

Into the LIGHT

For a young Sydney family, transforming their inner-suburban home proved more rewarding than moving elsewhere. *Andrea Millar* responds to architect *Sam Crawford's* transformation of a dark Victorian terrace into a light filled contemporary home.



The proliferation of 19th Century Victorian terraces defines much of the streetscape in Sydney's established inner-city areas. Many have been re-worked, recycled, and re-invented into divine, light-filled spaces suitable for contemporary living.

Yet many others with their Victorian bones intact have tacky, thoughtless additions. Most are dark and miserable, full stop. The exact level of genius, difficulty and cost for the successful salvation of a terrace house can be hard to appreciate, and begs the question: Is it worth the time, effort and expense?

The answer is yes, definitely. A case in point is this terrace re-invention by Sam Crawford for a couple and their two young children in Newtown, in Sydney's inner suburbs.

For Crawford's clients, Anna Hall, Simon Tobin and their children Max, 7, and Lulu, 4, home was a three-storey terrace (including basement level), last renovated in the 1980s. In a picturesque row amidst mature trees and a moment's walk to bustling King Street, it ticked many boxes.

The physical proximity of the terrace to like-minded, neighbouring families, for instance, provided the Hall-Tobins with a strong sense of community, and the house also had a "feel-good factor," says Anna. This meant that when, finally, the lack of natural light, a poor floor plan and the need for more bathrooms was too much to bear, the family opted for an architect instead of a real estate agent.

Crawford was chosen because his ideas and past projects confirmed to the Hall-Tobins that he understood family life. Things couldn't just look good, they had to function for a family of four. In terms of budget, there was enough in the proverbial pot for an overhaul of the terrace, but elements of the 1980s renovation had to be salvaged so that the quality of the new work could be at a high level.

The basement level was dark despite the 1980s extension featuring a skillion roof and floor-to-ceiling glass doors opening to the garden, which were to stay under the new design. Crawford knew that getting natural light into the basement would require a

01
The glass floor allows sunlight in to the basement level below.

02
The basement has become the new living, dining and kitchen zone. A Ben Quilty artwork hangs on the wall.

03
The sculptural concrete stair wraps around recycled plywood joinery.

04
Lounge room joinery cleverly conceals the entertainment equipment.



03



04

scenario

newtown terrace — NSW, australia

SAM CRAWFORD ARCHITECTS



05



06

05 Anna Tobin entertains in the new basement kitchen.

06 Concrete and plywood are materials of choice for the guest WC in the basement.

07 Glass walls in kitchen open to reveal pantry, laundry and guest WC.

08 The tiled porch floor was replaced with glass which allows light to penetrate into the kitchen.



07

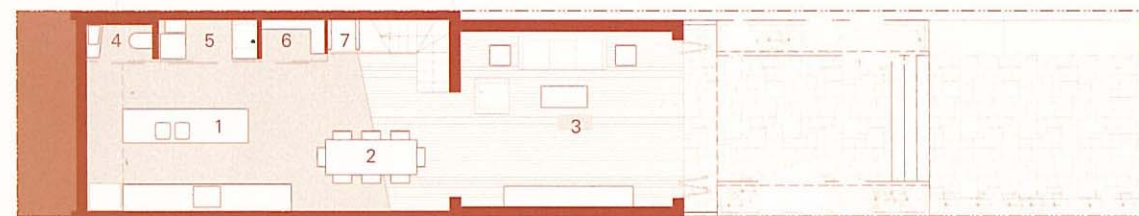
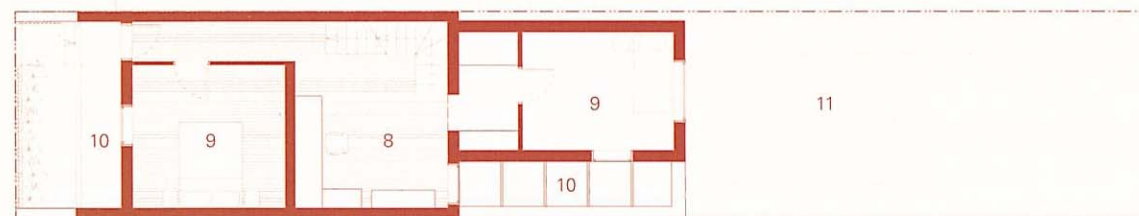
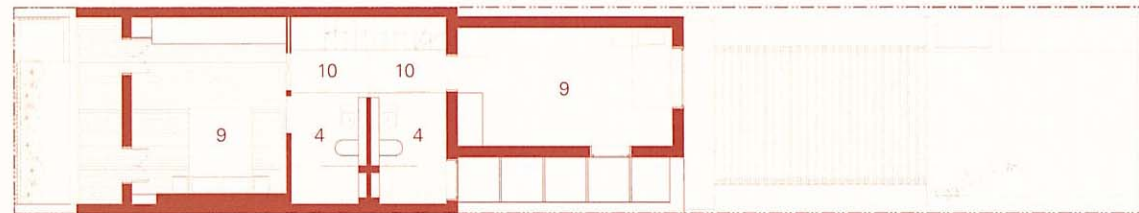


Replacing the *porch* with a sheet of glass allowed a generous *volume* of light into the *basement* kitchen area below.

scenario

newtown terrace — NSW, australia

SAM CRAWFORD ARCHITECTS



- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| 1 Kitchen | 7 Wine Cellar |
| 2 Dining | 8 Music Room |
| 3 Living | 9 Bedroom |
| 4 Bathroom | 10 Glass |
| 5 Laundry | 11 Pergola |
| 6 Pantry | |

thoughtful solution. Adding another bathroom to service the top floor bedrooms and unifying all three levels into one cohesive visual whole, yet retaining a certain 'personality' to each level, were other items on Crawford's agenda.

Crawford's masterful solution for injecting light into the basement was to hollow out the front portion beneath the original tiled front porch. Replacing the porch with a sheet of glass allowed a generous volume of light into the basement kitchen area below. The extra space afforded by the re-design of the floorplan has also resulted in a light, open, continuous living platform for family activities with visual and physical access to outdoor areas.

Important to both Crawford and his clients was the detailing, much of which was designed organically on-site between architect, client and master craftsmen. Raw materials such as unpainted steel, hardwood timbers, concrete and glass were chosen because they require little or no surface finishing and improve with age as they develop their natural patina. Crawford says that the tactile nature and visual honesty of these materials have always appealed to him. "I like people and things that are direct," he says.

This project... is as much about *footprint* as it is about aesthetic and *practical* issues.

The new kitchen, finished in timber and concrete, is a strong sculptural form in the space. Utilities including pantry, laundry, and powder room are set to one side and are sheathed in glass to transmit the precious light and maximise space in the slender terrace. Components such as stainless steel star rigging and hardware for the glass walls were selected for superior quality.

Crawford has linked the three levels by one symbolic and functional gesture, a single sculptural staircase of concrete, steel, timber and glass. The staircase weaves together three levels progressively from heaviest material – concrete – at the base, rising into timber in the middle floor and culminating in glass on the top floor. As well as a symbolic gesture the concept adds a distinct feel to each level.

Recycling and re-invention are strong themes here. Tallowood and Spotted Gum timber joists taken from the existing terrace were used for the credenza and bed frame, the nail markings and saw marks from the demolition telling a story about re-use. Formwork plywood used for the concrete elements was expertly recycled to make the basement level cellar and storage unit.



10



11

09 First floor (top), second floor (middle), lower ground (bottom) floors.

10 At entry level, the new music room connects the bedrooms upstairs with the basement living zone.

11 The top floor features extensive use of glass, a new ensuite and main bathroom.

scenario

newtown terrace — NSW, australia

SAM CRAWFORD ARCHITECTS

Another consideration in this project was the introduction of natural ventilation into the terrace to disengage any need for air-conditioning. This leads us back to the question, is it worth it? This project – part reread, part replacement – is as much about footprint as it is about aesthetic and practical issues.

Speaking in terms of energy alone, it's a mean feat to light up, heat, and cool an original terrace house. Preserving 'community' by creating suitable housing in large cities is another benefit, making the exercise more than worthwhile. Having completed works, and with a new ensuite bathroom and a reworked main bathroom on the top floor to boot, Hall and the family enjoy the fruits of their labour. "I wanted a house with integrity, here everything has been thought through," she says.

ARCHITECT

Sam Crawford Architects
(Sam Crawford, Hernan Alvarez, Leanne Borg, Lionel Teh)

BUILDER

Tricon Constructions

JOINER

Square Peg Woodworks

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Simpson Design Associates

(Kevin Monney)

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Spirit Level (Hugh Main, Richard Elkan)

QUANTITY SURVEYOR

Donald Bayley

TIME TO COMPLETE

10 months

Sam Crawford Architects

samcrawfordarchitects.com.au

(61 2) 9280 3555

Glass, mfgs.com.au. **Kitchen**

bench, basin and stairs

concrete cast on-site by Tricon,

triconconstructions.com, and

SBN Concrete, (61) 425 838

116. **Timber floors** existing,

stained in China Black from

Feast Watson, feastwatson.com.au. **Glass floors** clear,

laminated together with PVB

layer, supplied and installed by

Axolotl Group, axolotl-group.com.

Carpet in children's

bedrooms is Belgian wool

with sisal from The Natural

Floorcovering Centre, natural-

floor.com.au. **Bathroom floors**

concrete screed. **Cellar door**

panels re-worked form-ply from

construction of concrete ele-

ments. **Veneers** Spoked Gum

and Rock Maple from Briggs

Veneers, briggs.com.au. **Steel**

bespoke black steel hardware,

door jambs, stair treads, and

handrails fabricated on-site by

master carpenter Robbie Pat-

terson of Tricon Constructions,

triconconstructions.com. **Stair**

treads recycled Ironbark from

Coach House Timbers, (61 2)

4868 1389. **Steel balustrade**

supplied by Ronstan Architec-

tural, ronstan.com.

LIGHTING

Throughout supplied from

Inlite, inlite.com.au, and

LPA lighting specialists,

lpaust.com.au.

FIXED & FITTED

Tapware Vola, from dedece,

dedece.com. **Sanitary fittings**

from Candana, candana.com.au.

FURNITURE

Joinery credenza, bed,

bedside tables and other

throughout designed by Sam

Crawford Architects in recycled

Spotted Gum and Tallowwood

joists from the existing terrace,

salvaged during demolition.

FINISHES

Interior walls Dulux Vivid

White, dulux.com.au. **Exterior**

walls Porters Dark Secret stone

paint to existing walls and

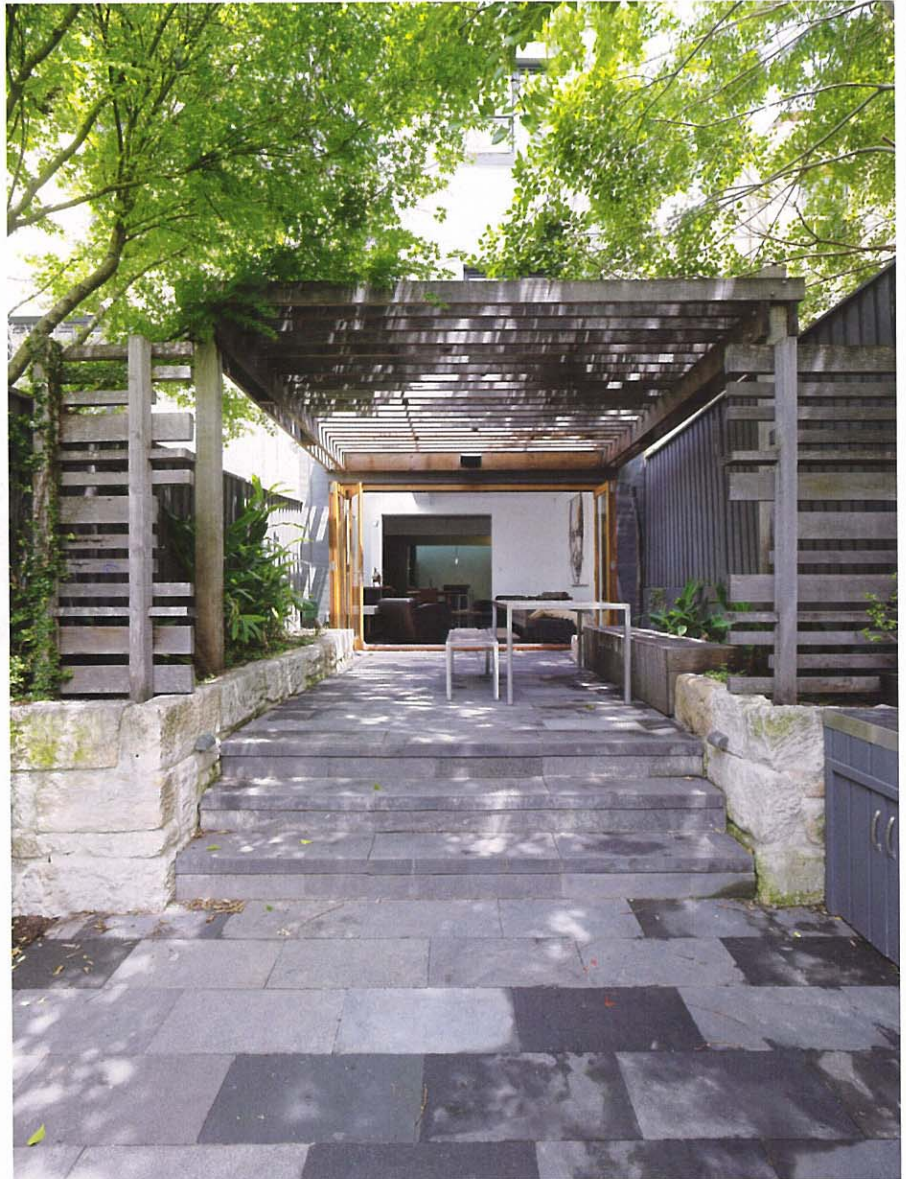
Porters Aniseed to detail metal

work, porterspains.com.au.

Doors and walls acid etched

glass on GEZE Aerolan track

system from Metro Frameless



12

12
The courtyard features leafy trees and natural finishes.