

ROBERT SIMEONI
A (COMPARATIVE) CATALOGUE:

Images, observed
moments, buildings

Robert Simeoni

Master of Architecture

2010

RMIT

Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

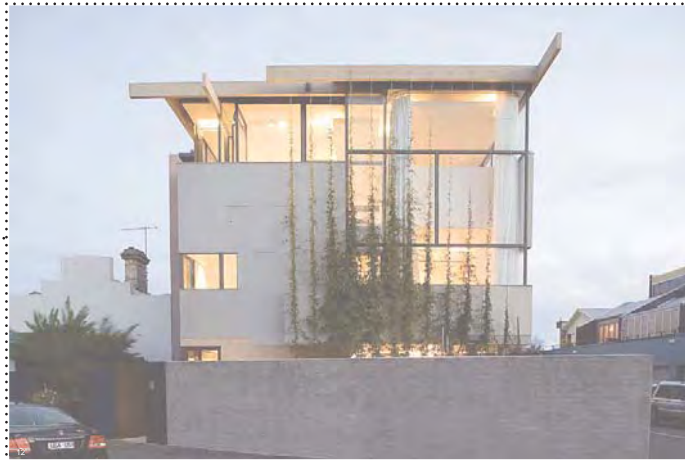
Robert Simeoni

Date:

Images above the line are separated with the intention of indicating a collection of ideas and moments linked to the project below the line (subject). These images may be drawn from past or future Robert Simeoni Architects (RSA) projects and/or the compiled catalogue of observational photographs. It is intended that there is a strong visual correlation between the images above and below the line, such that notation has only been added where the author has considered such text to be of use. Reference images are presented in black and white to reinforce the primacy of the subject images below the line. The images are deliberately not ordered by date and are repetitive by virtue of connections observed. Clarification between reference images and Robert Simeoni Architect projects are made in the footnotes.

Images below the line relate to the specific project and subject being reviewed. All of these images are of Robert Simeoni Architects (RSA) projects and are shown in colour and of a larger size than those above the line. These projects are generally ordered in a sequential manner by date of completion.

Robert Simeoni Architect



08 Woodlawn Images by John Gollings 09 Greaves Street Images by Trevor Mein 10 Mulgoa Images by John Gollings 11 Woodlawn Images by Trevor Mein 12 Park Street House Images by John Gollings

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For some years this practice was, as many others have been, immersed in small architecture – alterations and additions to existing houses and buildings. In these projects an intensity of connection between building, architect and client fostered a search for references and for connections at a small scale. This developed into a continuous catalogue of moments rather than complete buildings which is in the process of further development through an unplanned step into larger commissions.

It was with Leon van Schaik's invitation and his perspicacious nurturing that confidence grew to revisit and further explore such interests, and to value the outcome thereby created. It is with humility and gratitude that I thank Leon for this opportunity to further develop and scrutinise this process. The process of review, consideration and distillation aids the search for an 'indicative moment' within projects, and this process is open-ended.

Towards the end of this study I find clarity. The real interest relates to the idea of a catalogue, not of patterns or models but of moments, a sense of the building captured in one frame, its unexpectedness and sometimes the beauty in its awkwardness.

Early projects rely on the pre-existing to create separation and connection. In later projects, new buildings are often formed through an invented context. Rarely is the building considered complete but rather an ambiguous sense of suspension is strived for. Throughout, the re-appropriation of catalogue images sourced from within the work becomes apparent. In this way the distillation of images and projects leads to a more complete resolution. It is through (these) moments that a design is held together - light through a void, tunnel, or a distant horizon. The creation of these moments is not about systems or forms and stand in lieu of the complete building.

The following images I hope illustrate a continued distillation of certain similar, recurrent moments in the work.



01

Due sigarette

Ogni notte e' la liberazione. Si guarda i riflessi dell'asfalto sui corsi che si aprono lucidi al vento. Ogni rado passante ha una faccia e una storia. Ma a quest'ora non c'e' piu' stanchezza; I lampioni a migliaia sono tutti per chi si sofferma a sfregare un cerino.

La fiamella si spegne sul volto alla donna che mi ha chiesto un cerino. Si spegne nel vento e la donna delusa ne chiede un secondo che si spegne, la donna ora ride sommessa. Qui possiamo parlare a voce alta e gridare, che nessuno ci sente. Leviamo gli sguardi alle tante finestre – occhi penti che dormono – a attendiamo. La donna si stringe le spalle e si lagna che ha perso la sciarpa a colori che la notte faceva da stufa.

Ma basta appoggiarci contro l'angolo e il vento non e' piu' che un soffio. Sull'asfalto consunto c'e' gia' un mozzicone. Questa sciarpa veniva da Rio, ma dice la donna che e' contenta d'averla perduta, perche' mi ha incontrato. Se la sciarpa veniva da Rio, e' passata di notte sull'oceano inondato di luce dal gran transatlantico.

Certo, notti di vento. E' il regalo di un suo marinaio. Non c'e' piu' il marinaio. La donna bisbiglia che, se salgo con lei, me ne mostra il ritratto ricciolino e abbronzato. Viaggiava su sporchi vapori e puliva le macchine. Io sono il piu' bello. Sull'asfalto c'e' due mozziconi. Guardiamo nel cielo: la finestra la' in alto – mi addita la donna – e' la nostra. Ma lassu' non c'e' stufa. La notte, I vapori sperduti hanno pochi fanali o soltanto le stele. Traversiamo l'asfalto a braccetto, giocando a scaldarci.

02

...But you need only shelter in the corner and the wind is then no more than a whisper. On the wasted asphalt lies a cigarette butt. This scarf came from Rio, but the woman says she is happy to have lost it for she has met me. If the scarf did come from Rio it travelled the nights over the ocean enveloped with light from the great transatlantic liner. Certainly, windswept nights...



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Over time this practice has observed certain types of interventions that achieve a directness of expression, often as a result of utility, yet full of character.

In the mid-20th century in suburbs such as Carlton, Brunswick and Northcote, these kinds of buildings were born of necessity and are often characterised by the thought of sturdy materials such as concrete, bricks, and mortar. Working class migrant families, small businesses and marginal organizations were some of the end users but the buildings remain to be adapted with new layers and programs. Some of these things appear ad-hoc and unusually proportioned, even awkward, but looking closer they have a weight, honesty and beauty of their own.

Being surrounded by these buildings forms a diffuse yet recognisable visual sense of what density means in these suburbs. Backyard toilets, a sunny first floor terrace with Hills hoist and a garage under, these are often simple solutions to programmatic or spatial problems but are also often much more. There is poetry here in the robust, builderly quality of the forms and the labour invested in them. They are by no means expedient or temporary and arise from the needs of growing families at those times.

Robert Simeoni Architect



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Through photographic cataloguing of these local buildings and spaces there is a validation for their quiet awkwardness, directness and plainness. They offer cues of an approach to design that demonstrates totality, utility and detail. Not only do these buildings inspire formal aspirations for projects, but suggest an intense discourse between context, design process and building technique.

This is not a linear process requiring design to foretell architectural outcome, but one which is plastic enough to take on late developments and respond to the built work as a full scale design study allowing the skill of the tradesman to influence architectural outcome.

Robert Simeoni Architect



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I have spent years living and working in North East Italy predominantly in the Veneto. While at university I worked in the practice of Pietrobon e Rossi in the town of Castelfranco Veneto.

It is through this immediacy of contact that I have developed a deep interest in a form of rural architecture particular to the area. Large spaces open to private yards once used for oxen and other farm animals and are set back within the building proper often with internal balconies set within this cavern like space. The upper floors of these houses are mostly granaries open to the underside of terracotta-clad roofs.

There is a directness of expression in these forms and a powerful austerity in the way window openings are set within expanses of rendered wall. The presence of the craftsman evident in hewn-timbers and troweled finishes but without extravagance. Unexpected detailing often prevails, lost within the more defined nature and feel of these buildings. These details tend to be of an agricultural nature such as ornate timber vent covers to stables or ornate dovecots. Appropriately, floor plans are simple and reflect well the form. Close examination of these buildings yield another set of informal references as well as spatial sensibilities outside of the immediately apparent.



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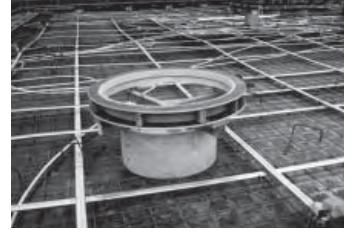
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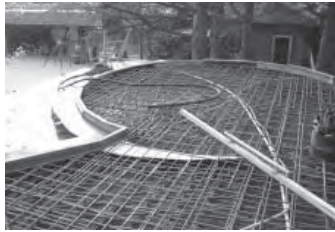
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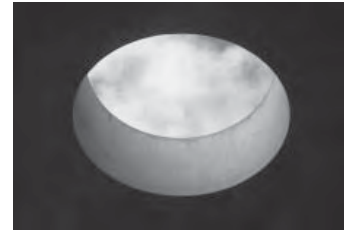
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The consideration and observation of craft in construction is recognised as a strategy for building detailing by which a trace or even a sense of a trace, is maintained. One way this happens is the attempt to evince the melancholy feeling that preparatory work is no longer evident. In dealing with smaller scale building often this question of leaving a trace of a beam or a particular connection has an animating effect on the sense of space experienced. However sometimes the presence of this preparatory work is merely fleeting, witnessed and appreciated by a few, the finished building a reminder. Recollections of scaffolding, formwork and other incidental works from the site of early projects have the power to inform later projects.



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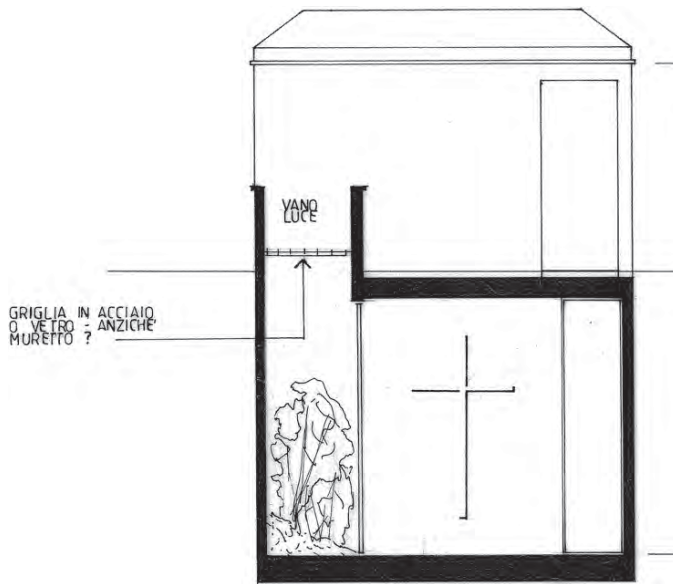
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An interest in locating spaces underground with a view out to submerged courtyards is also an interest in creating other kinds of intimate interior space, in this instance fostering the feeling of shelter when one looks out upon a sun-bleached exterior from the shade. This is clear in the competition for St. John's Cathedral in Canberra where a notional "creek bed" was formed around the historic buildings and new spaces view out from this sunken corridor. By forgoing the traditional form of building-on-ground as the primary interest the architecture becomes more about an extrapolation of space, of seeing it and occupying it. Similarly in a current project for proposed works for Abbotsford Chapel in Victoria the most intimate spiritual precinct is extracted from beneath the existing chapel taking its cue from an existing small crypt space. I imagine views from this space to an external courtyard or deliberate cropped views toward the under floor chapel space. Projects below ground have an immediate intimacy by virtue of the surrounding space.

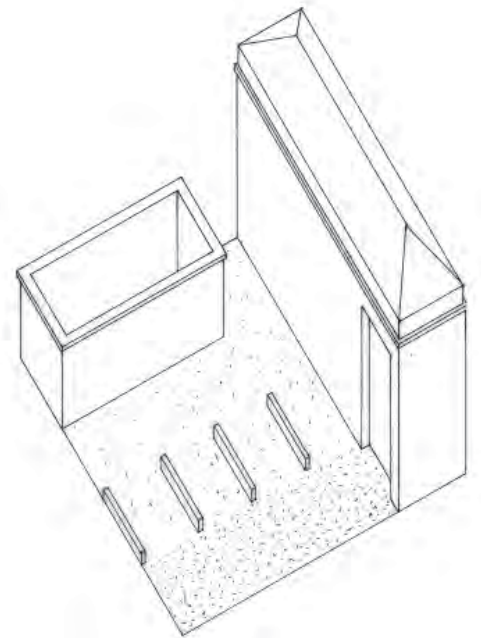
**U N D E R G R O U N D
FOUR SMALL PROJECTS**



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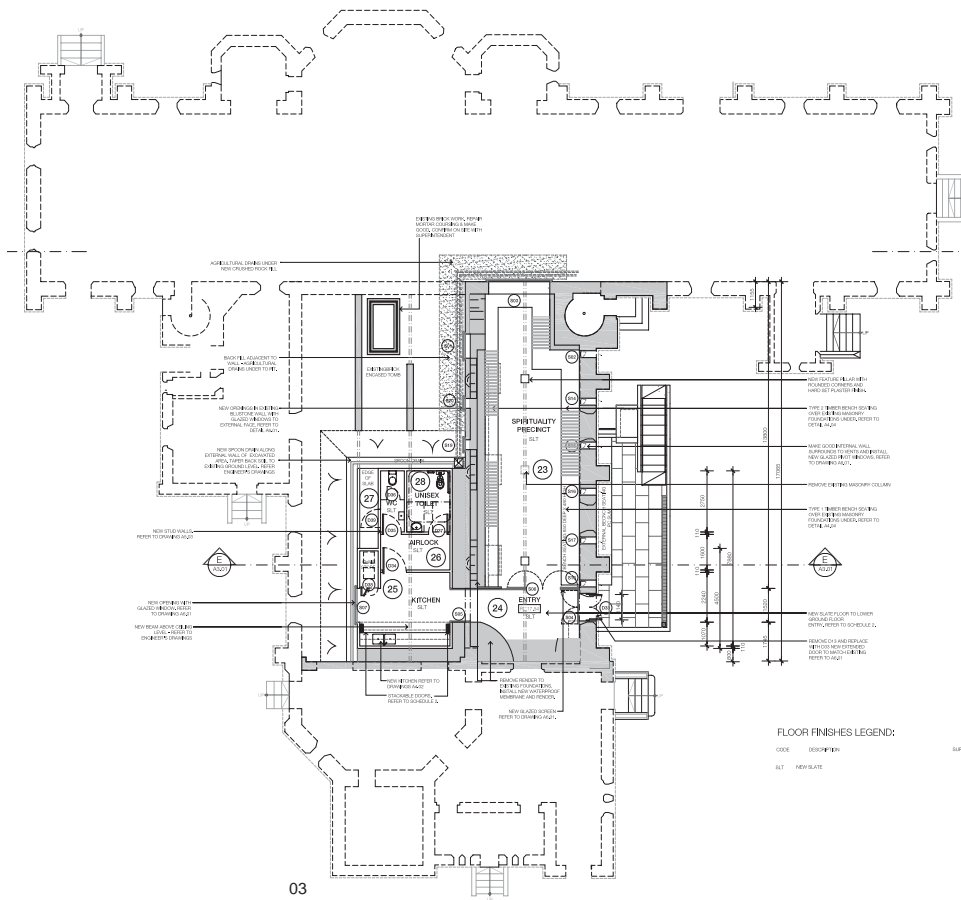




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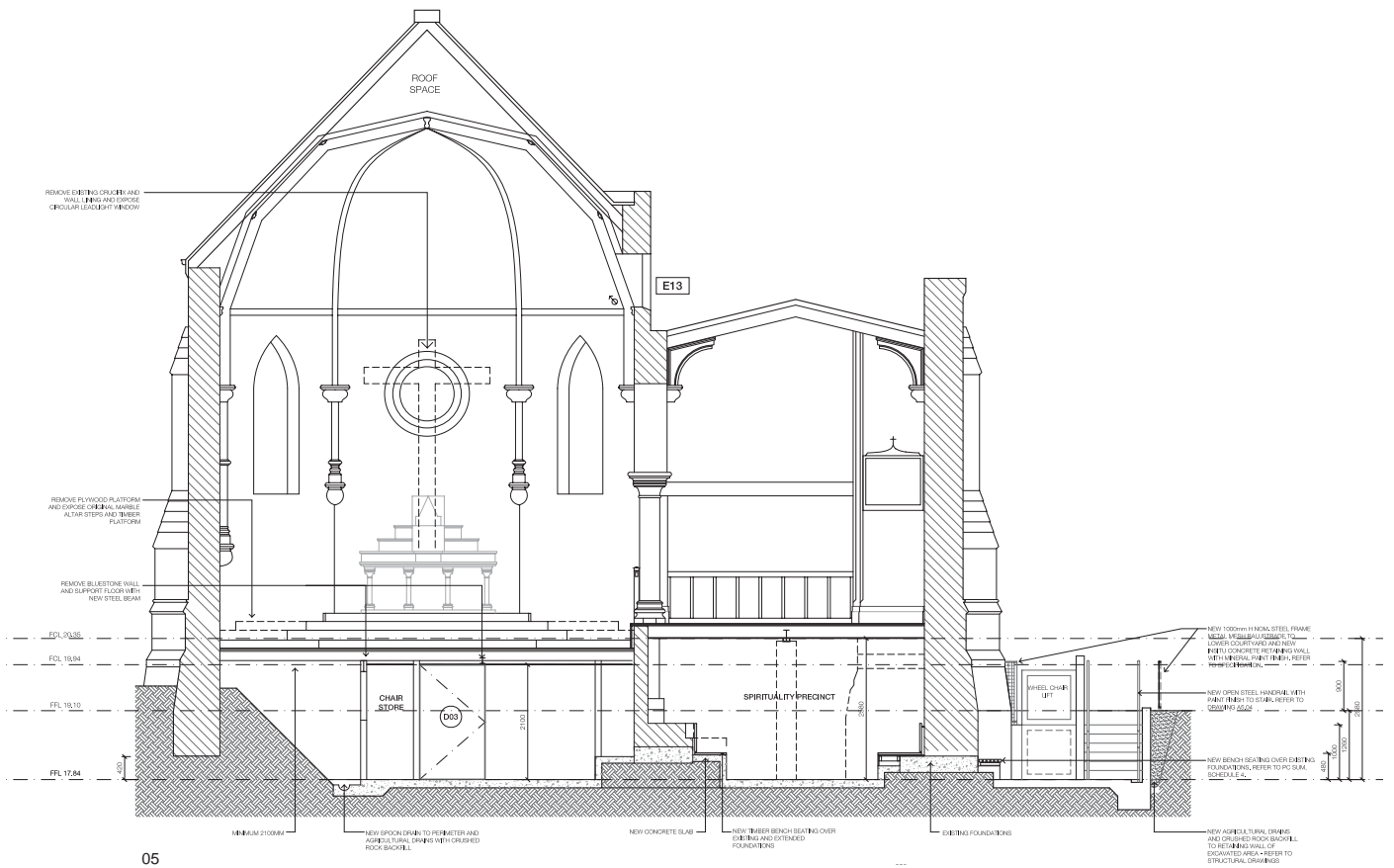


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ABBOTSFORD CHAPEL

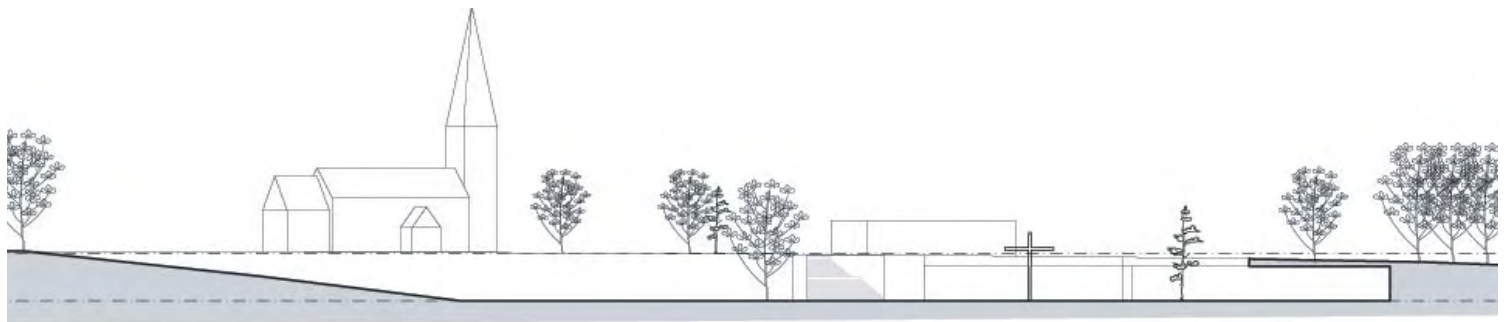


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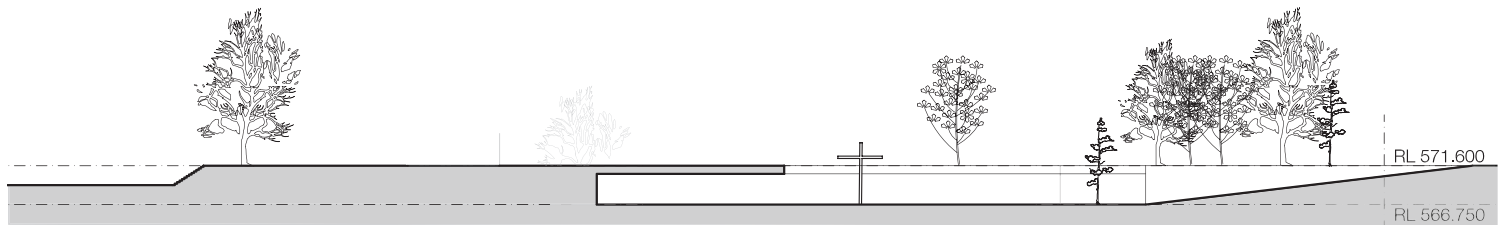


Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo! Facta est quasi vidua domina gentium.
The Lamentations of Jeremiah 1, 1-2.

How doth the city sit so solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow.



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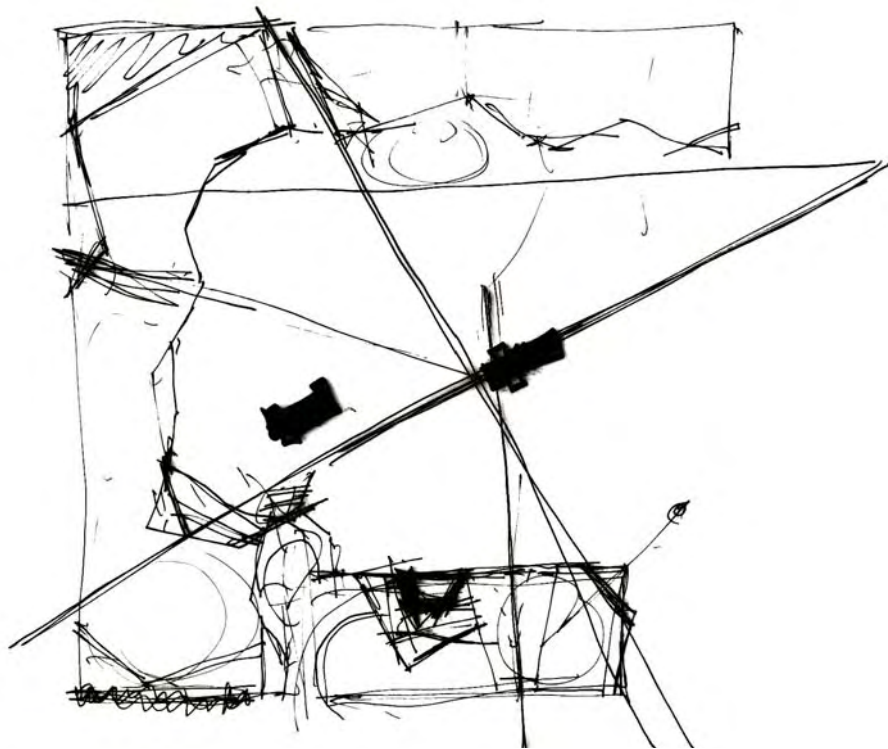


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ST JOHN'S CANBERRA



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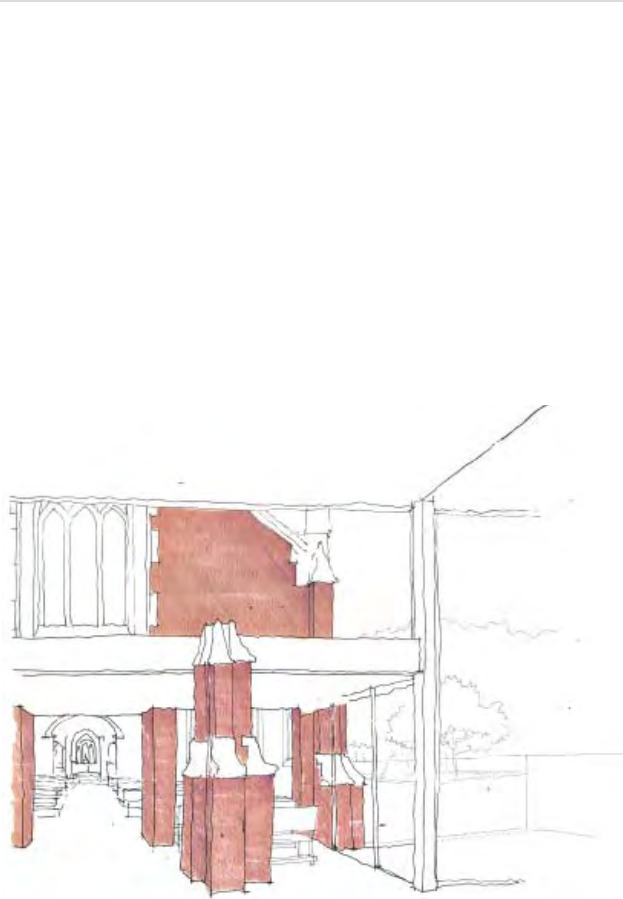
ST BRIGID'S BALLAN



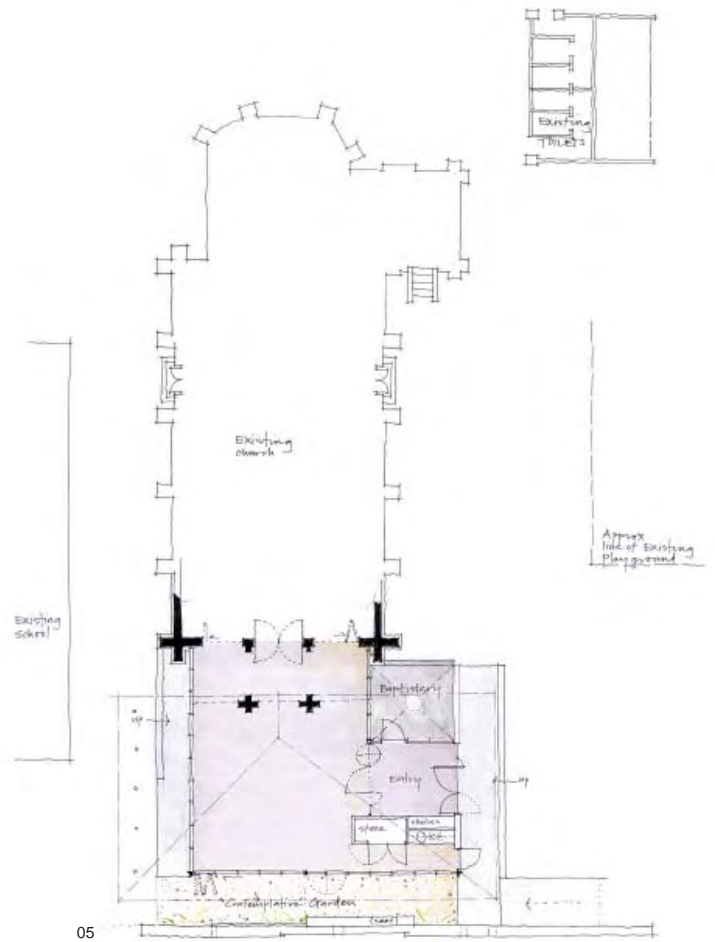
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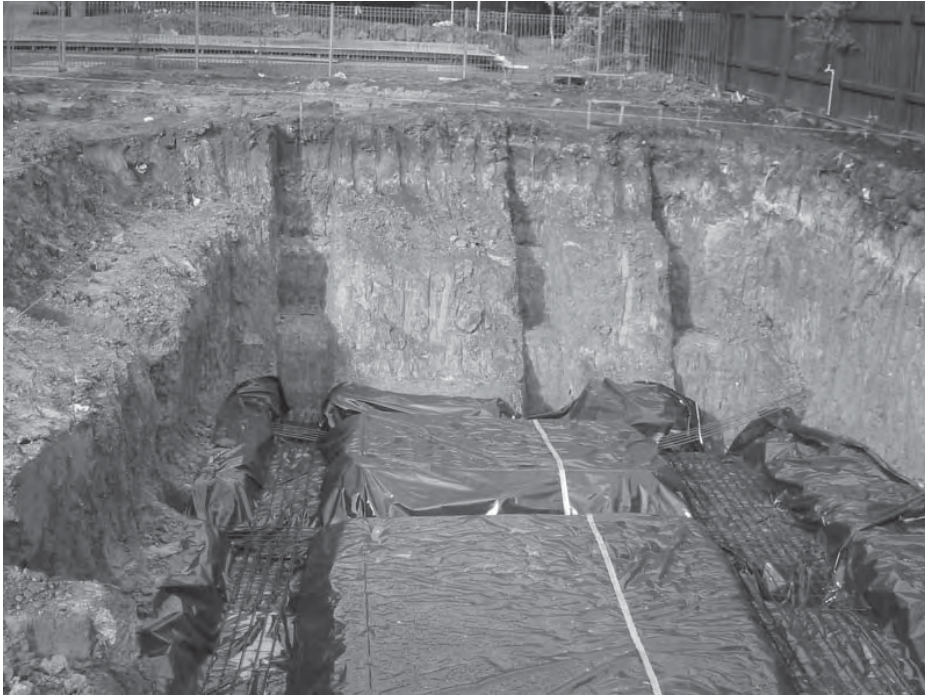
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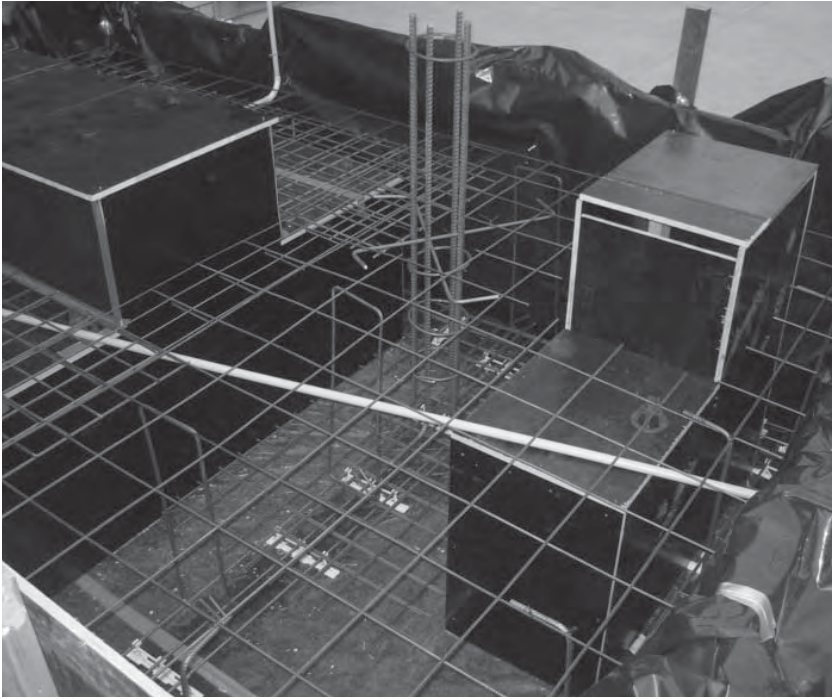
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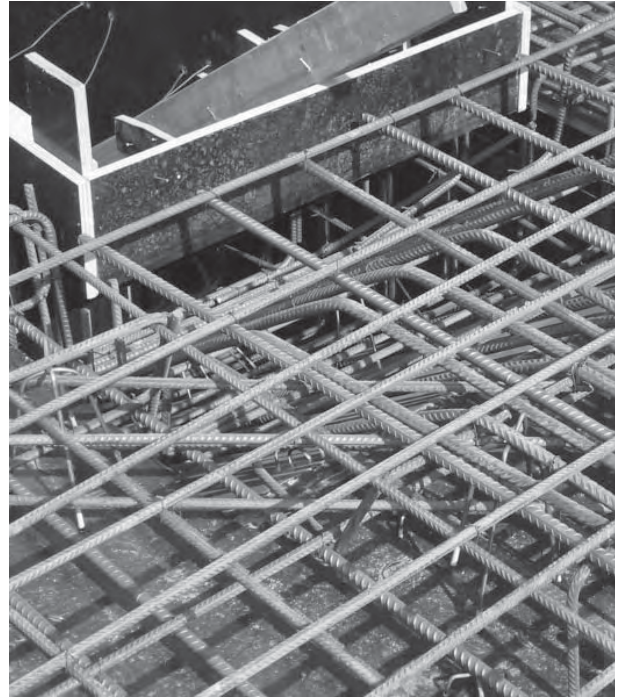
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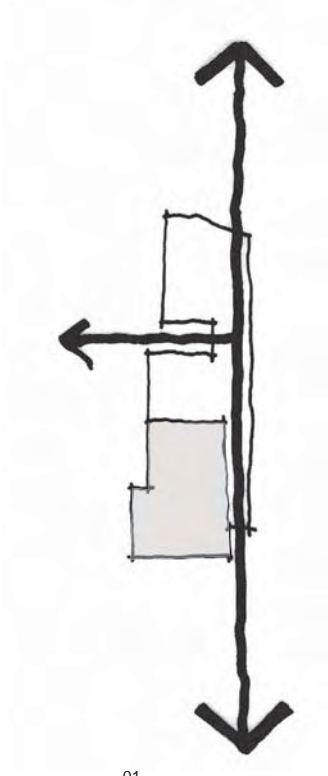
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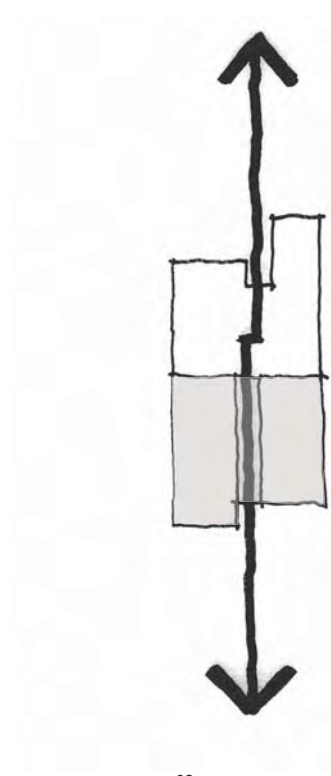
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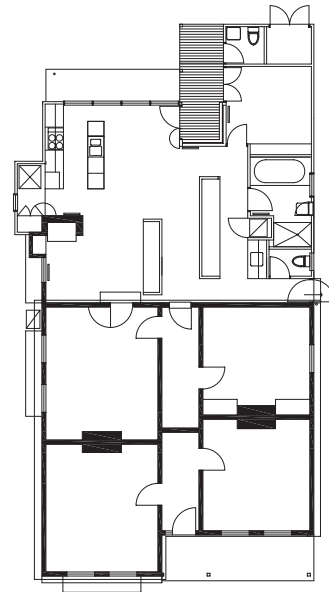
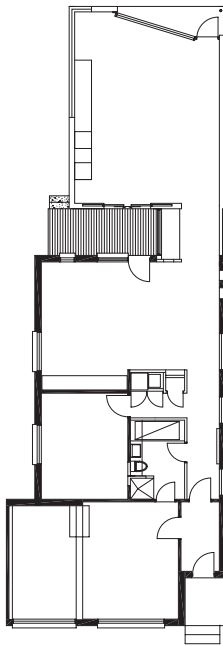
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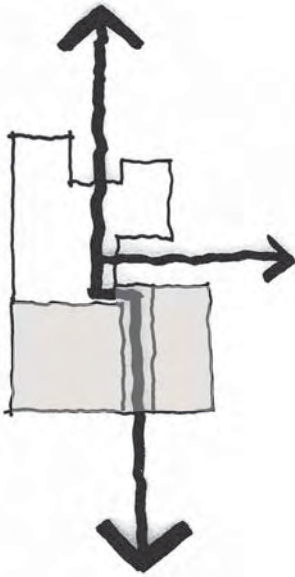


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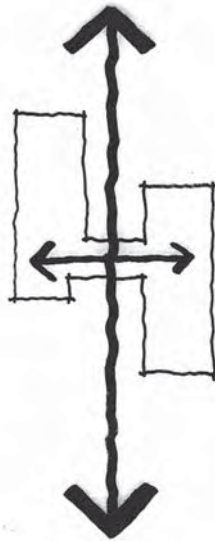


Images 01 - 05

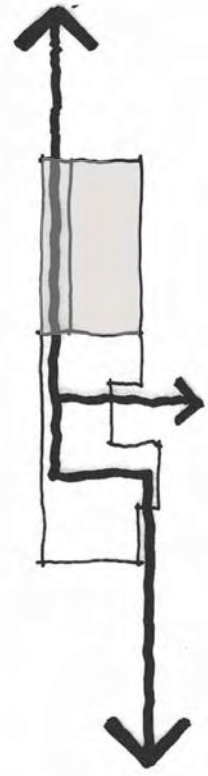
In early projects asymmetry became a strategy for creating a relationship between old and new. Tentatively misalignment charges the perspective view through multiple spaces inside and outside, at the same time guiding circulation around building elements.



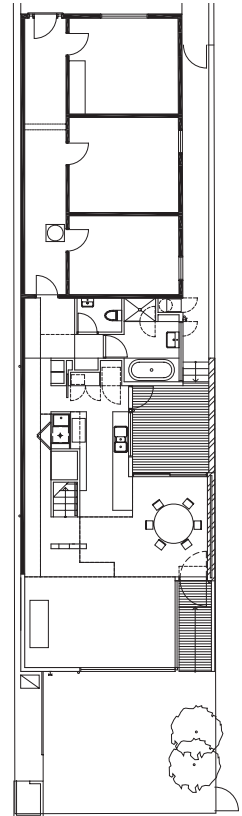
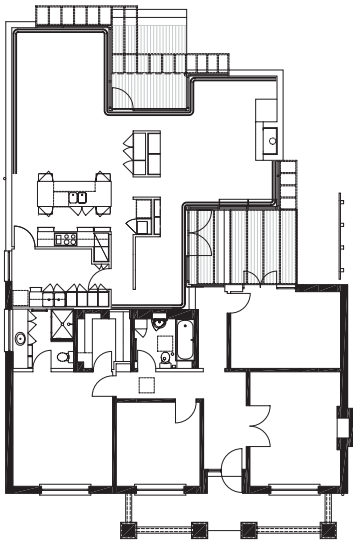
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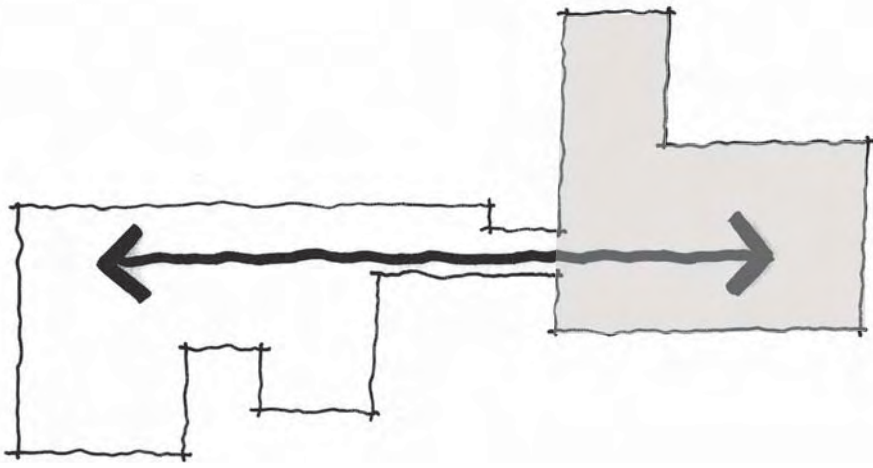
01 Eglinton St. House,
Moonee Ponds

02 Elm Grove House,
St. Kilda East

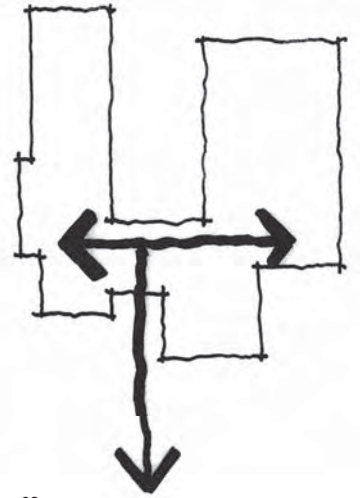
03 Sydney Rd. House,
Coburg

04 Loriket Close House,
Bawley point

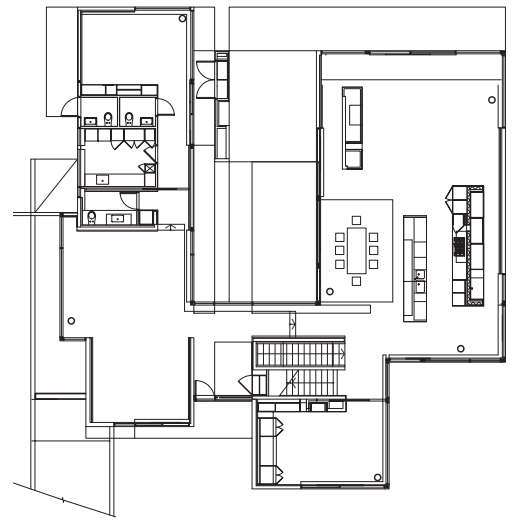
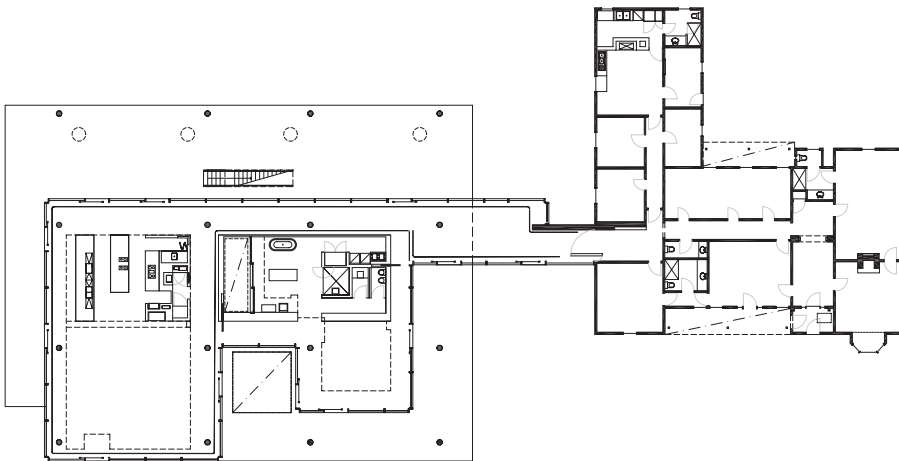
05 Wolseley Pde. House,
Hawthorn



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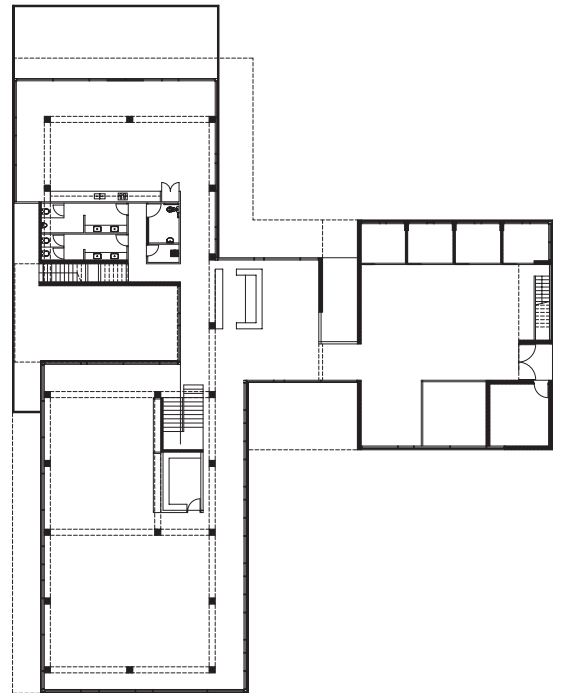
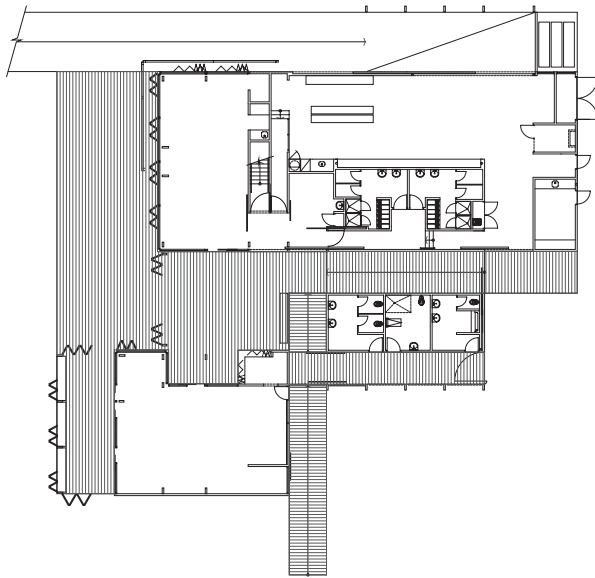
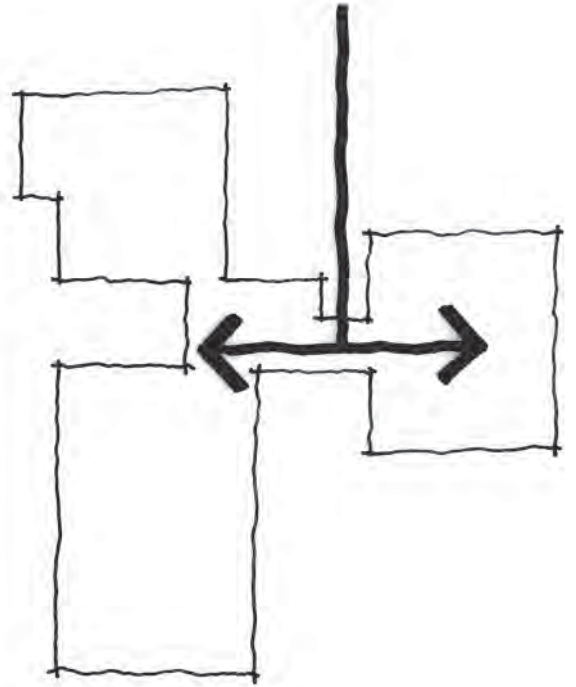
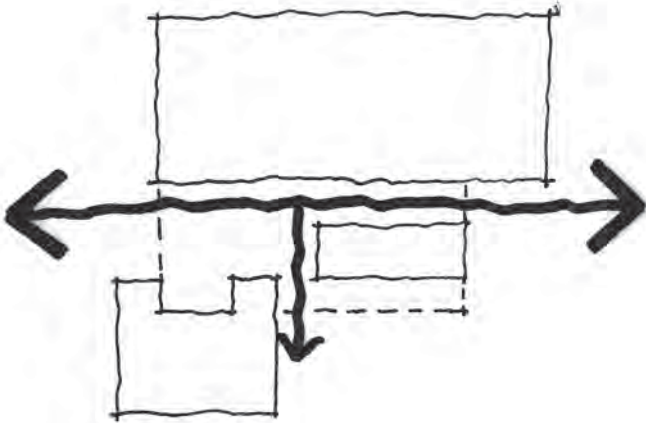


ImageS 01 - 04

Coupled with transparent walls of glass there develops a relationship between seeing and moving in more recent projects whereby the direct line of visibility belies the circuitous manner of access. As the scale of work has increased the overlap between rooms has been developed to cultivate spaces within the buildings with an ambiguous quality somewhere between a corridor and an open plan.

LATER

WORKS





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Woolamai was a turning point in the type of projects entering the practice. Small relationships tested previously were explored on a larger, more complex scale. The renovation of the existing house at Woolamai required substantial demolition and in this process certain qualities in the layering of its construction became apparent and influential upon the design of the addition.

During construction temporary formwork was treated with the care and precision of a finished object of its own accord. What is of interest in these temporary structures is the order and pattern that stands for the thing yet to be.

Moments of beauty in the craft of construction are recognised - desire to retain a sense of that 'which was made to create' - to leave a trace of the construction in the final.

At points the structure achieves a poise similar to that of a ruin – the poetic quality of the incomplete.

Transparency forms the sense of the building within its context, the primary structure and glass create a layering of visual fields through which the landscape is viewed. Less than framing the landscape this is an attempt to populate the foreground of view.

Emptiness that forms a separation between object and time. "The quietness of the space and sense of uncertainty"

WOOLAMAI HOUSE, PHILLIP ISLAND



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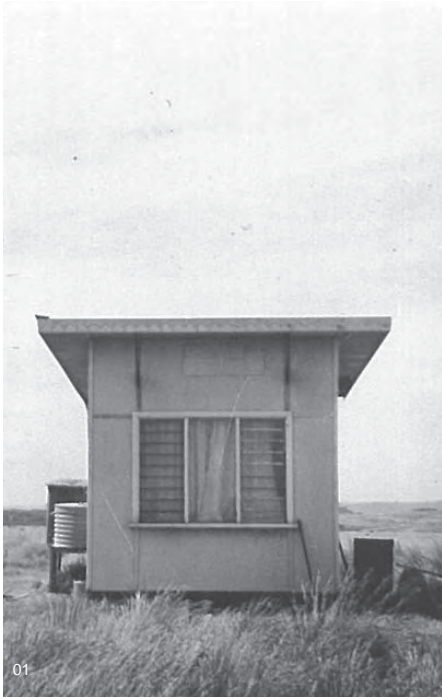
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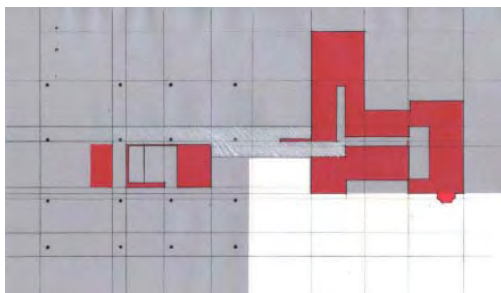
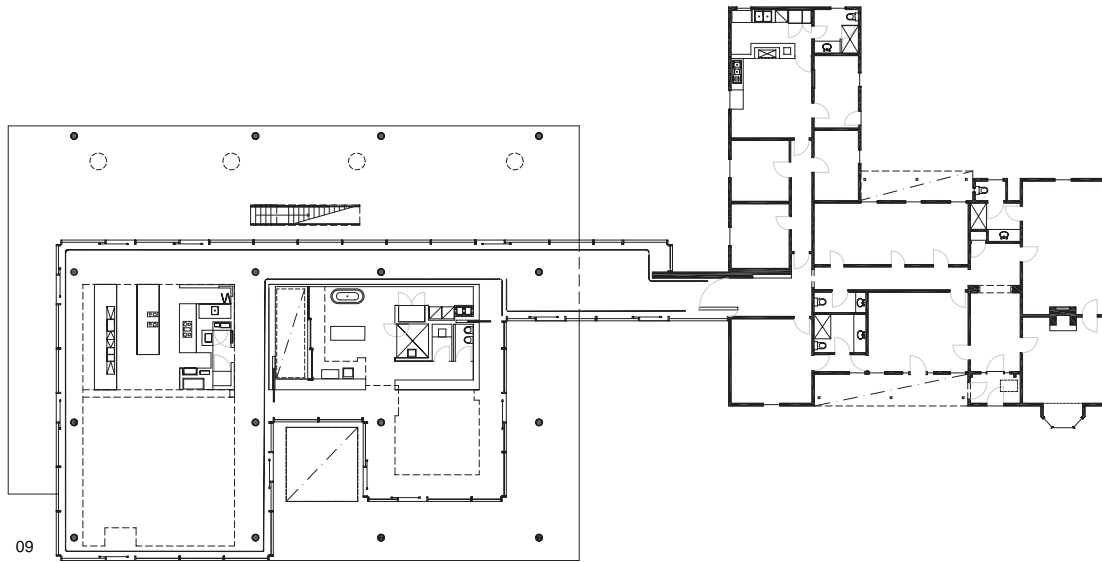
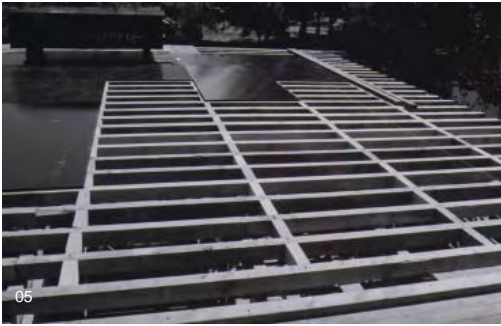


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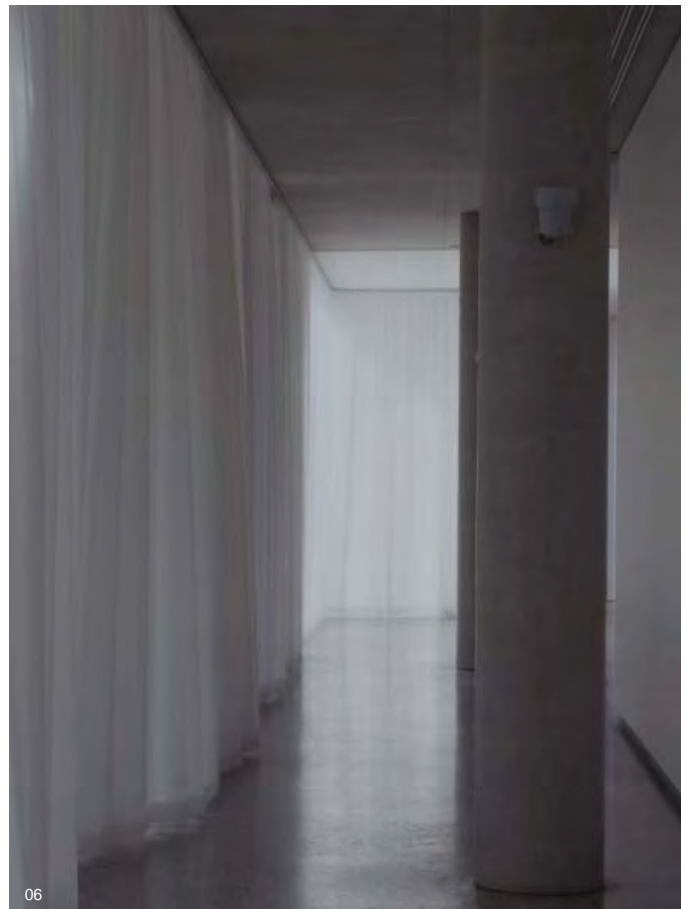
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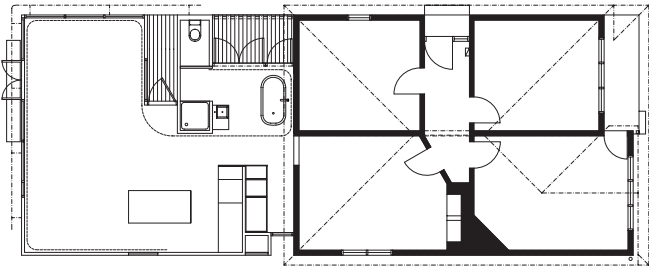




Image 01

At first glance I notice the walls: Victorian render with a later brickwork edition. The new rear concrete roof slab aligns with the existing moulding of the original building. Does the gate lead into the yard or the room?

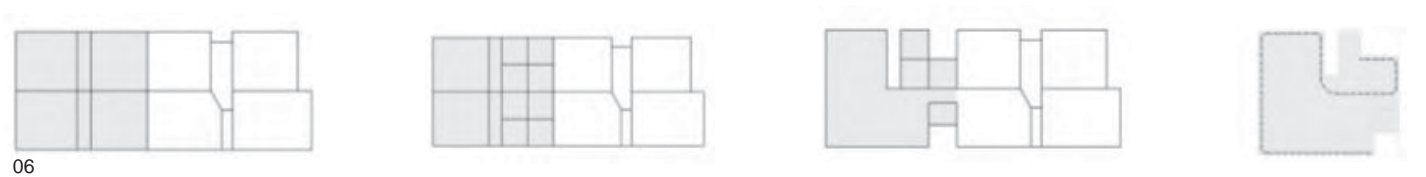
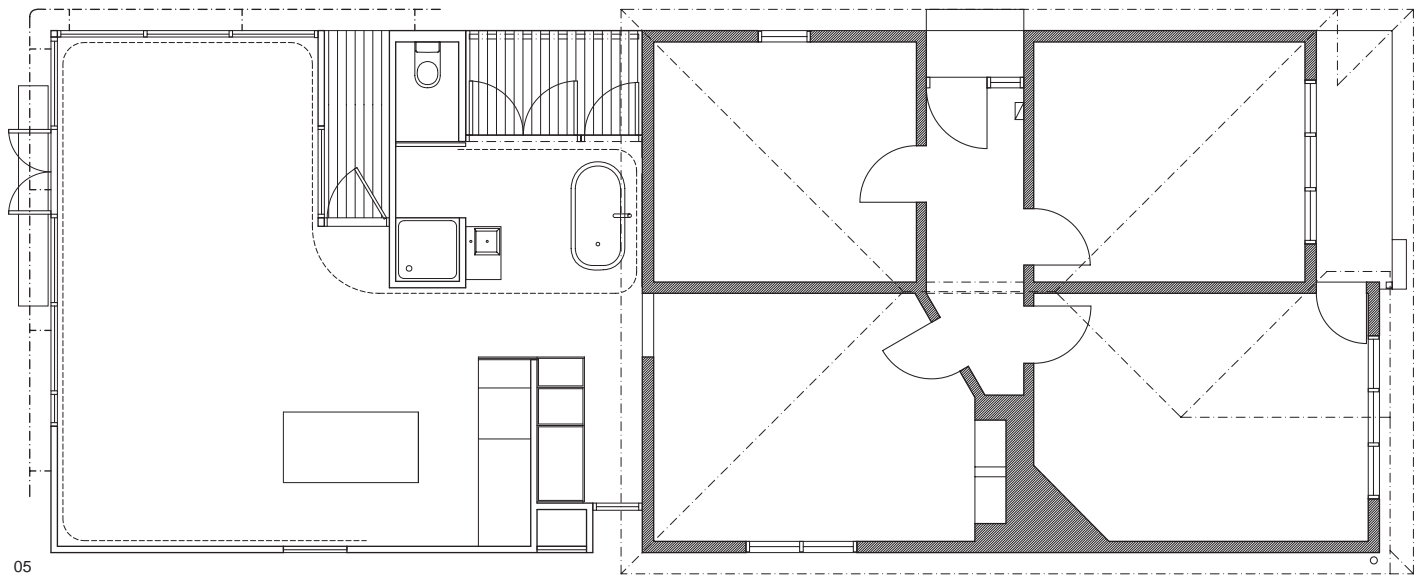


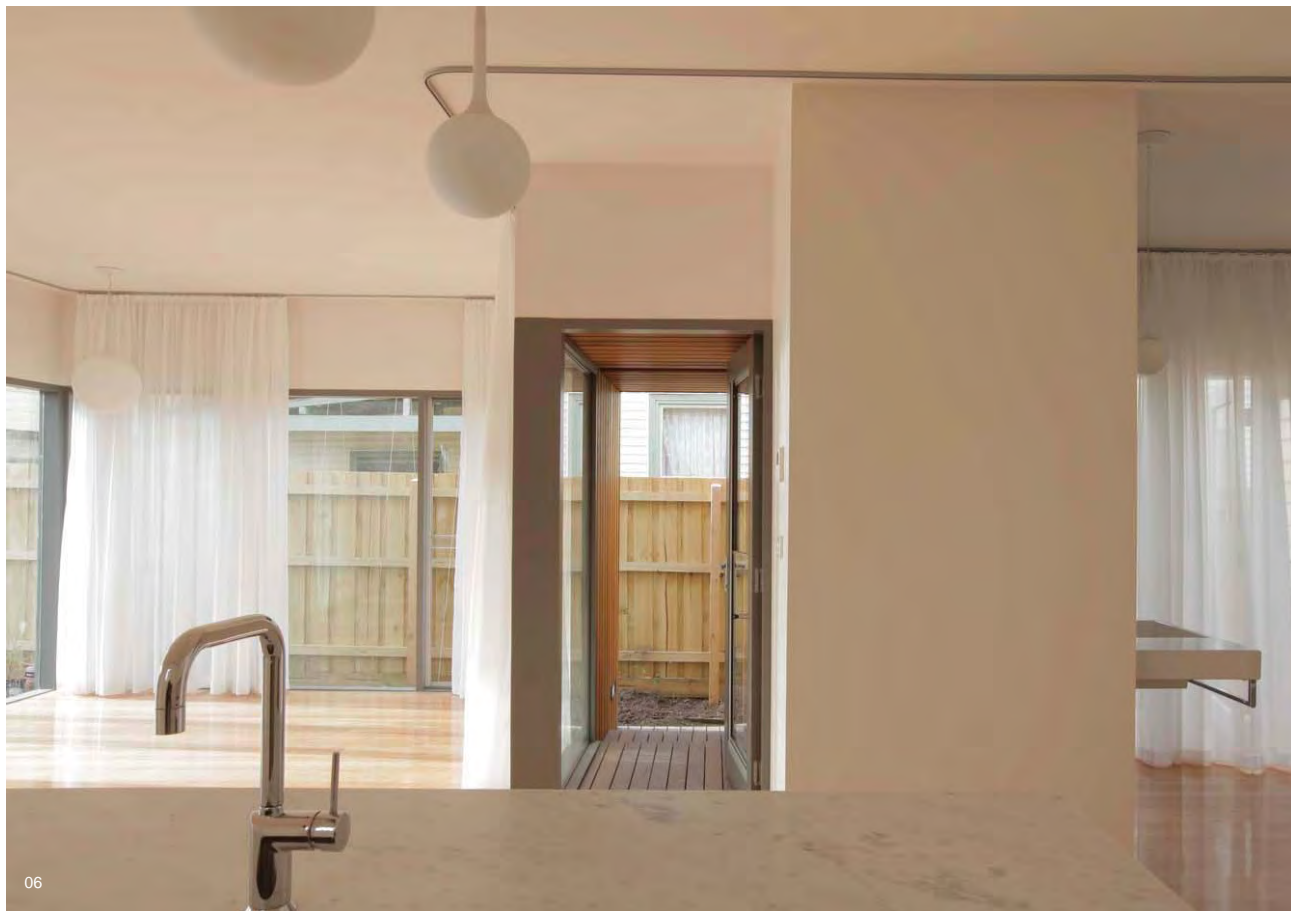
Image 02
*I then notice the recessed east facing window
under the roof overhang. I imagine the quality of
the morning light within that room and the soft
incidental day long light.*

A small project required an analysis of what was important to the client. A larger space was necessary in which to live, to prepare food and to bathe. The garden would become beautiful through her work.

The aim was to create a pavilion, or a box in a garden, a shelter, inexpensive in construction and finish. Some of the north was revealed for greater sunlight and to recall the original Edwardian house plan with its side entry.

A series of curtains separates the living, kitchen and bathroom. Rolls Street resembles moments in both Woolamai House and Park Street House projects. Sun shading was offered via a simple line system with vines to the north and west. The enveloping the building is much like that of St Johns Canberra competition. In time the addition becomes a garden within which to live.









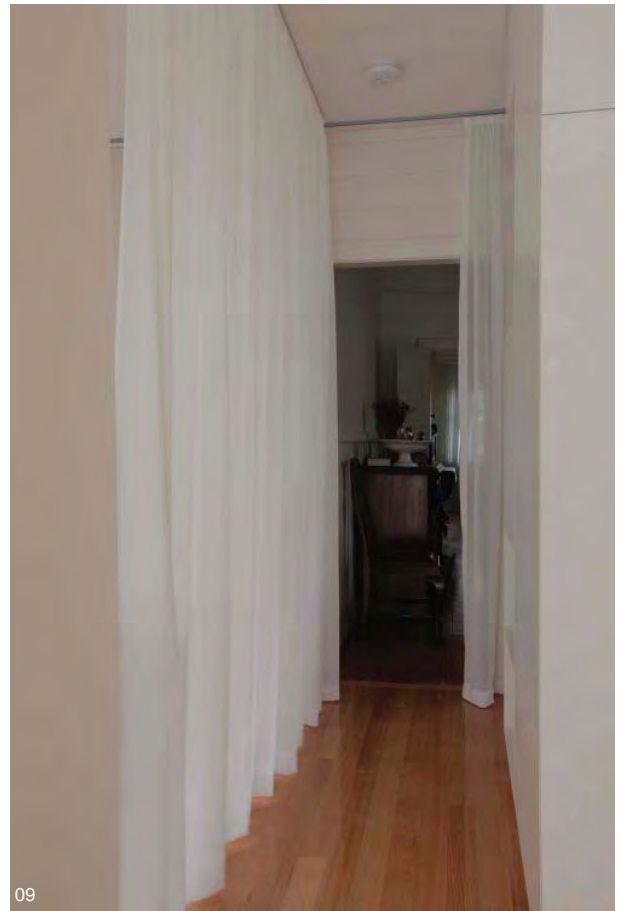
02



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Images 01 - 02

These buildings have an austere and robust bearing that I admire. They embody a commitment to place by virtue of their heavy-set construction and a no-fuss simplicity in their detailing. In their elementality and proportions there is suggested a disregard for propriety, pretense and prettiness. And yet they have been built with a care for the craft of well-laid brickwork and concrete.



02

At its heart designing for small sites offers the opportunity to amplify quality and focus function in ways that create an architecture of physical closeness. This is the ergonomic architecture of daily use where small details become significant through their practicality and sense of invention. There is a rewarding humility to design as well as joy of discovery that is fundamental to a more specific and direct connection between architect, client and building.

In different ways both the Greeves Street and Park Street houses use vertical circulation as relief space to give a sense of expanse where little is available horizontally.

In the Park Street house the land is only one room wide and so stairs are used as an adjunct space to the prescribed rooms. This enclosed concrete stair also begins a kind of narrative opening-out of the building spatially as the occupant walks up through it, the feeling then becoming one of being elevated above the street by a concrete plinth that forms the primary structure of the building. This primary structure is symbolic as much as it is literal, considerable effort made to retain a sense of the beauty of it as a raw and unfinished construction of its own right in a similar way to other houses under construction.

The Park Street house accepts the scale of the southern neighbour for the purposes of proportion and, moving clockwise, modulates it with each facade. Each elevation is then proportionally related to the next sequentially and open or closed relative to the possibilities of solar orientation and view.

In a more simplistic manner the Greeves Street house uses proportion to assimilate with its southern neighbour; the first floor bedroom aligning itself in order to extend the visible top edge.

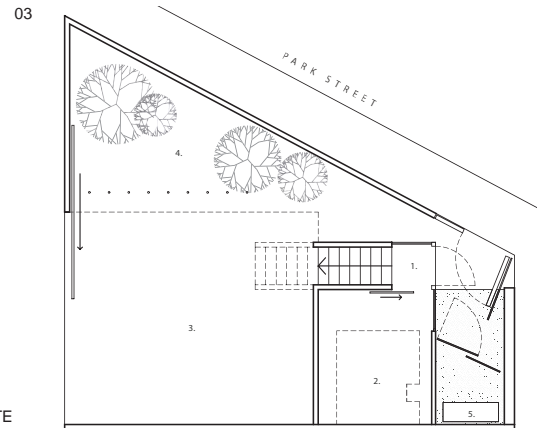
PARK STREET HOUSE, FITZROY NORTH



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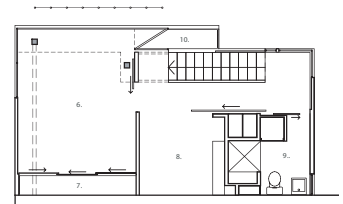


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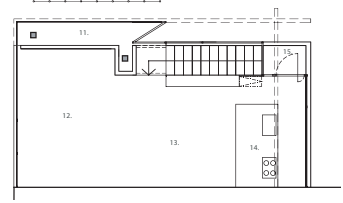


03

SITE



FIRST



SECOND





Images . Observed Moments . Buildings





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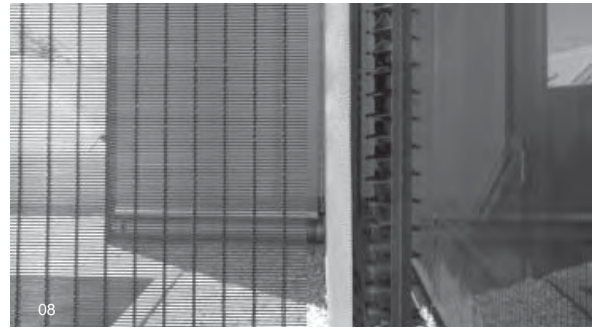


The deepening of facades through the use of exterior screening takes different forms. In some cases I have used green walls, more so over glazing. Exterior screening further separates the occupants and their private space from public space and filters light – a series of layers.

This use of vines is related to the kind of informal pergolas found in north suburban backyards, frequently improvised from plumbing pipe. Often the armature of such is ramshackle with an intensity of its own. In the case of Park St house this external vine was also thought to act as a further connection to the park opposite. Similarly at Rolls St the vines offer protection from the North West and link it to the private garden space. It is interesting in this case how photos of the demolished resemble the new.

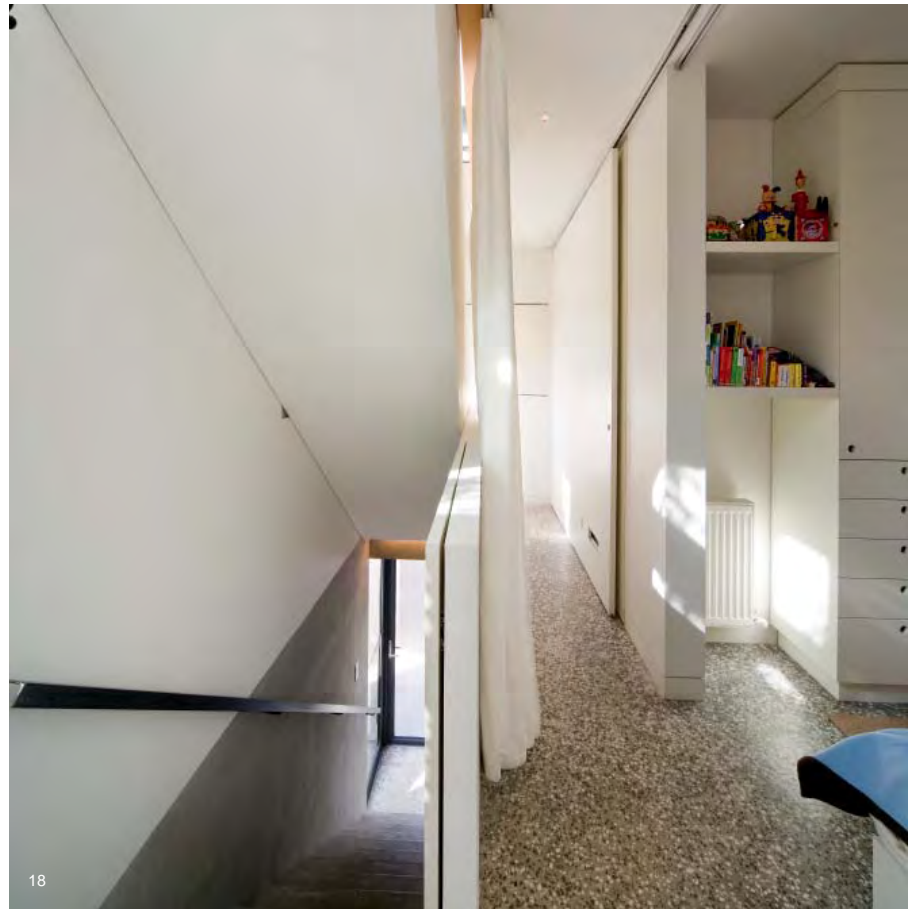
In other projects the screen is of a more formal nature: at Seaford the timber screening appropriate to its beach setting while at Greeves St retractable steel mesh blinds have a finer grain appropriate to the building's scale.

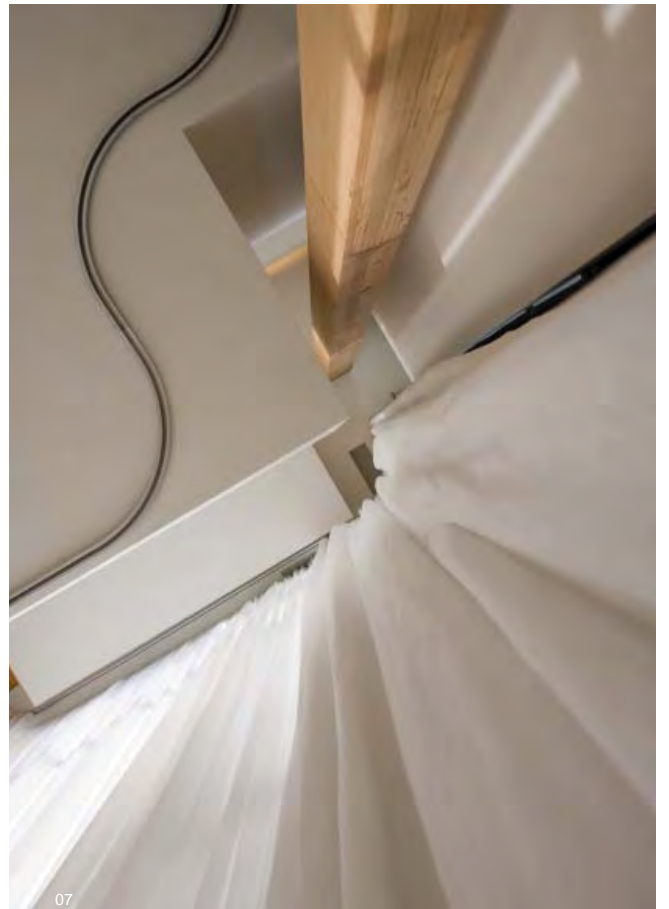
From the interior, curtains are a further layer, tent-like and yet paradoxically nurturing a sense of security and enclosure. There is a looseness in the way they theatrically soften a room, a sensuality when they are used to delineate space.



Images . Observed Moments . Buildings







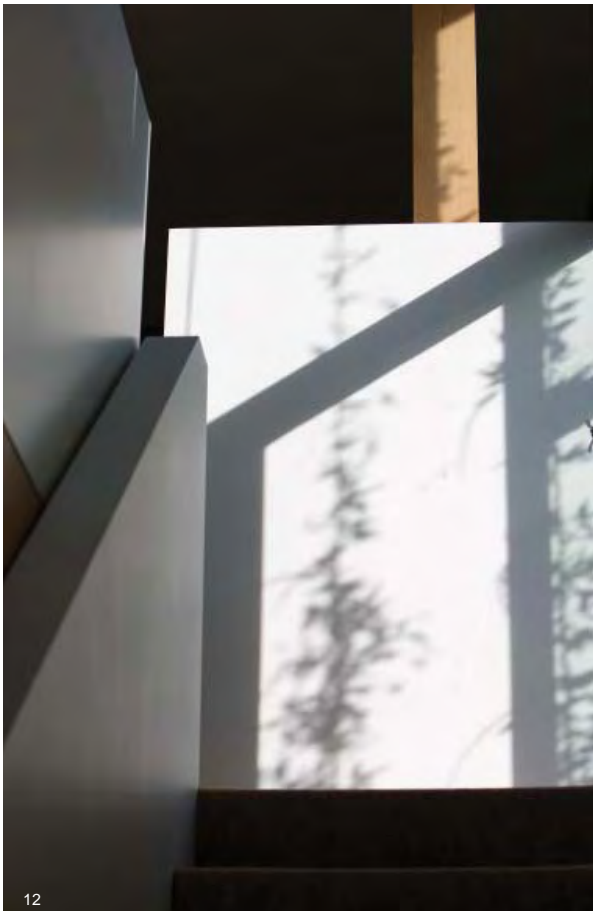




Image 01 - 02

Here the simple transparency of chain-link fencing is configured to sublimate its humble utilitarian associations, folding back against a wall to provide stability but also a charged layering. The fence by its incongruous positioning on top of the building indicates a usable rooftop space, enfolding it like a curtain where a handrail would have been enough. The frame and mesh defray the top edge of the buildings.



02

Whilst experimenting with configurations at the Greeves St House, the dual need for a ground floor parking space and courtyard as well as a first floor master bedroom with a sunny, private aspect led to a solution whereby the room is cantilevered over the ground floor footprint.

This kind of small-scale urban architecture is born of the condition of in-fill and add-on, a type of Darwinism where forms must adapt to survive. And so, the architect's ability to invent sensitive ways of doing this enriches our cities, re-inventing them by slow accretion rather than grand gesture⁸. The sense of discovery that comes with buildings-behind-buildings is common to the context. Here, the extension can be found in a laneway and embraces the ambiguous possibility of seeming to be freestanding.

The deliberate misalignment of connection between old and new creates a diagonal view through to the courtyard, the intersecting space between hallway, dining room and kitchen that results from the apparent rigid stacking of form above.

An unusual double-height space was developed to connect the additional architecture, a staircase constructed predominantly from glass maximizing transparency but also refracting light from the first floor above. This leads to the first floor gallery, the transparency of which combined with lower pebbled roofs gives a sensation of traversing across the surrounding roofscape to reach the bedroom suite.



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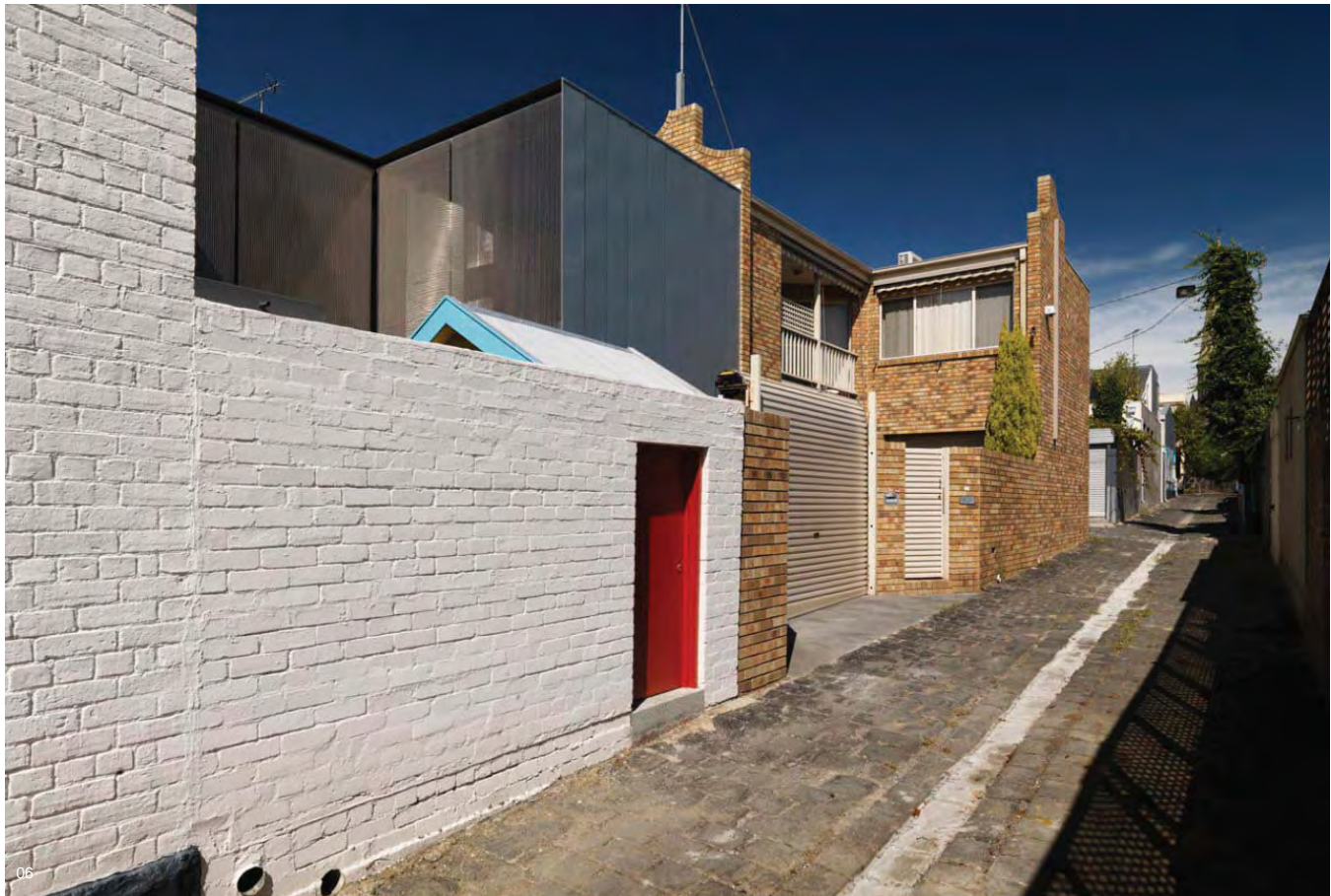
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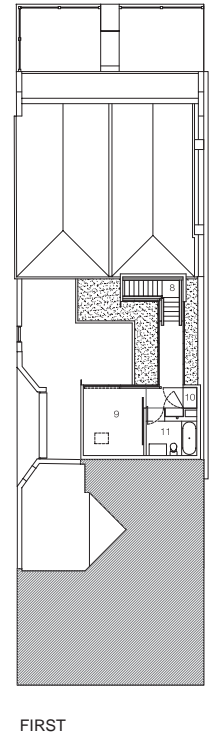
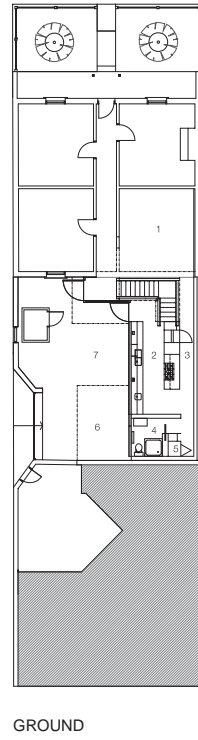
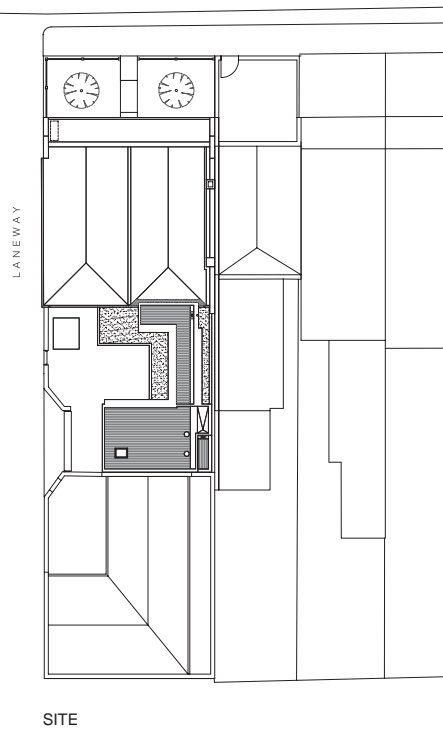
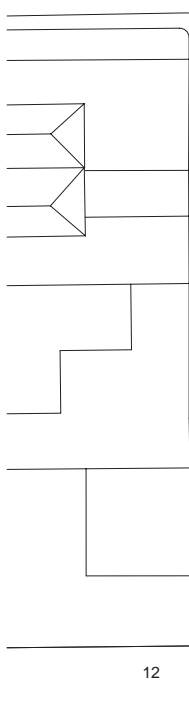
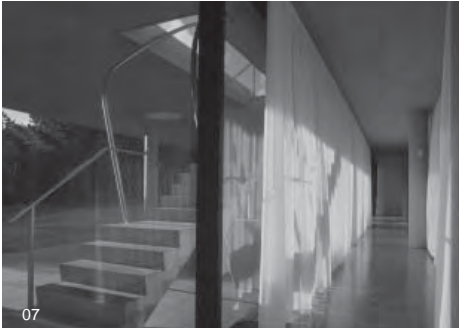


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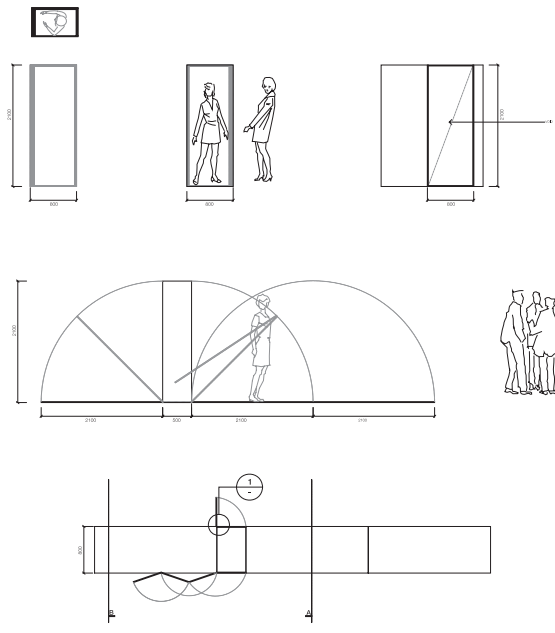




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This project was a collaboration with Material By Product and Megan Atkins. There was an interest in the sense of an opening box that served a multiplicity of uses through an arrangement of typical plywood sheeting for Material by Product's new collection. Upon activation, the object formed a delivery container, a stage, a runway, and an implied change (and later display) area when assembled accordingly.



02

BOX





01



02

The buildings and external spaces at Seaford Life Saving Club were conceived more as a landscape object rather than a complete (singular) building.

The design is a collection of buildings with residual outdoor spaces that strive for an ambiguity between their being still in the manner of a courtyard or busy in the manner of a corridor. These outdoor spaces are manipulated by the use of folding screens to control accessibility and allow the differing zones to be adaptable to purpose, depending on the time of year or time of day. There is an orchestrated and intentional overlap in these spaces and the adjacent interiors as well as a concern for view-lines and the visual layering that becomes legible only by seeing through spaces into others and beyond into the (cropped) distance. This, in particular, informs the manner in which the sea view is revealed. The open corridor gently rises so that as one approaches the horizon line of the bay is met – drawing the viewer further into the main space.

Spatial considerations are both practical and notional - bringing forward the cafe stops South and West winter winds and still allows light to the courtyard.

There is a cultivated sense of deep space running through the North/South axis, with shaded spaces looking out upon the sunbleached. The materiality of the interiors develops a sense of the exterior; these spaces are lined with plywood and balustrades are replaced with steel mesh cyclone fencing, maintaining the connectiveness between spaces. This is consistent with the manner in which materials have been chosen for their durability, plainness and affordability. The detailing is carefully designed to be direct and easy-to-build, junctions and lines exposed in an unfussy manner consistent with the buildings' use and the barefoot beachside manner of its users.

SEAFORD LIFE SAVING CLUB

Robert Simeoni Architect



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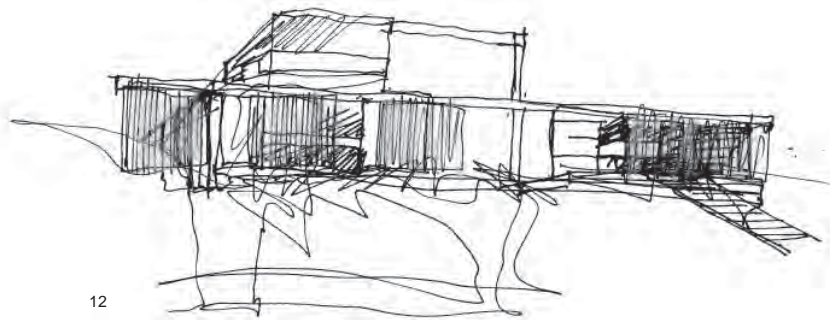
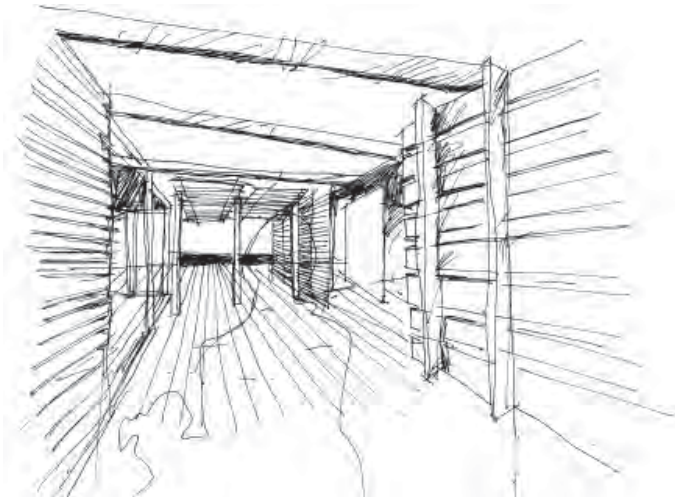
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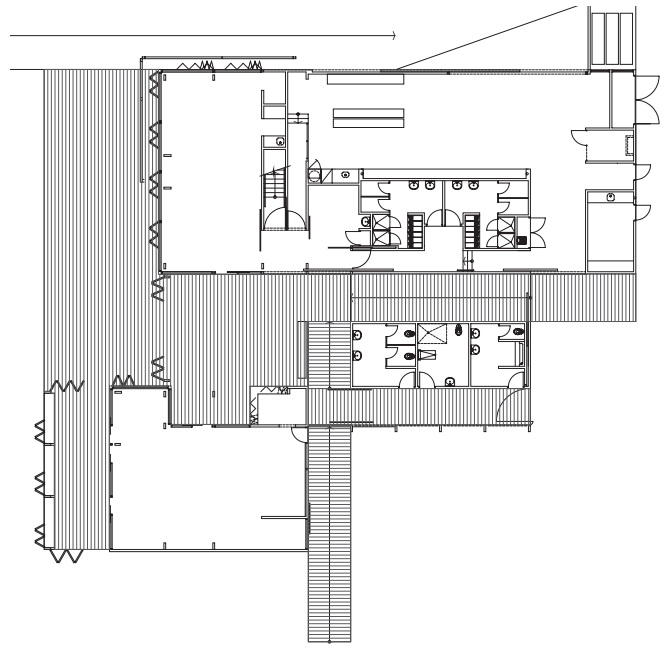
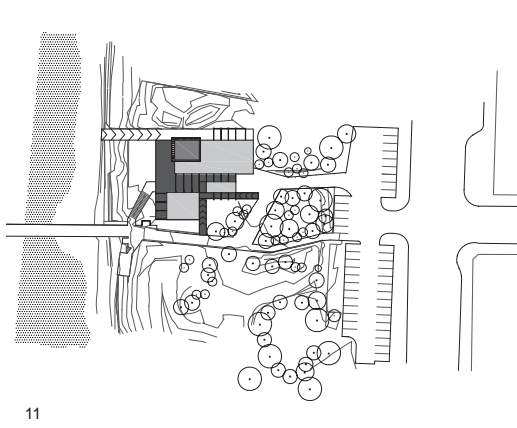


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Images . Observed Moments . Buildings







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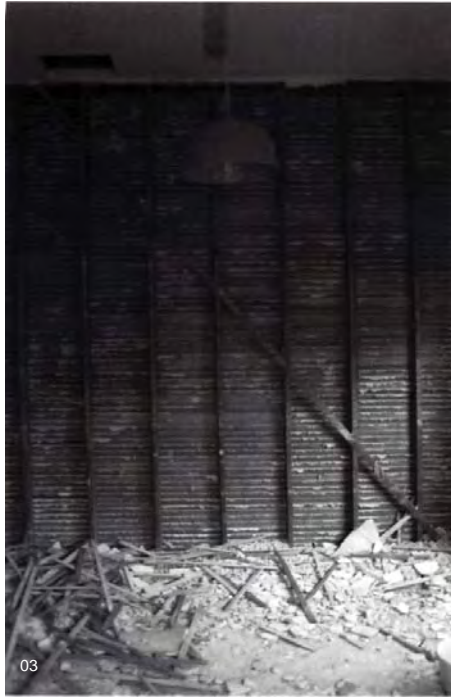
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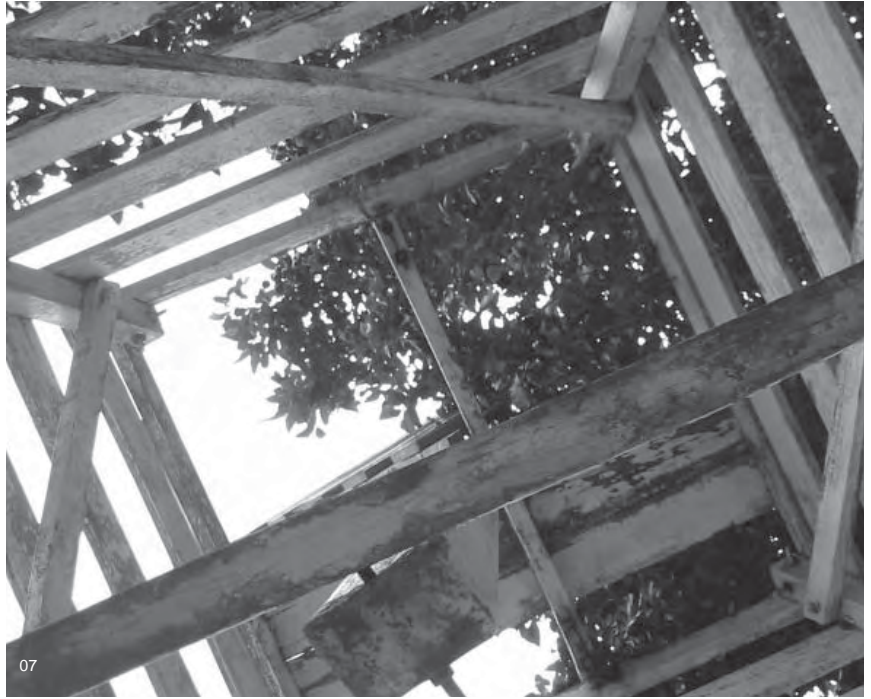








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Image 01-02

Within the commercial streetscape these two buildings provide unusual configurations. In one the mass of a suspended brickwork facade is belied by a corner detail as delicate as a paper fold. In the other the building is reduced to a collection of components, an assemblage. One imagines the light through the opening beyond the flat roof. Both recede and in doing so guide the eye in.

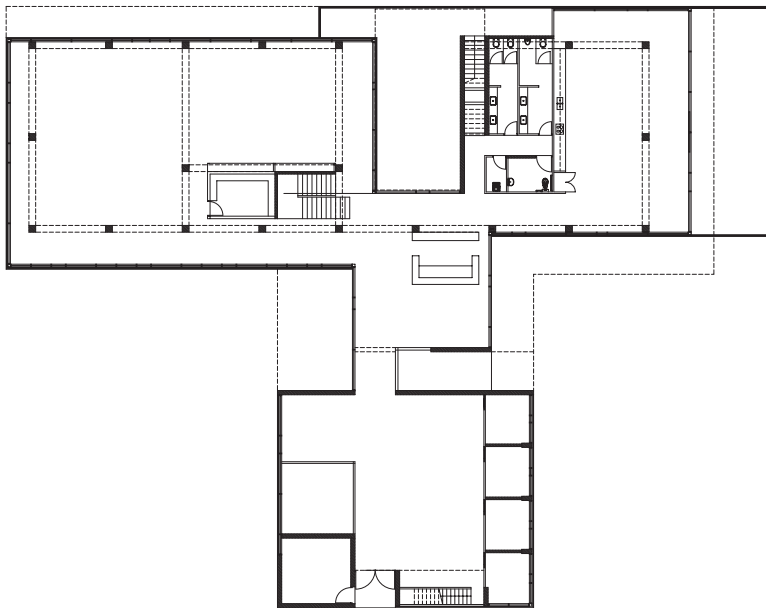




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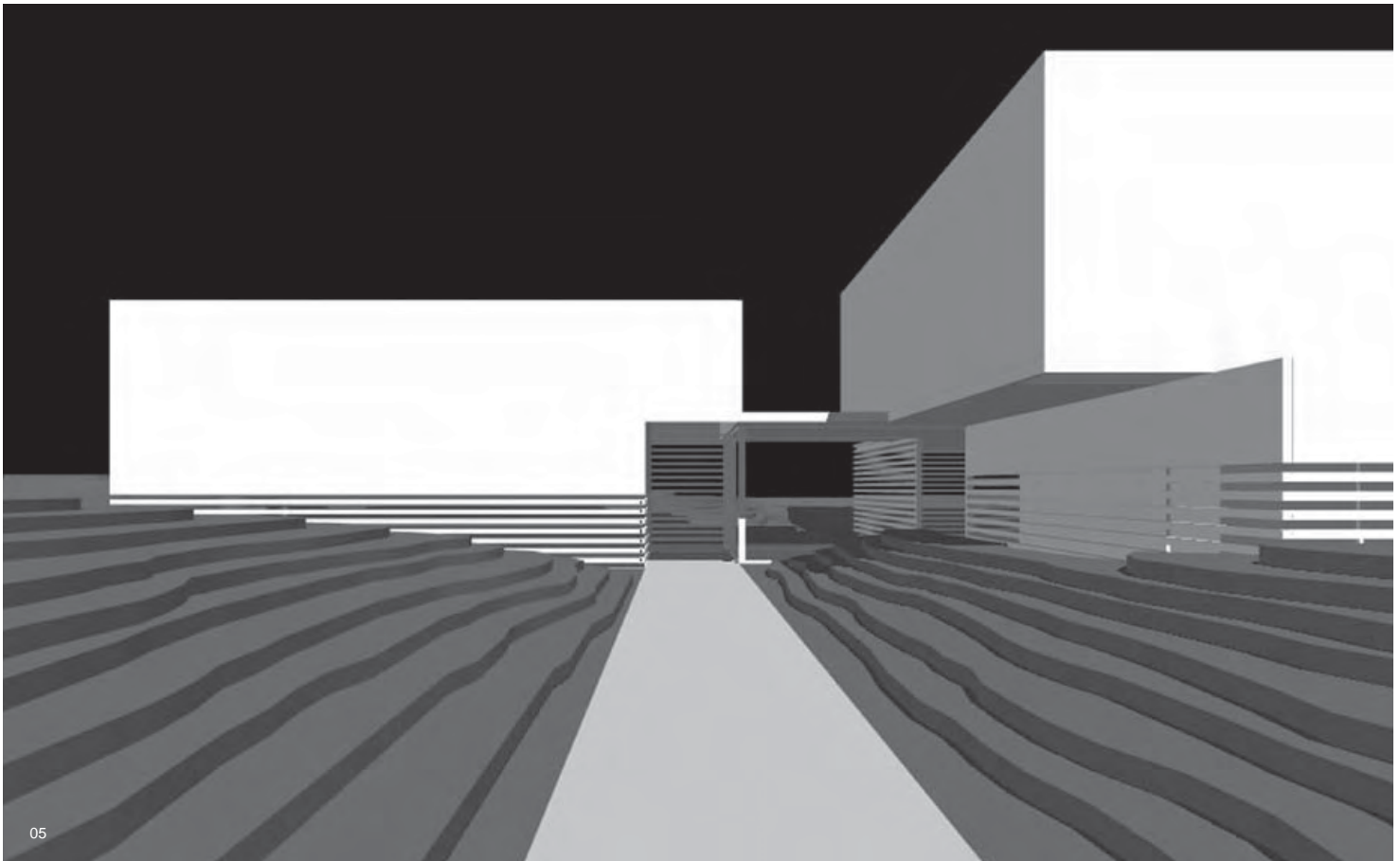
03

A pin-wheel like plan was generated around the configuration of client's program, delineated by a series of absences. The absences control views through and beyond the building where circulation is required and then privacy for open-plan office zones. What appears from the entry to be two forms is actually three.

WESTKON OFFICES MELTON



04

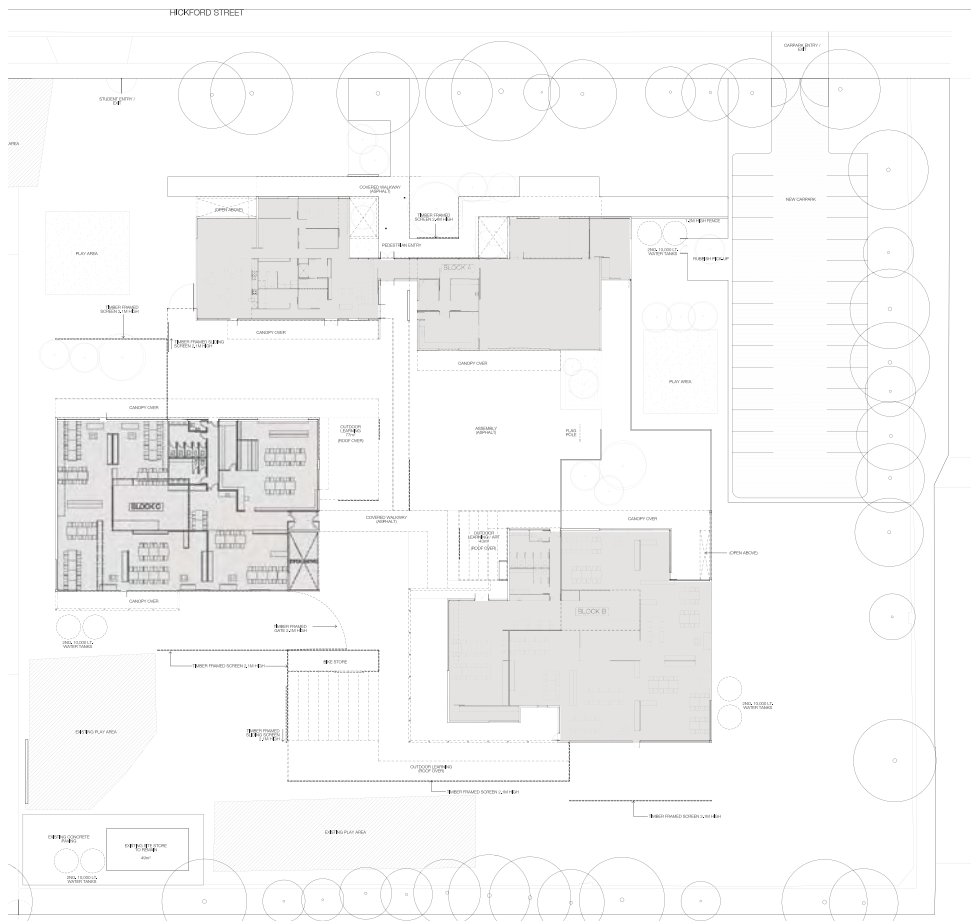


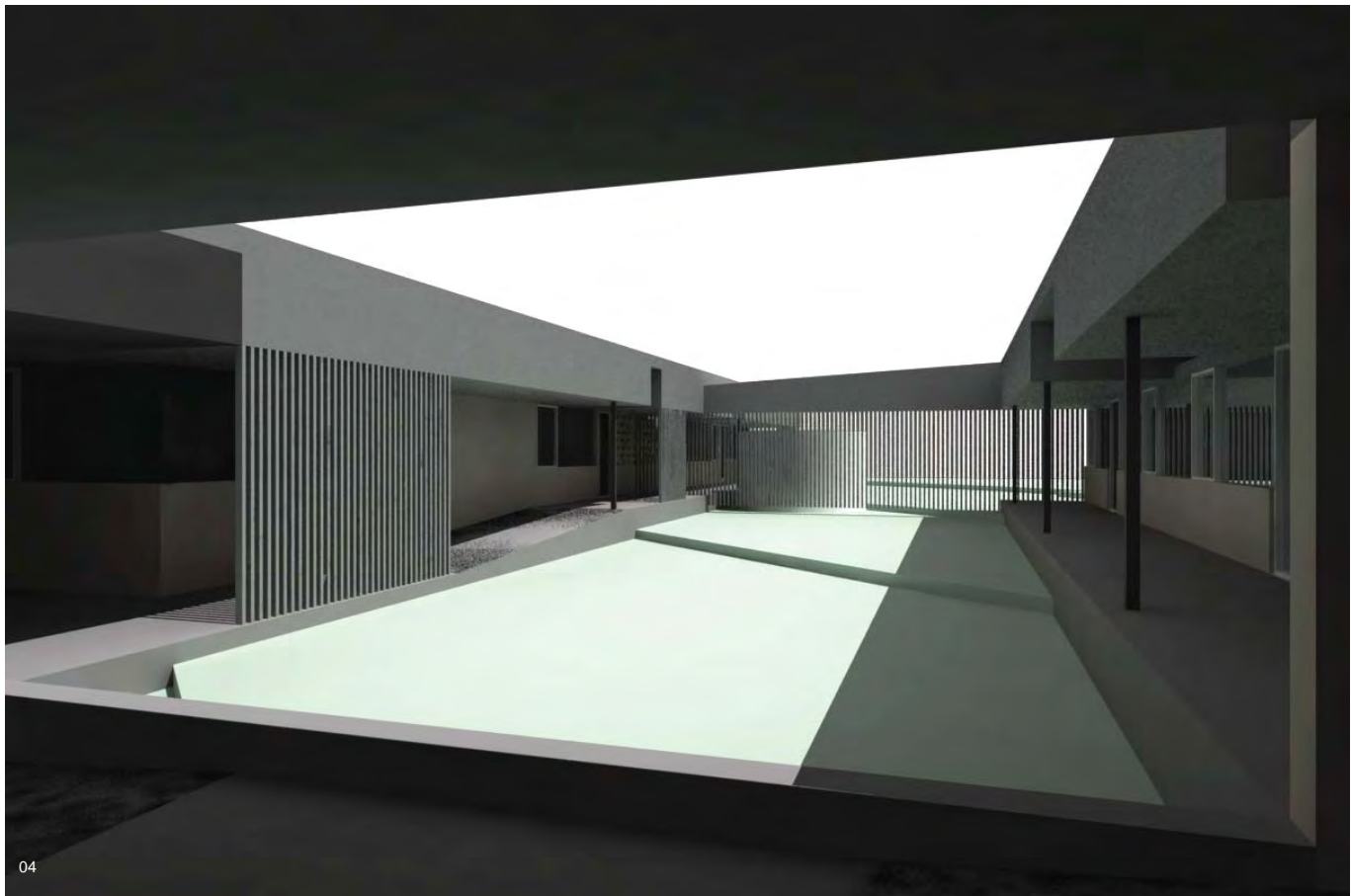
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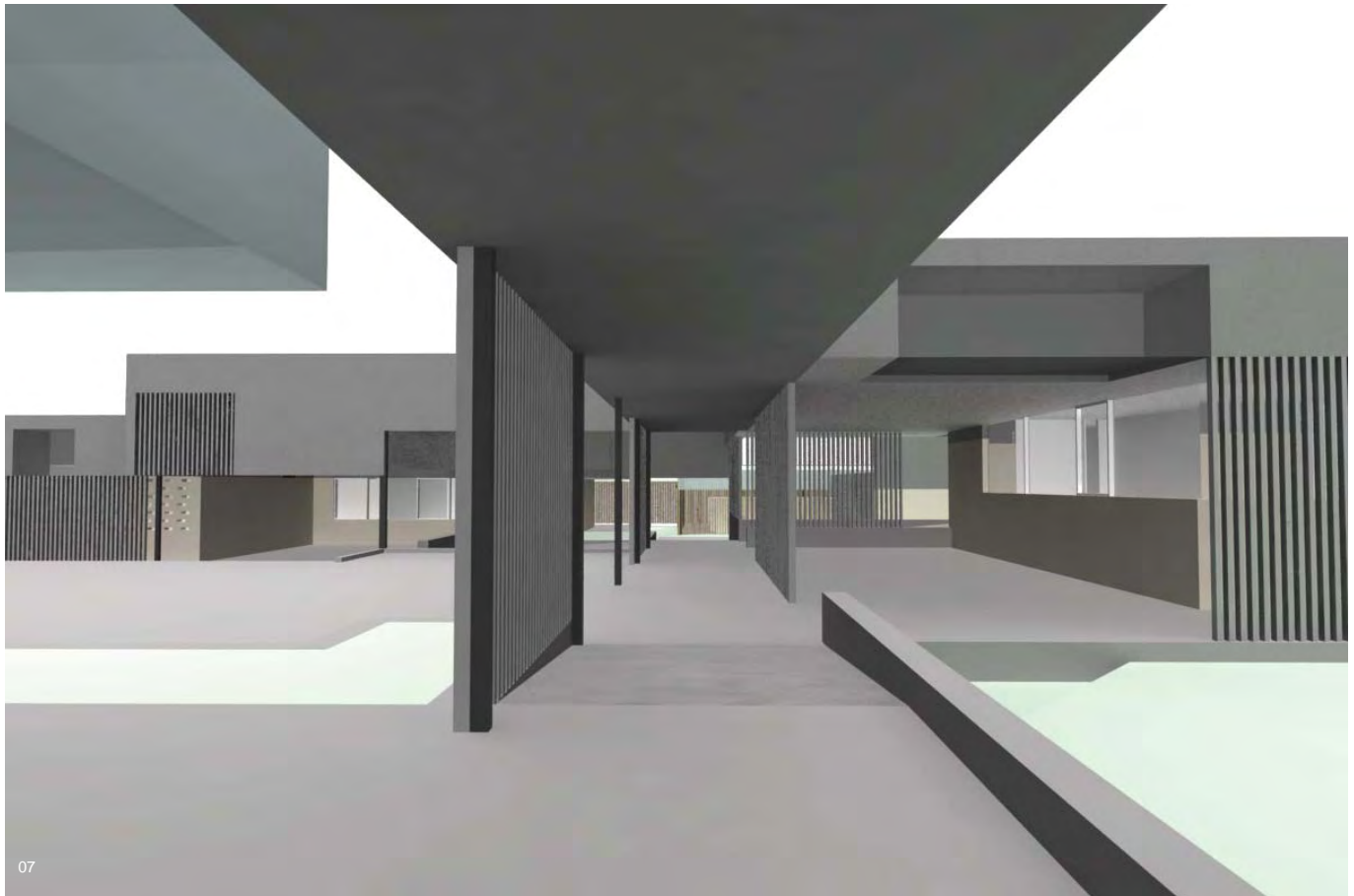


The dispersal of the school program into a collection of buildings is then re-connected by a series of screened and roofed outdoor circulation spaces and playground spaces.

RESERVOIR VIEWS PRIMARY SCHOOL









01

Image 01-02

The irreducibility of these two sheds is tempered by their observation and acknowledgement of the scale found in adjacent structures. Thoughts of shelter - open and enclosed.



02

Image 01-02

*L'esercizio della memoria e' un piacere e un bene
perche' implica conoscenza, rievocare una
superstizione non e' praticarla ma conoscerla.
The use of memory is a pleasure and it is good for it
implies familiarity. To evoke a superstition is
not to practise it but to understand it.*

The three sides of this house enclose a partly covered north facing courtyard however it is landscaped and thus rendered inhabitable. This is not a traditional central courtyard but rather a space through which to look to others beyond. The horizontal configuration enables long views diagonally through the building and across the site whilst the vertical stacking is intended to provide deep shadow and contrasting areas of light.

The building is formed around a collection of concrete primary structures around and over which lightweight construction is used to define spaces. Some of these cannot be entered.

It is intended that the house may appear to be a collection of forms but that from the ground floor interior an overall sense of singularity is achieved. This is different to the first floor where privacy is achieved through the composition of aperture.



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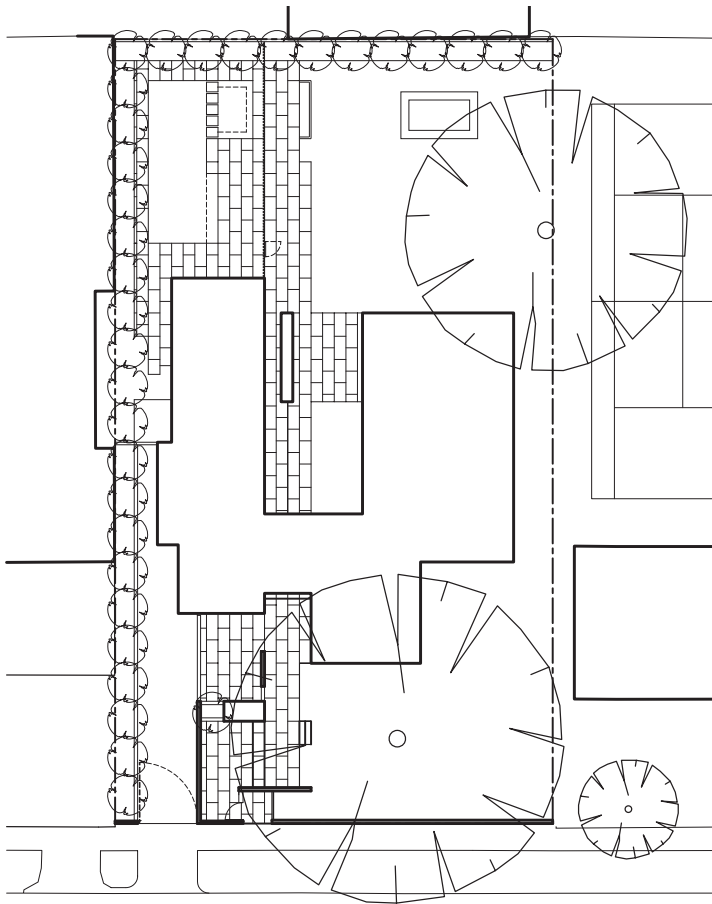
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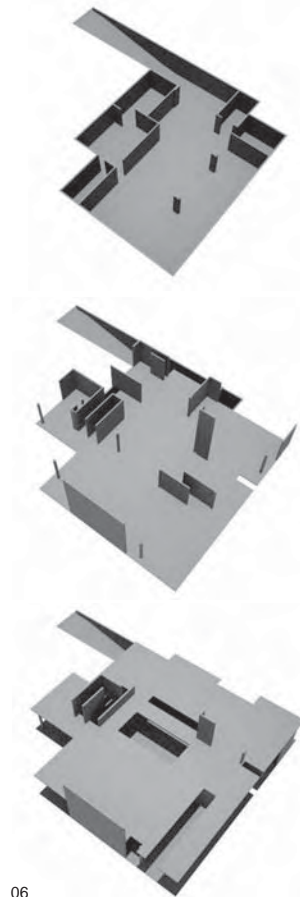


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MULGOA STREET



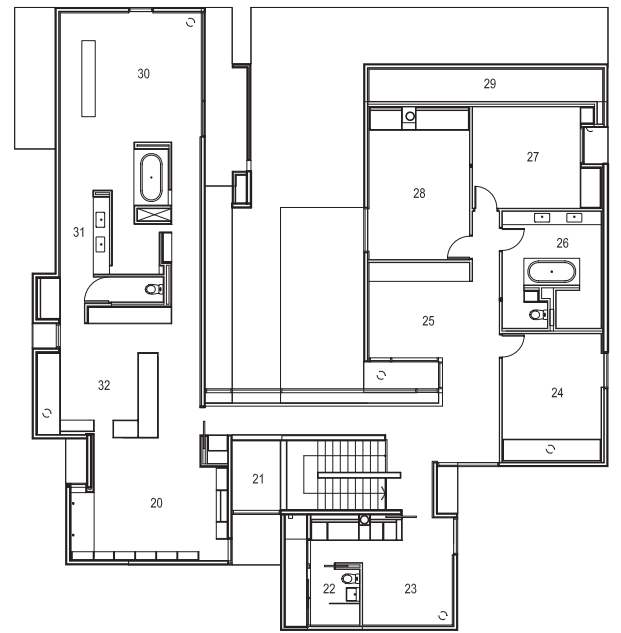
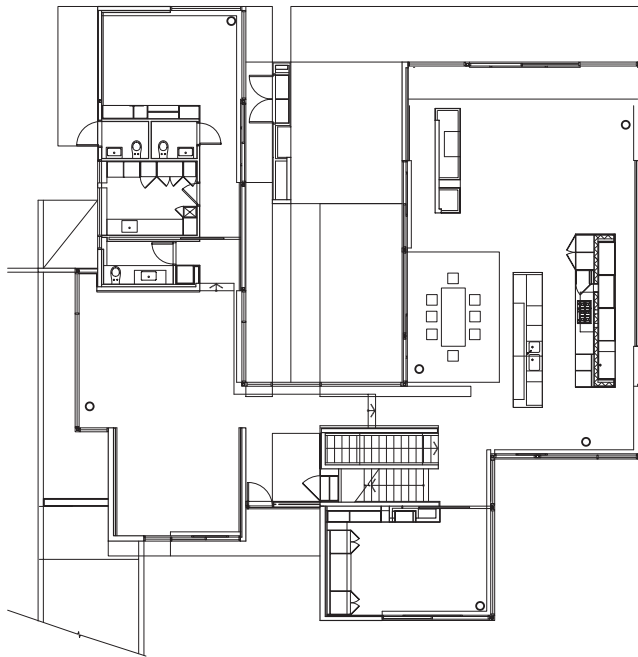
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Image 01-02

Observing this shed the configuration of roof and wall (or in this instance screen) is reduced, the steel trusses providing large open spans and a track for moveable panels. There is an agricultural quality in the execution but beyond this lies the abstraction of architecture into its component parts. There is also a quality in the filtered view through the timber screens.



The value of an existing archetypal shelter-shed was keenly felt however this building created a physical and visual barrier within the schoolyard. It was noted that the structure consisted of a roof over a paling fence. This critical observation combined with a desire to 'open out' the structure lead to thoughts about boundaries and fences. Economical ways of reinvigorating the dilapidated existing were sought.

An attempt was made to articulate the fence, to accentuate it as an element of its own right within the existing form and manipulate it to new ends; to guide movement through this new form and allow new sightlines.

The strategy of borrowing from ancillary circulation space explored in the Park Street house as well as Seaford Lifesaving Club here proved useful.

Studies of the familiar paling fence; remove every second paling or third?

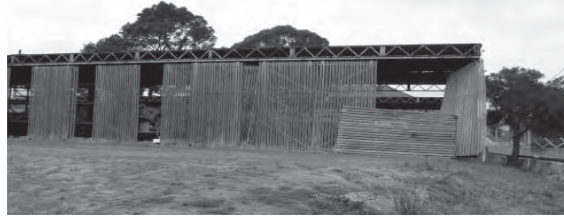
The horizon seen through silhouette of pattern.

The ambiguity of the object from a distance.

The creation of a focal point **around** which things happen rather than only **within**.



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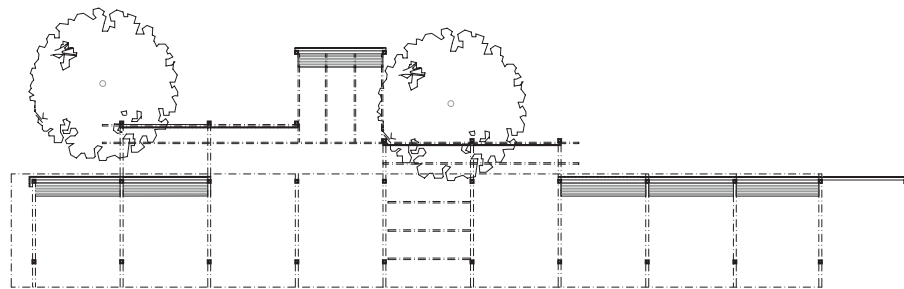
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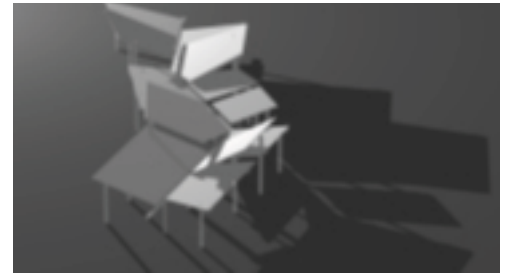
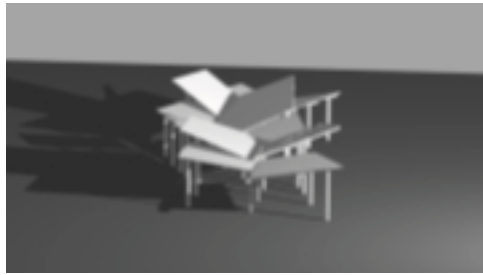
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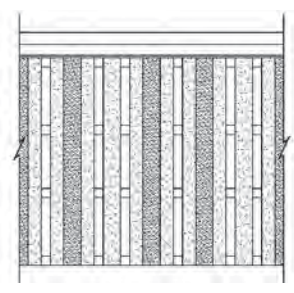
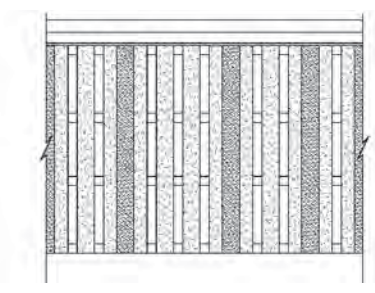
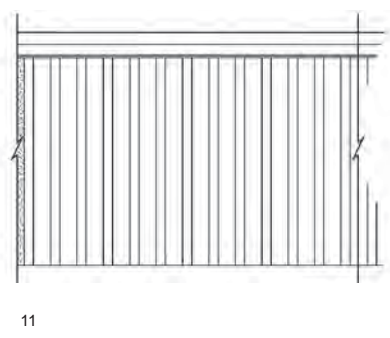
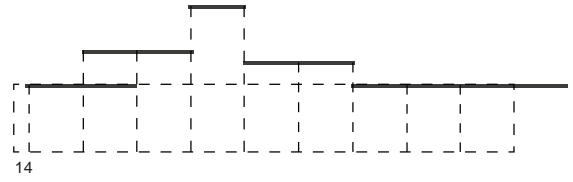
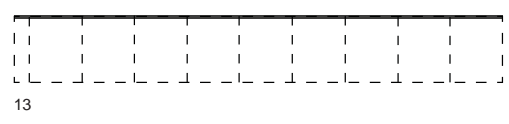
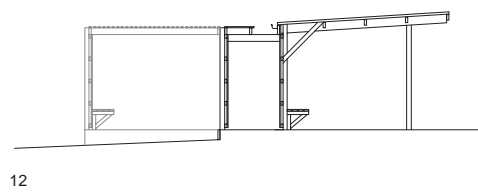
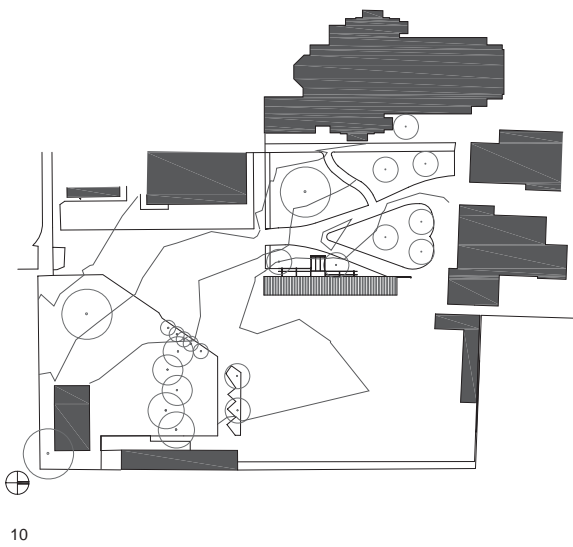


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Images . Observed Moments . Buildings





The images in this catalogue are observed and/or absorbed moments and reflexivity leads to instances reappearing in the work in varied ways. Through analysis and review of earlier work completed through the process of this study I am more easily guided to the potentiality within an existing condition to yield a framework for (future) response. In the case of earlier alterations and additions, the measurement and documentation of the existing conditions leads naturally to observation and analysis. Through this process that which is valuable is uncovered and a sense of the yet undesigned building often hinted at. As free-standing commissions developed I began to create a notional framework and a series of conditions to react to and use as a context. In this sense the catalogue is of particular value.

Space is subtracted and combined with transparency and cropping to create a sense of perspective layering, of planes seen through, and of spatial depth. This is evident in projects such as Woolamai House, Mulgoa St House and Westkon Offices. In the cases of Seaford Life Saving Club and Reservoir Views Primary School a similar spatial sensibility is created by dispersal of the program and form. In these instances the architecture is formed around places for gathering; at Seaford a sheltered courtyard with a cropped view of the water's still horizon line, at Reservoir Views a collection of enclosed playgrounds for children.

The buildings are less about external appearances and more about the space that is created through the relationship of forms internally and externally. Other interests such as the interrogation of the building process and desire to leave a trace of this process are secondary. This observation during construction becomes less critical as the scale of buildings increases, changing the intensity of interest within discrete spaces requiring less stimulation.

The idea of a fallow space is essential to the work. There are many instances where seemingly residual spaces in a building offer a moment of repose. Their lack of function is cultivated, often as a result of an overlap between spaces and not surprisingly they often provide key vantage points within the designs. And yet rather than being an idealised point of singular perspective there is a panoramic.

I find inspiration continually in the work of Giorgio de Chirico, whereby the architecture acts more as pretence for the act of painting and remains a privileged reference.¹ There is a stasis in his paintings that I hope to capture in my own designs, a quiet that I find standing within the open space at Aldo Rossi's Modena Cemetery. In Rossi's work I also find forms of visual suspension and metaphysical extraction, a quality shared with many of the catalogue images I have been collating.

Aspects of the catalogue describe a longing for a certain state of incompleteness: that sense during construction that at points there is sometimes a building more powerful than the finished work. It is this interest that has linked works by continued observation of moments and conditions and hopefully through this the building is further reduced in form.

For me the collated images tend to suggest something more than just details or even atmosphere, hinting at an imagined assemblage not yet realised. Collectively they are subconsciously distilled into new buildings designed within the practice. It is particularly through this exploratory and reflective process that my interest in these things is legitimised and particularly celebrated.

S U M M A R Y

Increasingly I'm drawn to an abstraction and simplification of wall surfaces and elements. Rather than aperture, windows become walls of glass – merely solid or non-solid while doors and (recalling Bernard Joyce)² screens slide past creating either open/connected or closed/disconnected spaces. Spaces become interchangeable - such as at Seaford Life Saving Club, where a meeting room is at times an extension of the courtyard and at other times discreet and private. Layering materials and surfaces (panels and curtains) becomes a method to separate and foster intimacy. The use of curtains not only tempers light and glare but also makes an inviting sense of enclosure and intimacy by virtue of both acoustic dampening and a physical softening of wall surfaces. It enables a building to be in turn transparent and enclosing. When enfolded in curtains a room can achieve the protective quality of underground spaces discussed elsewhere.

In time I have become increasingly aware not only that the spatial delight of some places exists outside of their appearance but in fact that it is sometimes belied by it. That the humble appearance of a block of flats by Joyce or the grandiose structure above the crypt at the Shrine of Remembrance are flip sides of the same kind of masking effect is a reminder that there are some aspects of architecture that can only be appreciated by moving through it and that these qualities exist outside of language.

The northern suburbs of Melbourne have been the context for much of my life as well as my practice. Early commissions naturally tended to be additions the type and location of separation between new and the existing became of primary interest. Circulation and visual layering were manipulated by way of subtracted courtyard spaces to enrich and enmesh new and old.

Concurrently, and especially during the on-site administration of building, there developed a concern for evincing a sense of how the building had been constructed and the techniques required during the building process. I refer specifically to the example of the craft required in creating a roof detail in a concrete slab and the melancholy sense that this intricate and beautiful formwork is lost upon the building being considered complete.

There is also the understanding of the incomplete as a desirable quality of its own, the spark that this gives the imagination. Asymmetry and misalignments were cultivated in such ways that this would be appreciated during the experience of moving through and around the building, certain details adding to this effect. As these strategies developed a framework was then created for the unexpected arrival of larger commissions.

During this time I was collating a series of photographs of the greater physical context in which I was designing mostly as a reminder of poignant moments within the inner city, and sometimes beyond. By collecting these photographs an awareness of personal value was slowly created. That this personal value is manifested in constructions which appear ad-hoc and unusually proportioned is not accidental, these qualities being evident of the plain-speaking way in which density accumulates in this place.

That the view of these constructions is also imbued with a sense of melancholy is also a longing for that feeling one gets when visiting a building by Aldo Rossi or viewing a painting by Giorgio de Chirico, of a condition of quiet that exists outside of language. And so the framing of these photographs is to me critical, as they are moments that stand in for the experience of the whole of a building and the accumulation of them is not an attempt to create a collection of references but a distillation of memory.

I find a key outcome of the Masters programme has been this discernment and recognition that forms an essential aspect of the working process for new and larger commissions. As a result the catalogue informs my approach towards design and embodies a personal, diffuse contextualization in which to design. Furthermore it aims to communicate this personal value within the local context to others. By developing this catalogue of images a reflexivity has been created with an useful open-endedness.

C O N C L U S I O N

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RECOGNITION AND THANK YOU

