

PEOPLE

Daniel Lane & Nathanael Preston of Preston Lane Architects

With offices in Hobart and Melbourne, Preston Lane Architects has developed a signature design process that focuses on the way people interact with buildings.

Words by Judith Abell
Photography by Derek Swalwell



As an architectural practice forms and evolves, the studio output always reflects a rich mix of inputs, with certain preoccupations and principles arising alchemically from conditions such as economic environment, existing networks, past working experience, educational background, personalities and lucky breaks. Preston Lane Architects, an architectural studio of twelve people with offices in Hobart and Melbourne, reflects this alchemy in a range of ways through its portfolio of houses.

The first input is education. With a joint start in architectural education in Tasmania, Nathanael Preston and Daniel Lane share similar training in sensitivity to site and existing context – a priority of the environmental design degree at the time. Both acknowledge that they are often happier working with existing buildings than with greenfield sites. This sensitivity is

clear in projects like Mount Pleasant (see *Houses* 82), Brunswick House, Milkman's Cottage and Malvern East House. In the Mount Pleasant project, the additions to the heritage home are significant, but each new piece is clearly delineated while remaining reflective of and respectful to the proportion and detail of the existing house. The roof of the new runs at the eave line of the old so that there is continuity, yet it deliberately does not rise in a hipped roof to mimic the existing structure. The materials of the new are those of the old – bluestone, sandstone, timber – but with contemporary reconfiguration. The decorative lines of the timber eave are remade in steel for the new works, with like dimensions. Sandstone striations are arranged on the rear wall of the pavilion, directing the eye to Tasmania's Mount Wellington.

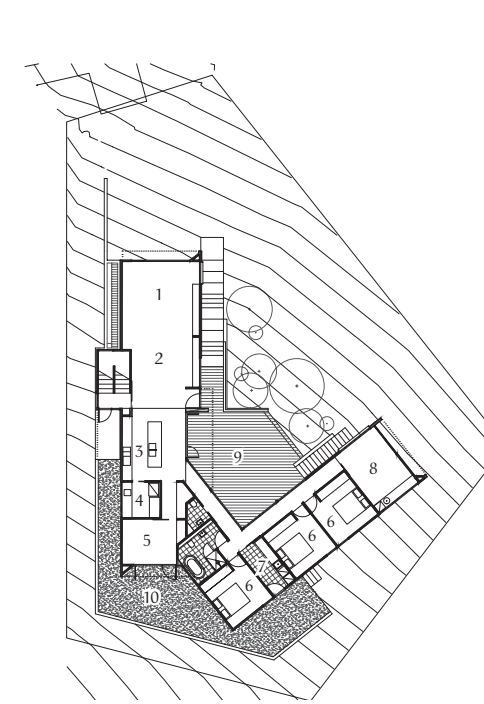
Another input is work history. Daniel

spent his early working years at Heffernan Button Voss Architects (HBV) and Terroir, and credits each for developing certain aspects of his design approach. Working predominantly with the late Ray Heffernan while at HBV, Daniel learned to work hard on alignment, balance and proportion, with everything needing to “line through.” Daniel says that the way Preston Lane uses planar or barrier-like walls as devices to anchor a building or offer visual layering is directly connected to his experience working with Ray, a distinguished Tasmanian modernist. And at Terroir, the idea of a wall evolved for Daniel as a rich, in-between space. These principles can be seen in the precise alignment of the Mount Pleasant house, the depth of the facade wall in both the Horse Shoe House and the Winscombe Extension (see *Houses* 103), the heavier barrier wall on Milkman's Cottage or the way walls orient the viewer in the Malvern

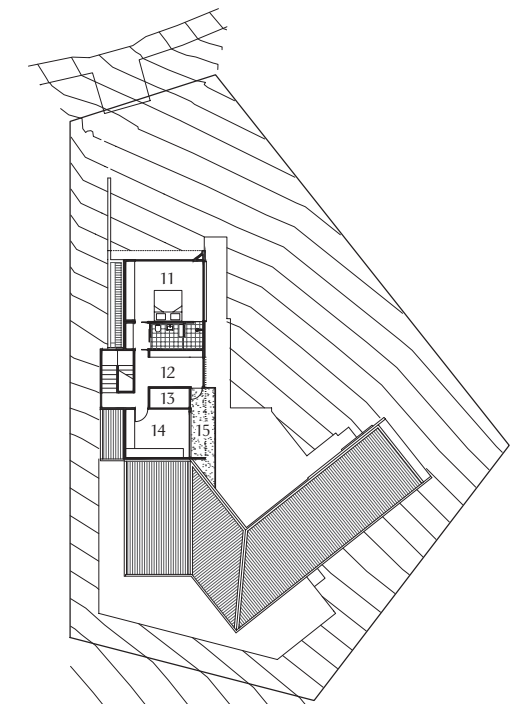
2015 Horse Shoe House

• HOBART, TAS •

- 1 Living
- 2 Dining
- 3 Kitchen
- 4 Pantry
- 5 Sitting
- 6 Bedroom
- 7 Laundry
- 8 Rumpus
- 9 Deck
- 10 Courtyard
- 11 Main bedroom
- 12 Study/library
- 13 Void
- 14 Office
- 15 Balcony



Horse Shoe House first floor 1:500



Horse Shoe House second floor 1:500



2011
Mount Pleasant
• HOBART, TAS •

01 The roof of Mount Pleasant's extension meets the eave line of the house, achieving continuity without mimicry.



02



03

02 A barrier-like wall contributes to visual layering and anchors Horse Shoe House.

03 Horse Shoe House's light internal material palette contrasts with a dark exterior.



2016
**Milkman's
 Cottage**
 • HOBART, TAS •

East House. Nathanael's time working in larger commercial practices, particularly SJB, has helped to shape the way the practice is organized, systematized and connected, which allows for smooth working between Hobart and Melbourne, and SJB's Michael Bialek has remained a mentor.

The set-up of Preston Lane across two offices has had an impact on the development of the design approach. While the Hobart office, run by Daniel, grew steadily from the beginning, the more competitive environment in Melbourne slowed the development of the office run by Nathanael. As a result, Nathanael and Daniel worked closely together on all of their earlier buildings, which were predominantly located in Tasmania. The principles that each works with now emerge from a shared sensibility, shaped by Tasmania's economic climate, where significantly lower budgets stimulate a different kind of thinking. The way the

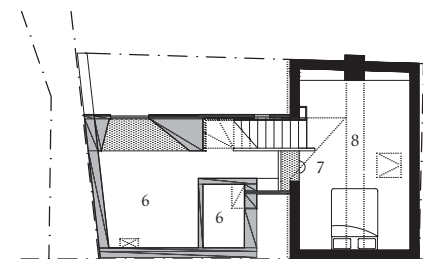
practice works with volume to create generosity, variation and delight in buildings, where there might not be the budget for expensive materials, is a clear outcome of this way of working. This can be seen equally in tiny projects like Milkman's Cottage, where a lower ceiling on a deep external threshold creates an additional room, and in more expansive extensions such as the Malvern East or Brunswick Houses, where the section is subtly articulated to separate old from new and draw light deep into the building. Both directors talk emphatically about working with a clear concept or organizing idea throughout the entire design process. This is an approach that has been reinforced and habituated through the two-office system, which demands a consistent touchpoint so that all can work on or review a project.

An interesting ingredient in the mix is the practice's longstanding working relationship with Cordwell Lane Builders. Daniel's brothers, Michael and Perry, work

04 The two-office system (Melbourne office pictured) influences the practice's design process. Photograph: Peter Bennetts.

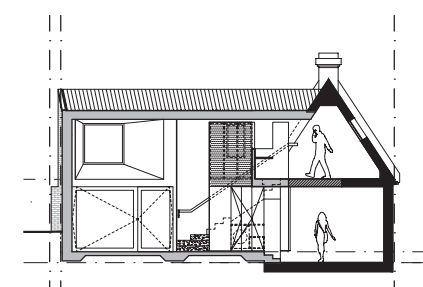
05 A subtle shift in materials at Milkman's Cottage reflects the architects' sensitive approach to reconfigurations. Photograph: Adam Gibson.

06 The Milkman's Cottage extension celebrates tall, light-filled spaces, in contrast to the original dimly lit alcoves. Photograph: Adam Gibson.

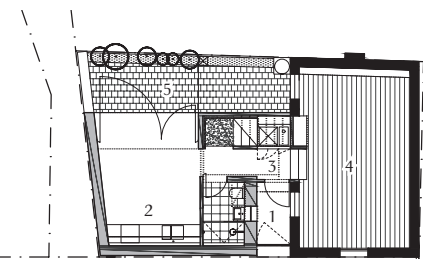


Milkman's Cottage first floor 1:250

- 1 Entry
- 2 Kitchen
- 3 Laundry
- 4 Living
- 5 Courtyard
- 6 Void
- 7 Desk
- 8 Bedroom

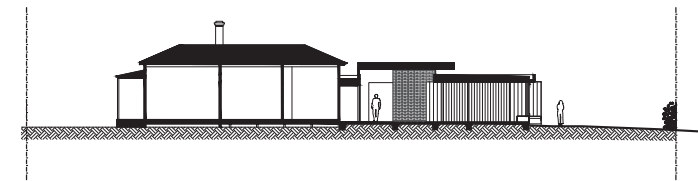


Milkman's Cottage section 1:250



Milkman's Cottage ground floor 1:250

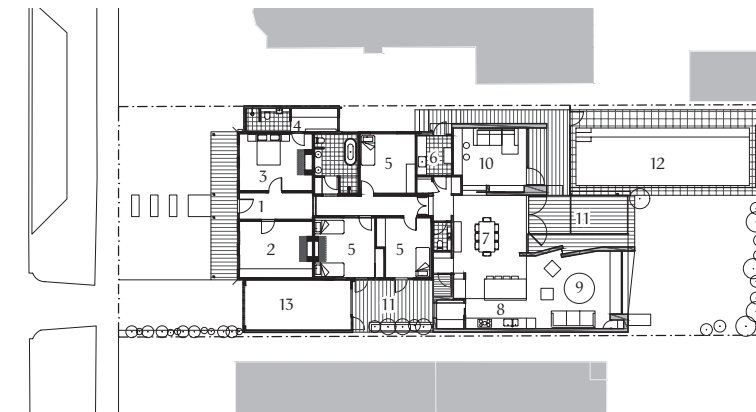




Malvern East House section 1:500

07 A combination of timber, concrete and masonry introduces a textured and tactile palette to Malvern East House.

- 1 Entry
- 2 Study
- 3 Main bedroom
- 4 Robe
- 5 Bedroom
- 6 Laundry
- 7 Dining
- 8 Kitchen
- 9 Living
- 10 Sitting
- 11 Deck
- 12 Pool
- 13 Garage



Malvern East House plan 1:500



2015
Malvern East
HOUSE
 • MELBOURNE, VIC •

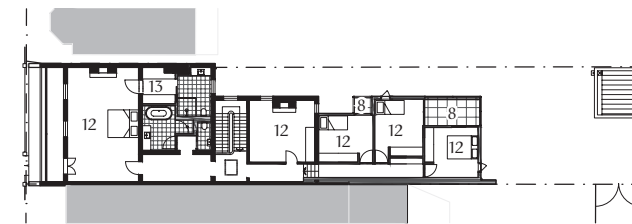
in this business as co-owner and foreman respectively. While Cordwell Lane doesn't build all of the studio's designs, it completes at least one Preston Lane project per year. Daniel's close relationship with his brothers has allowed for a different and perhaps more robust kind of conversation to happen in the design and construction phases. Preston Lane has been able to push for greater experimentation in ways of making, and Daniel's brothers have been free to push back with demands on the practice to operate with respect for their trade. The practice has developed customized glazing with Cordwell Lane, which melds commercial sections with timber-framed doors for a tactile yet budget-friendly finish. In addition, Preston Lane has designed several projects for both Michael and Perry, offering easier access to built examples of their work.

The final aspect marinating in the mix is time. I have reviewed several of Preston Lane's Tasmanian designs over the past decade and have noticed shifts in the

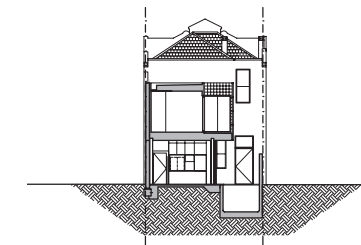
language of the practice and an increasing clarity in approach. An emerging aspect is the desire to concentrate the energy of the design in the places where people interact with a building – sit in its window bays, lean against its walls, relax under shady overhangs. In these “moments,” materials are warm and tactile and the design is shaped to control views in order to amplify the strengths of each context. Nathanael describes the incorporation of a long, narrow pool at Brunswick House, which was drawn back into the plan in order to become a focus for the internal spaces, its black tiles increasing reflection. Demonstrating an approach that might be born from Tasmanian frugality – where one element is designed to do many things – this pool is now a key player within the home. Becoming more than its ten or fifteen days of active use a year, it offers the home an outlook and a daily light show across the ceilings of the living space. prestonlane.com.au

08 The crisp lines of fine steel windows and a perforated mesh box contrast with the original Victorian terrace at Brunswick House.

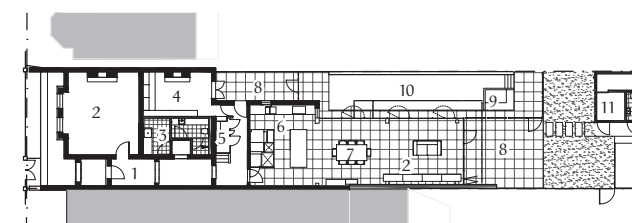
09 A pool, drawn back into the plan, becomes a reflective focal point for the internal spaces of Brunswick House.



Brunswick House first floor 1:500



Brunswick House section 1:500



Brunswick House ground floor 1:500

- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1 Entry | 8 Terrace |
| 2 Living | 9 Spa |
| 3 Laundry | 10 Pool |
| 4 Study | 11 Plant room |
| 5 Cellar | 12 Bedroom |
| 6 Kitchen | 13 Robe |
| 7 Dining | |



OUR PALETTE

• MATERIALS & FINISHES •

Preston Lane Architects uses a careful selection of natural materials, locally designed fittings and innovative window and door designs to create its residential projects. Here, the practice shares some of its favourite products.

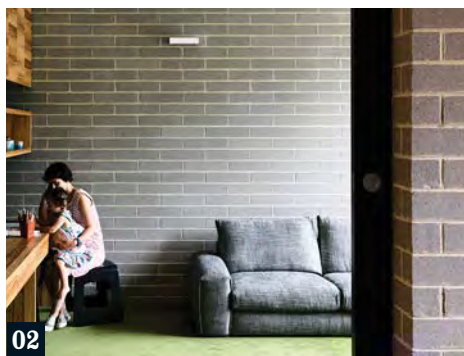


01

01 Aneeta sashless windows

Sashless windows are often used to provide ventilation to a space without drawing attention to the opening window, as seen at Mount Pleasant (pictured). Preston Lane Architects values the simple integration and good circulation provided by the double-hung configuration of this product.

aneetawindows.com



02

02 Grey blockwork

Preston Lane Architects often uses grey blockwork for both internal and external walls. The practice likes the texture the blockwork provides through repetition and the variety of block sizes, as seen at the Malvern East House (pictured). The neutral tones of the blockwork provide a strong base for other elements to sit against and within.

boral.com.au

Photography:

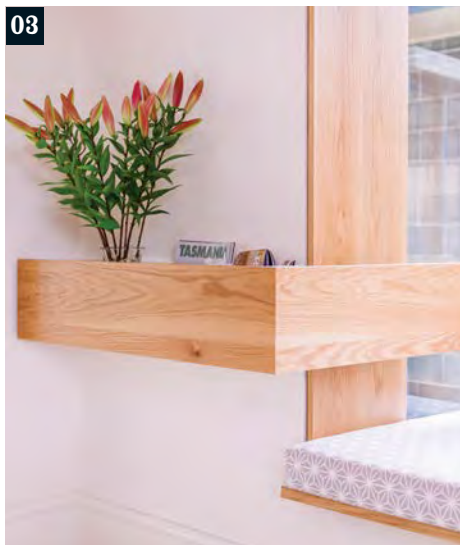
Derek Swalwell 01, 02, 04, 05

Jonathan Wherrett 03

Adam Gibson 06

03 Timber

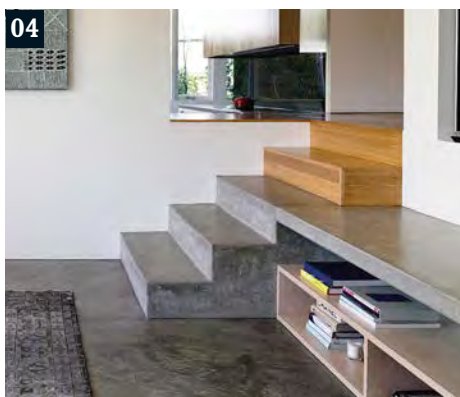
Preston Lane Architects enjoys the natural qualities and warmth that timber provides to a space. The practice often uses timber around thresholds and where people interact, as seen at the Weld Street Kitchen (pictured).



03

04 Concrete

Preston Lane Architects likes to use concrete for flooring, as seen at the Winscombe Extension (pictured). The practice likes the permanence of concrete, as well as the neutral tones that it provides as a base, allowing for other materials and colours to interact and stand alone within the space.



04



05

05 Christopher Boots BCAA pendant

Preston Lane Architects loves using products made by local designers and, in particular, the Christopher Boots light fittings. The practice appreciates the materiality of the fittings and their ability to be modified. The 3D nature of the BCAA fitting allows it to work well in spaces with a large volume, as seen at the Malvern East House (pictured).

christopherboots.com



06

06 Top-hung doors

Top-hung sliding doors enable custom detailed doors to be fitted to the face of any project, such as Spring Beach Getaway (pictured). The practice incorporates custom doors of this type to provide large openings and draw attention to the door itself.

capral.com.au