



the
mediator

Reconciling broken ties between suburbia and the bush, this
home offers a new template for nature-first architecture

Photography Rory Gardiner





Like much of Melbourne's suburban idyll, this domestic dwelling perches amongst a row of duplicated homes – each double fronted and left starkly on display as low fences demarcate the boundaries of their neat, ornamental gardens. But while these front lawns are meticulously trimmed and tapered, out back, a bushland reserve runs wild. To some extent, the juxtaposition of these two frames feels jarring, unnatural even. So when a family down the street decided it was time to remodel their home, Studio Bright took this as “an opportunity to reimagine this juncture through humble, replicable design strategies focused on landscape.” From the start, this plot was different; its white picket fence squashed by a robust, sculptural hedge broken only by a carved archway denoting entry. “The hedge serves as the primary elevation, liberating the house from its usual responsibility of a formal facade,” explain the architects. Unshackled from expectation, the design – envisioned in collaboration with landscape architect Sarah Hicks of Emergent Studios – instead prioritises landscape relations, experimenting with how the architecture can both appear and function as an extension of the bushland. Beyond considered spatial planning, and a unique journey through garden walls and courtyards to enter the property, the most obvious device Studio Bright utilises to work with the surrounds is the metal screening that cages in the blockwork elevations. Trellis-like in both form and function, this scaffolding encourages natural vines to climb and weave through its perforations, creating an overlay that will shift with the seasons and grow over time. Where it could be easy to fall into the tried and tested trope of ‘blurring the boundaries between indoors and out’, here Studio Bright has devised a new, replicable blueprint that instead fosters meaningful connections between domestic architecture and the landscape. A home that, essentially, is well and truly alive.



“THE GARDEN EXTENDS THE BUSHLAND
RESERVE INTO THE PRIVATE GARDEN”



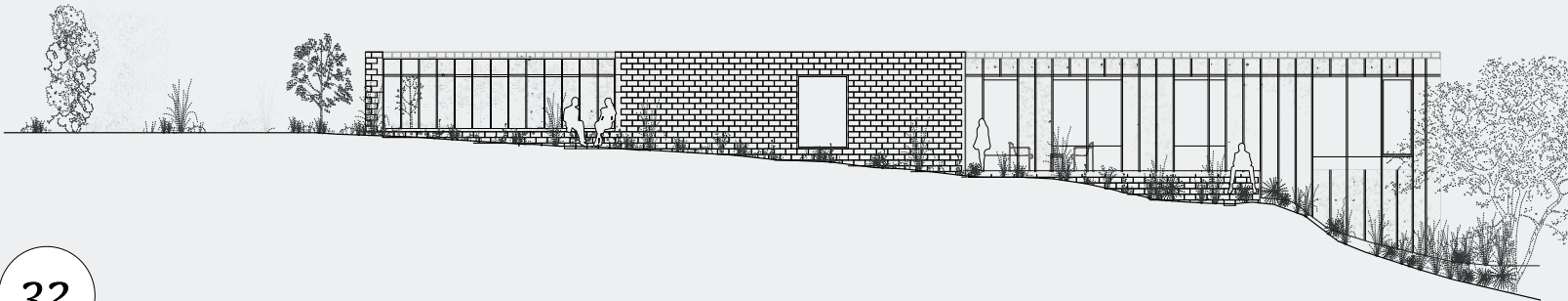


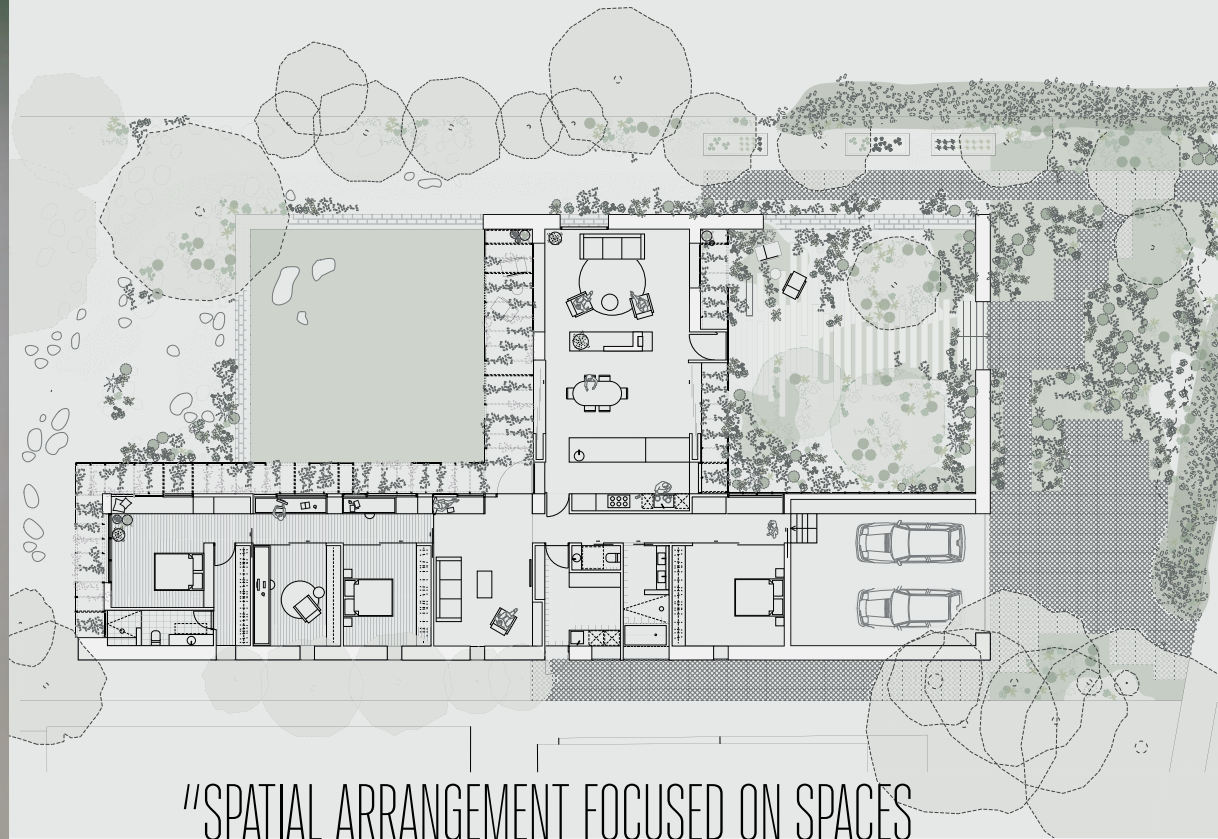
HOME PROFILE

Offering a unique experience of the land, the inhabitants of this family home must make their way under a carved arch in a hedge, through a break in the thick blockwork garden walls and across a courtyard before reaching the entrance of this family home. To maximise northern light and minimise sightlines from neighbours, the main volume of the property stretches down the length of the site, housing mainly bedrooms. A smaller, secondary module slices through the primary mass, creating a perpendicular element that houses the kitchen and living spaces. Flanking this wing are two garden courtyards. While the structural walls are made from blockwork, a metal sheath wraps around the perimeter of the build enclosing the veranda and forming an arbour that encourages plant growth up, over and around the build.

LOCATION

Melbourne, Australia





"SPATIAL ARRANGEMENT FOCUSED ON SPACES THAT WERE CROSS VENTILATED THROUGHOUT"









ARCHITECT'S QUESTIONS

How did you approach sustainability?

Passive sustainable principles guided the project – maximising natural light through careful orientation, minimising the need for mechanical conditioning and selecting materials for durability and low maintenance. The spatial arrangement focused on cross ventilation throughout. The length of the dwelling faces north with a mesh eave that is a climbing frame for a deciduous creeper vine to allow winter sun to penetrate deep inside and to protect from the harsh summer sun. The blockwork garden walls and concrete floor slab provide thermal mass and the lightweight timber framed walls are maximised with bulk insulation.

Who did you work with on the landscaping?

The landscape was conceived with landscape architect Sarah Hicks. Sarah explains the scheme: “Domestic ecologies – the garden extends the bushland of a neighbouring reserve into the private garden”. This project demonstrates rethinking the boundary between domestic space and public bushland. Rather than treating the garden as an ornamental zone, our design extends the neighbouring reserve into the private realm.





“THE MESH SHIELDS
THE INTERIOR FROM THE
WINDS AND HARSH LIGHT”



PROJECT NOTES

**ARCHITECT
& INTERIOR
DESIGNER**
Studio Bright

**LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECT**
Emergent Studios

**LANDSCAPE
CONTRACTOR**
Lucida Landscapes

BUILDER
Guild; Frank
(Victoria) Pty Ltd

**STRUCTURAL
ENGINEER**
Meyer Engineering

MASONRY
Austral Masonry

FLOORING
Timber, Big River
Group; bathroom
tiles, Signorino

LIGHTING
HAY rice paper
shade, Cult; dining
room pendant,
LAAL; study wall
light, Cocoflip

KITCHEN
Brodware

BATHROOM
Ceramic basin,
Lindsey Wherrett;
fittings, Brodware;
wall tiles,
Academy Tiles