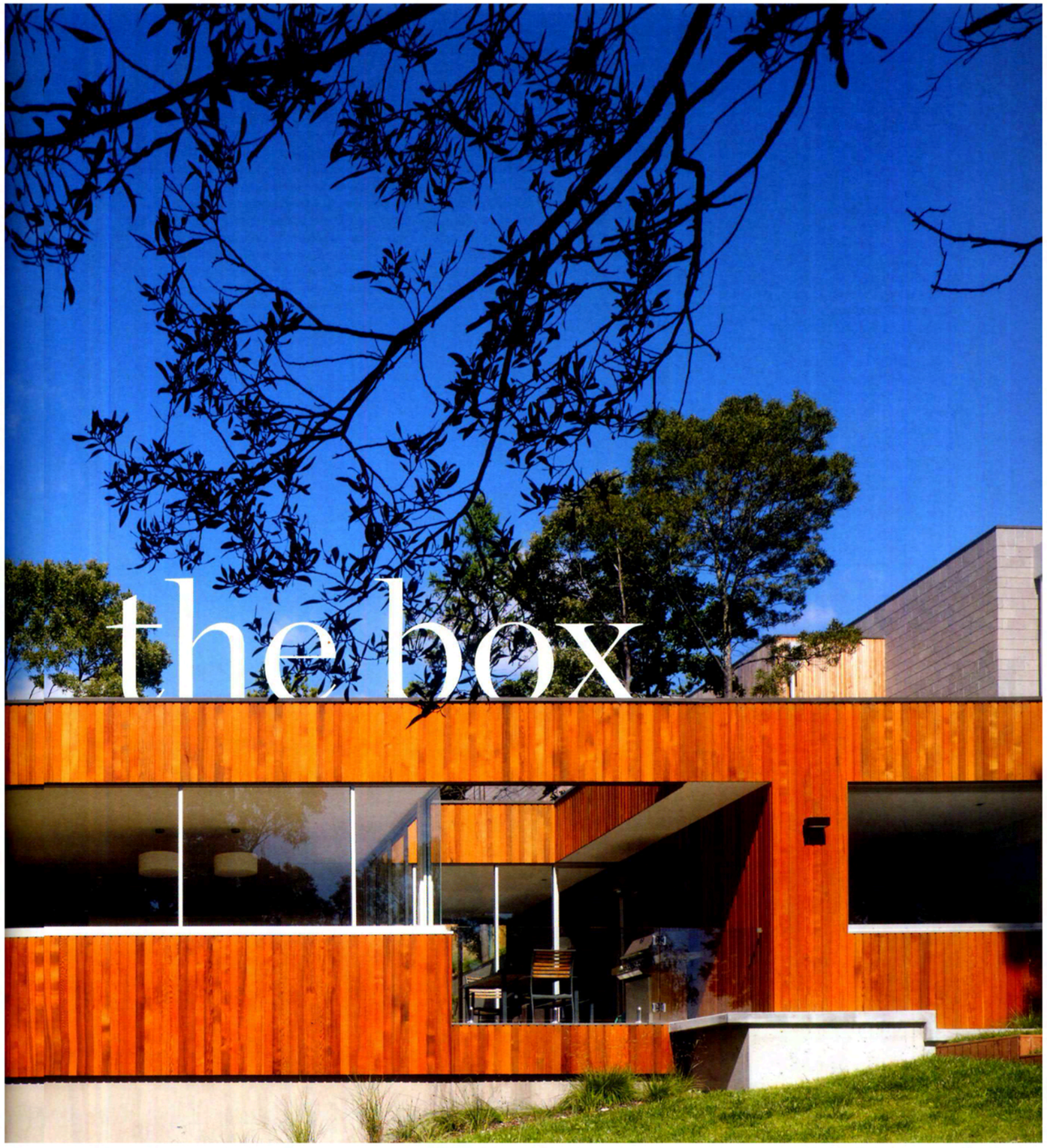
One out of the box

A SIMPLE BRIEF HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A WORK OF FINE LANDSCAPE ART SOUTH OF HOBART'S CBD

It is not often that a client requests that their new home be "... just a box, not a dumb box, but a simple box". When this happens, it is a fine opportunity for architects to stretch those minimalist, alignment muscles and get to work. Clients Seana and Terry made this exact request for their house in Sandy Bay and architects Preston Lane have gladly taken the succinct brief to heart. But, as any designer recognises, "simple" requires much work beneath the surface, to ensure that what you see lives up to the imagined result.

The site for this home sits on the edge of a small bush reserve, in a new subdivision within a dense residential area south of Hobart's CBD. A right of way runs along the northern boundary. The subdivision has been created out of a private, wooded reserve that was used and viewed by locals. Seana and Terry selected their site for the established trees and have encouraged Preston Lane to retain as many as possible on their title, although it does seem as though owners of adjacent allotments may be less inclined to protect this heritage.



ARCHITECT *Preston Lane Architects* WRITER *Judith Abell* PHOTOGRAPHER *Derek Swalwell*

Architect statement

The Boot Leg Reserve House sits amidst a wooded setting in the suburb of Sandy Bay. Conceptually, the house is composed of a simple timber box sitting within a concrete cradle. Our architecture can be reduced to a simple diagram, without having it take over and reduce the tactile qualities of the place. Yet the simple form of the house belies a complex set of spatial connections. Cross-linked spaces and the manipulation of spatial volumes expand upon the perceived size of compact rooms and provide unexpected connections to spaces beyond. This was a key device used to make a smaller house feel larger. Living in a cooler climate with fluctuating weather patterns, we are constantly reminded of the need to create spaces which respond to the site. Through the manipulation of the building apertures and the lining of internal and external cladding, and the flow between spaces, we aim to create connections between inside and outside.

DANIEL LANE

Fortunately, the site also overlooks a public, council-owned reserve to the north, which has a dense, variegated canopy.

The form of the building is a long, rectangular tube clad in Western Red Cedar that beds into the slope at the west end of the site and projects over a carport to form a cantilever and double height entry portal on the east elevation. The selected level on the slope gives enough elevation in the building to offer some privacy to the main living floor while retaining a modest overall building height. On the south and west elevations, which are most susceptible to overlook from new neighbours, the tube is wrapped by a rendered masonry wall with minimal penetrations, while the northern face opens out to the sun and the canopy view, with a series of crisp incisions in the timber skin.

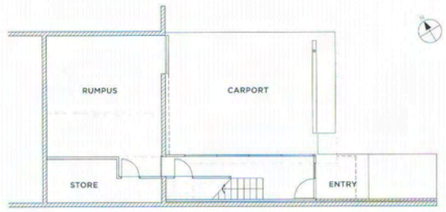
The programmatic di gram for the building has all the living spac running along the porous, warm, northern f e, and all the service spaces – circulation, la dry, walk-in-robe – against the cooler south n wall. Openness is promoted throughout t shared living areas through a marked absenc of hinged doors, with flush-pull cavity sliders a ilable as required for thermal or aural separati .

It is the alignment features within the house, the reduction o surface changes or penetrations and a mini l colour palette that give this box its simpli ty while increasing the perceived size of h volume. Certain dimensions, such as the th of the entry stair or the depth of the study, e carried through to adjacent spaces so that ere is flow between different zones and fro inside to outside. As Daniel Lane descril , no one space is "singular, each relates to another". Surface materials and fixtures reinforce these connections. Throughout, joinery is detailed to reduce or remove the need for handles. Any machinery required to service the house – washing machine, dishwasher, heating, extraction – is concealed within storage joinery or, in some cases, behind custom vents.

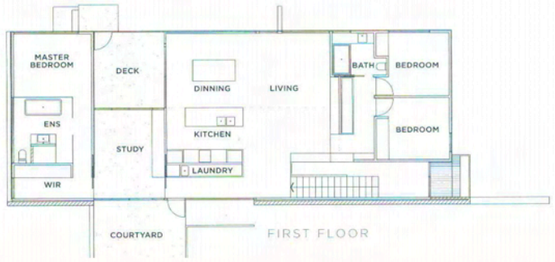
While the brief of a simple box has been soundly achieved in this building, it is the captured view to the reserve to the north that completes the design. Queensland architects Owen and Vokes coined an expression, "borrowed landscape", for the suburban strategy with which residential outlooks can be created by carefully framing foliage from adjacent blocks, reserves or backyards. These clients readily identify this aspect of the design as an important part of their living experience. Seana relates that one clear surprise and delight is the way the visual slice of tree canopy is an integral part of the interior spaces: "When you come up the stairs, which are quite closed to the outside environment, and step into the living area, the large windows and view give a real sense of space." While I don't believe that this particular dwelling has contributed significantly to the degradation of the private reserve, I can't help but recognise some irony in this scenario as I recall the large hole, stripped of all but one tree, steadily growing on their neighbour's plot, in readiness for a six-car garage. If borrowed foliage is patently essential to suburban homes, then what level of responsibility does any local authority, developer or subsequent buyer need to accept in order to protect or provide "landscape" for others? M

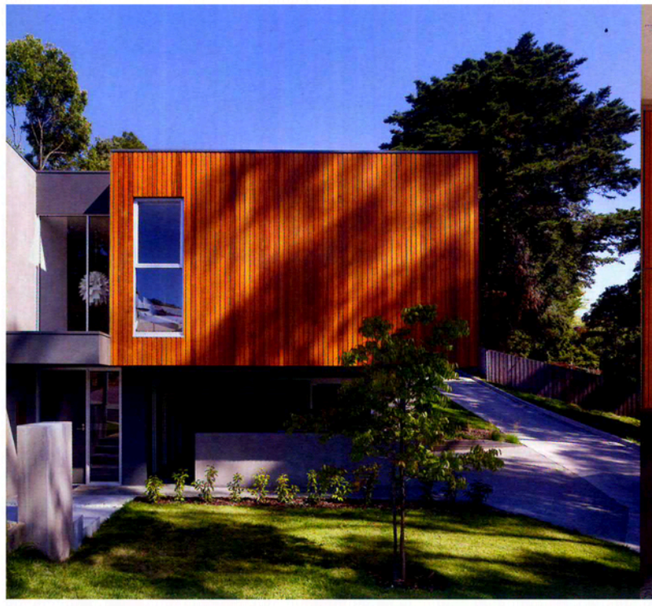
PROJECT DETAILS

ARCHITECT: Daniel Lane, Phil Ackerly, Nathanael Preston
ENGINEER: Gandy & Roberts
BUILDER: MGB Constructions
BUILDING SURVEYOR: Holdfast Consulting
DESIGN AND DOCUMENTATION: 6 months
CONSTRUCTION: 6 months
FLOOR AREA: 140m² upper, 60m² lower
BALUSTRADES: Frameless toughened clear glass
BATHROOM: Lanark Fusion bath tub from Reece Plumbing, Duravit Vero basin by Elite Appliances, benches in Caesar Stone, Argento Polished Gasparre Prive tiles
DECKING: Polished concrete clear seal finish
EXTERIOR: Cement Fairing Render to masonry walls
FLOORING: Tasmanian Oak timber with limewash stain and water-based sealer
INTERIOR: Walls painted in Beige Royal by Dulux and Grey Ember by Wattyl, plasterboard ceilings
KITCHEN: Bench in Crystal Salt Essa stone
LIGHTING: EUTRAC recessed track and spots from Casa Monde, Vistosi Lucciola pendant lights, Artemide
ROOF: Trimdeck Colorbond



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

THIS PAGE: Western Red Cedar clads the rectangular cube, which houses light-filled rooms that are intimately connected to each other and to nature. **OPPOSITE:** All the living spaces run along the warm northern face, while the service spaces, such as the laundry and walk-in robe, are set against the cooler southern wall.