of the house, protected by a folded steel canopy.



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Practice profile
A collaborative studio-based practice focused primarily on the design of residential and public buildings.

Project team
Sam Crawford, Wai-Yee Ho,
Lachlan Delaney

Builder
Horizon Habitats

Consultants
Engineer: Northrop Engineers
Landscaping: Melissa Wilson Landscape Architects
Quantity surveyor: QS Plus
Heritage: Weir Phillips Architects
Hydraulic engineer: Glenn Haig and Partners
Planning: JBA
Fire: Delfire
Asbestos: Safe Environments
Geotechnical: JK Geotechnics
Surveyor: Dunlop Thorpe and Co

Products
Roofing: Lysaght Klip-Lok and Custom Orb in zincalume
External walls: Render over brickwork and treated pine weatherboard in Dulux 'White'

Internal walls: Plasterboard painted in Dulux 'White'
Windows: Architectural Window Systems aluminium casement and bifold windows; Viridian double glazing; JWI Louvres clear anodized retractable louvres
Doors: Custom solid-core pivot doors, painted; Architectural Window Systems aluminium bifold doors in clear anodized finish
Flooring: Havwoods Quadro Character Grade European Oak engineered timber floorboards
Lighting: Rolo Mini Track Light; Audrey recessed downlight; Modernica George Nelson Bubble Lamp
Kitchen: Miele oven, cooktop and dishwasher; Fisher and Paykel fridge; Panasonic microwave; Starion mixer;

Unisteel benchtop; custom stainless steel sink; Carrara marble island benchtop
Bathroom: Arena Stone Bianco stone benchtop; Viridian Decor Mirror and VTough toughened glass; Villeroy & Boch basin; Ram and Grohe tapware
Heating and cooling: JWI Louvres retractable louvres
External elements: Arena Stone Bianco stone tile; Basalt Mali basalt tile

Floor area
1272 m² site
156.6 m² floor

Time schedule
Design, documentation: 16 months
Construction: 5 months