Life in this house by Preston Lane Architects is dictated by the Tasmanian climate, from summer evenings on its western deck to winter nights in its cozy study.

for all seasons
I HAVE A FRIEND who has designed her London apartment so that she can sleep in at least three different places. She lives alone and the apartment isn’t large, but she likes variety and enjoys a change of scene. So she has a conventional bedroom, a sleeping platform and a window bed, each made to accommodate herself or to be readily relinquished for a visiting friend. The idea that a design for a dwelling might create such potential for variety, or that you might be able to live in the same spaces differently, is really appealing. Changeability is found in abundance in the Victorian terraces of our share-house days, but seems less and less in contemporary homes. This house by Preston Lane Architects recaptures something of that spirit, but in this case it seems to be geared more specifically towards living in different directions.

The house, for a couple expecting their first child, is located south of Hobart, on the Channeled Highway between Taroona and Kingston. The clients discovered and bought the site – a combination of ex-farming land and remnant bushland – about five years ago and moved into their new home less than a year ago.

The property arguably has the pick of the aspects of the small Bonnet Hill community. From its saddle position on the hill, there are unimpeded river views to the east and south–east and, to the west, it looks down to Kingston and beyond to the edges of Wellington Park. From its saddle position on the hill, there are views that recapture something of that spirit, but in this case it seems to be geared more specifically towards living in different directions.

Once the house had been sited, wind was the next significant factor to consider for the design. With unimpeded views in this part of Tasmania comes exposure to the elements. Throughout the morning, the wind gusts in from the west or south-west, and in the afternoon, the sea breeze flies in off the channel from the south-east, clearing out any residual heat from the day. In construction terms, Preston Lane considered the design as a series of heavy parallel walls that would act as buffers, so that the house would always feel solid, even in the worst gales. In planning terms, they provided the potential to open the home in one direction or another depending on the breeze. In the morning, when the east sun streams into the kitchen and dining area, the wind is generally coming from the west, so doors to the kitchen terrace can be left open comfortably. In the afternoon and early evening, as the sea breeze gets up, the occupants can spill out onto the west deck in the warm sun, once again protected. On those rare hot Tasmanian days, the entrance to the kitchen window to become an external breakfast and drinks bar. Preston Lane director Daniel Lane talks of his firm’s preoccupation with the idea of thresholds. It is their belief that the Tasmanian house must attempt to draw the outside in wherever possible, even if only visually, as a way to create a continuous relationship with external spaces, particularly when the weather dictates enclosure for so much of the year. So in this house, the architects have taken every opportunity to explore and exploit this relationship. The circulation spine reaches out into the surrounding landscape with views at each end and becomes a winter tucked into the warm study, full summer nights spent catching the sun on the kitchen terrace. The concept was most clearly revealed when the owner talked of his intentions for the external space.

Entry is from the south, the living and main bedroom spaces focus on the eastern aspect, a “warm” study room at the end of the house faces north and the remaining secondary bedrooms and dining courtyard look to the west. The spine links these areas of the house, providing bench seats to extend living spaces, niches for art and a substantial amount of storage space hidden behind flush–finished joinery panels.

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The potential to live in different directions became most apparent when I was touring the house with the owner. Even after a year the couple is still learning different ways to live in the house. There has been a winter tucked into the warm study, full summer nights spent eating and drinking with friends on the west deck, winter mornings catching the sun on the kitchen terrace. The concept was most clearly revealed when the owner talked of his intentions for the external space.

Along with retaining the remnant bushland on the site, he has plans for each of the outdoor spaces adjacent to the house – each with a different focus, based on aspect, weather exposure or the requirement for further privacy. It is refreshing to see how complexity and simplicity sit comfortably with each other in this design, and I can imagine that the addition of children will further reveal the ways in which a small home can cater to many situations. JUDITH ABELL.

OUT OF TOWN

IN FOCUS

HOUSES 70

PREVIOUS PAGES: Heavy parallel walls give the house a feeling of solidity and provide a buffer against the strong prevailing winds. THESE PAGES: Smooth, natural materials and a subdued colour palette allow occupants to focus on the landscape outside.
THESE PAGES, ABOVE: The sheltered western deck is the perfect place to bathe in afternoon sunshine.

BELOW: Positioned on the saddle of a hill, the house enjoys spectacular views in all directions. A double circulation spine runs though its centre.
ARCHITECT
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PRACTICE PROFILE
Small practice specializing in small- to medium-scale housing and small commercial work.

PROJECT TEAM
Daniel Lane, Nathanael Preston, Phil Ackerly, Garth Ancher

BUILDER
Cordwell Lane

CONSULTANTS
Engineer Gandy and Roberts
Interiors Preston Lane Architects

PRODUCTS
Roofing Colorbond Trimdeck Hi-Ten; wool batt insulation
External walls Etched-face blockwork; cement sheet; exterior-grade plywood; madison oil finish
Internal walls Plyesterboard painted in Dulux ‘Antique White USA’
Windows Capral double-glazed windows
Doors Capral 200 series; anodized aluminium-finish; Vantage bi-fold doors; Centor internal bi-fold doors and sliding doors; Nova Hardware
Flooring 14 mm Tasmanian oak strip flooring
Kitchen Miele ovens and dishwasher; Baumatic cooktop; Qasair rangehood; Liebherr refrigerator; Franke integrated sinks; Gessi tapware; Silestone benchtops
Bathroom GSI Traccia basins; Duravit toilets; Zucchetti tapware; Bette bath
Climate control Devi ceiling heating; External elements Pelewan timber decking

TIME SCHEDULE
Design, documentation
6 months
Construction 7 months

FLOOR AREA
263 m²

PHOTOGRAPHY
Ralph Aphonso

LEFT: The living room and raised northern study are divided by a chimney-like partition wall of etched concrete blocks. The wall’s thermal mass assists in natural climate control.