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We serve up design on a non-elitist platter with Joris Laarman, Nathan Yong, Reel-Loon and Kyouei Design. And sieve out the things that make IKEA the massive success that it is. Also, featuring projects by Vladimir N. Ivanov Architects, Arkhefield Architecture, RT+D Architects & H&S Architects



gutted and cleaned

CORED AND RECONFIGURED, THIS 19TH CENTURY WEATHERBOARD TERRACE IN BALMAIN, AUSTRALIA IS AN EXAMPLE OF A CENTURY-OLD STRUCTURE TURNED CONTEMPORARY.

Nestled in a small pocket of land in the Balmain waterfront in Sydney, Australia, Cameron's Cove plays host to nature and its colony of weatherboard houses. Brooks Residence, designed by Vladimir N. Ivanov Architects is one such residence, perched high on an escarpment that overlooks Cameron's Cove. Here, a beautiful view of the waterfront beguiles and is fringed by lush nature. Owned by a couple who are both authors and their child, Brooks Residence accompanied by an idyllic setting is perhaps their personal realisation of a Walden Pond dream.

OPPOSITE: A long, low, dark wood coffee table is positioned in front of a modular sofa. The room is a mix of contemporary and rustic elements, including a cowhide rug and a dark leather armchair. The room features a high ceiling, white walls, and a dark wood coffee table. A red and white modular sofa is positioned against the wall, and a large fireplace is visible in the background.



Previously a two-storey two-bedroom timber terrace weatherboard house, Brooks Residence was claustrophobically cramped to say the least. "In the 1970s, the rear of the cottage was altered. The 70s renovations had a living room, kitchen, and laundry-cum-bathroom on the lower floor. There were two bedrooms with balconies on the upper floor," architect Vladimir N. Ivanov describes of the old construct.

Built on a tight site, the old Brooks Residence was a modestly sized dwelling. The house was built long, as terrace houses sometimes are, and despite its excellent location overlooking Cameron's Cove, little room was allowed to enjoy the rare views. The condition of the house too, according to Ivanov, was dire.

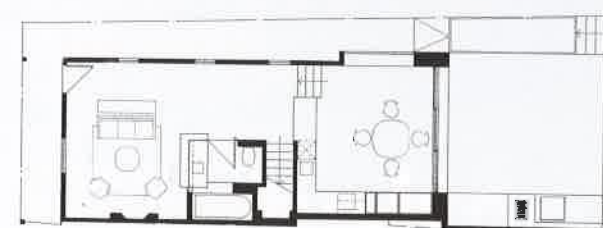
When commissioned to take on the project, Ivanov was briefed to create open-plan living areas that relate easily to the outdoors. In addition, an office-cum-study was to be incorporated, together with a contemporary bathroom and kitchen.

The first task at hand was to reconfigure the space, if any connections to the exterior were to be had. Realising airy, open-plan living for the home called for a substantial amount of tearing down and rebuilding – a virtual remodelling of the house. Thankfully, weatherboard homes are versatile in that way. Structurally easy to work on, the original weatherboard construct allowed for interior walls, and even exterior walls to be removed. In fact, all but three of the latter were stripped.

The front of the house was intentionally left untouched after taking into consideration the existing streetscape and a desire to preserve the particular feel of the street. Aside from preserving the specific feel of Cameron's Cove streetscape, it accords the necessary privacy from the street level.

But beyond that, all else was changed, adapted and remodelled for spaces that infused a sense of expanse and took advantage of the surrounding views. Untying the house from the knot of claustrophobia it originally was, Ivanov reshuffled the workings of the house and placed utilitarian spaces such as the staircase and bathroom at the core of the construct, and gave communal spaces priority in their relations to the exterior.

The living room at the front of the house, though relatively petite, feels decidedly airy and spacious—perhaps due to the astute choice of a white background and proportionately sized pieces of furniture that do not impose. Retaining the parti wall also led to the preservation of the fireplace, which lends an interesting injection of the dwelling's past into the new composition.



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

Not to be missed is the single slice of red on one wall. Made of MDF board that has been given a protective coat of lacquer paint in deep red, the neat insertion of red draws one's eye to the end of the living room, leading it to the following space. Above this panel of red is an equal panel of frosted glass that serves as a backsplash in the adjacent bathroom. Seen from the living room, the frosted glass panel lights up from behind whenever the lights in the bathroom are turned on.

While Brooks Residence is a model of open-plan living, a wide passageway from the living to the dining-cum-kitchen area gives a semblance of privacy and separation. Passageways often suffer from a lack of natural light. But it is not the case here. Glorious sunlight filters through two high windows, which accords mini-views of the gentle parabolas of the Anzac Bridge and the twist of a gum tree bough outside.



OPPOSITE: A flash of red in the kitchen forms continuity from the living room.
THIS PAGE: Upstairs, simple configuration accommodates two bedrooms, a study and a balcony.



the amalgamation of functions, the kitchen-cum-dining area hardly cramped given that it melts almost seamlessly into the exterior, with only light sliding glass doors between the two. And so, without even stepping into the kitchen, one is privy to the magnificent view of trees, water and sky.

The communal area is furnished simply, with cabinet in white lining both lower and upper ends of two adjacent walls. Centring the space is a timber-topped bench which in turn is lined with white chairs for a sense of cohesion. A flash of red appears once again in the form of a Pilbara-red glass backsplash, giving the space just the right dose of drama and excitement.

The relocated staircase wraps round the aforementioned bathroom as it makes its way up to the second floor. Even as this happens, sunlight slices through the roof and a through-the-house lightwell bathes the bathroom with a healthy dose of sunshine during the day.

On the second floor, spaces are configured simply to accommodate two bedrooms, a study and a balcony, which is cornered by the study and a bedroom, from which the view of the waterfront is best seen. The said study is centrally positioned at the far end of the second floor and is made accessible via a "bridge" from a small landing. This aptly gives a sense of separation between the workspace and the rest of the home. And should a moment away from work prove needful, a simple stepping past the full-height sliding glass doors brings the owners to the aforementioned balcony. From here, glass balustrades offer an unhampered view of near and far.

This residence is a juxtaposition of a modest traditional facade and modern interiors. The latter is an expanse of white with carefully inserted doses of colour and texture, both horizontally and vertically to greet vistas of water, flora and fauna. The new perspective of balance comes into play when issues of old and new are wisely preserving its front facade and features such as the fireplace and timber flooring, Ivanov orchestrated a dwelling that assimilates the old with substantial contemporary introductions. ■



OPPOSITE: Sunlight enters the bathroom through a lightwell from the roof.
THIS PAGE: Glass balustrades on the balcony offer an unhampered view.