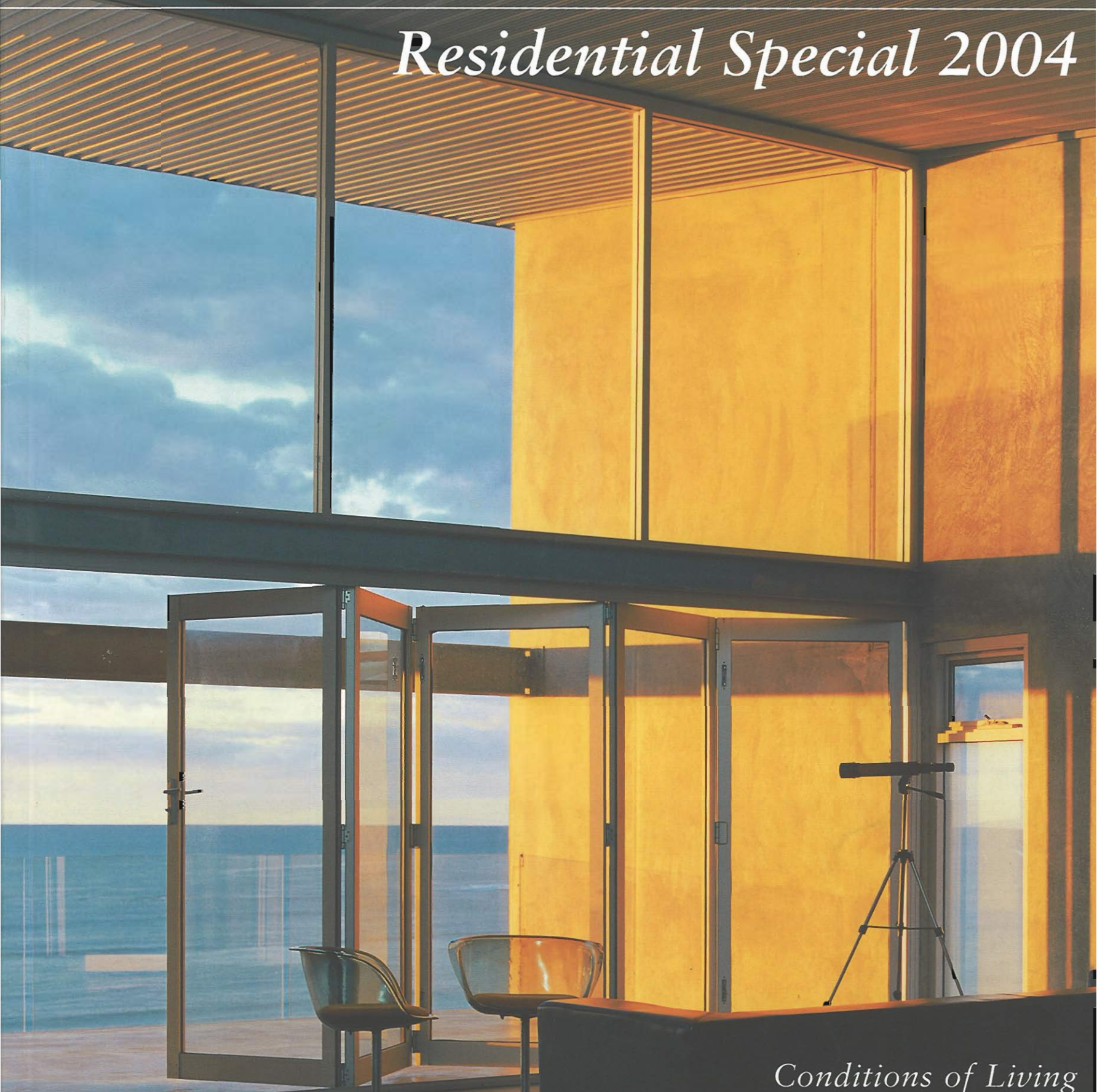


MONUMENT⁶³

Residential Special 2004



Conditions of Living

Odden Rodrigues

Virginia Kerridge

Kazuyo Sejima

Jackson Clements Burrows

Donovan Hill

Archi-Tectonics

Stevens Lawson

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04

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL 2004

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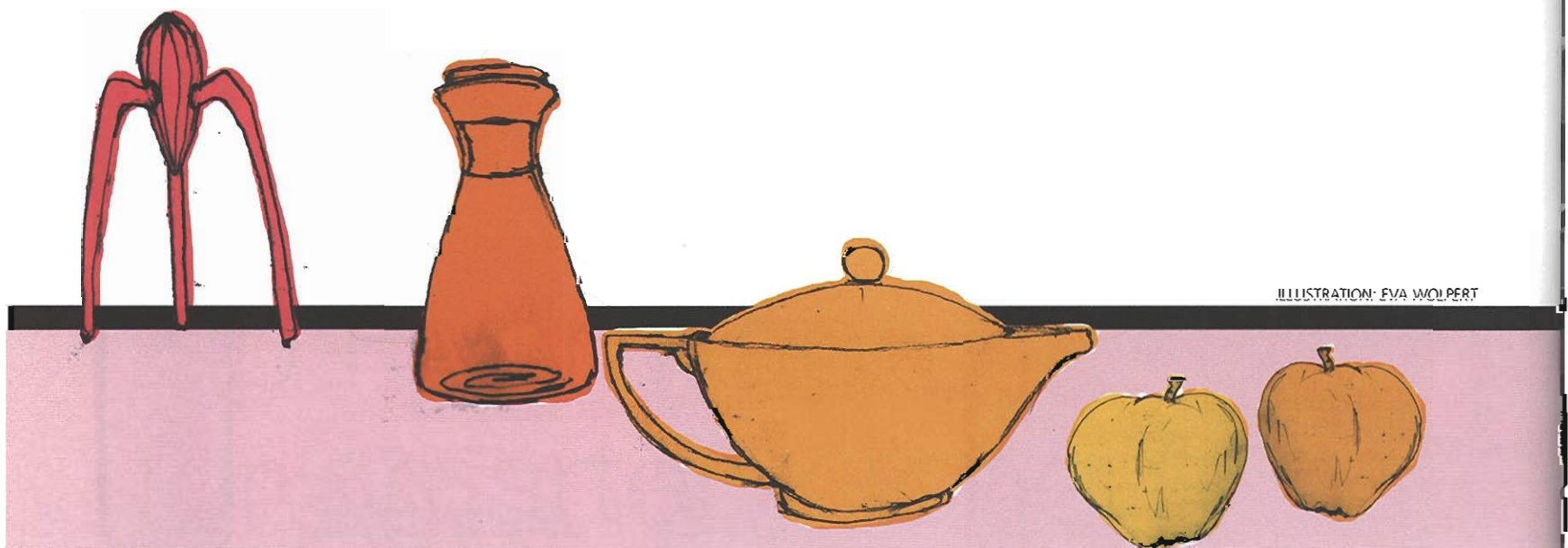
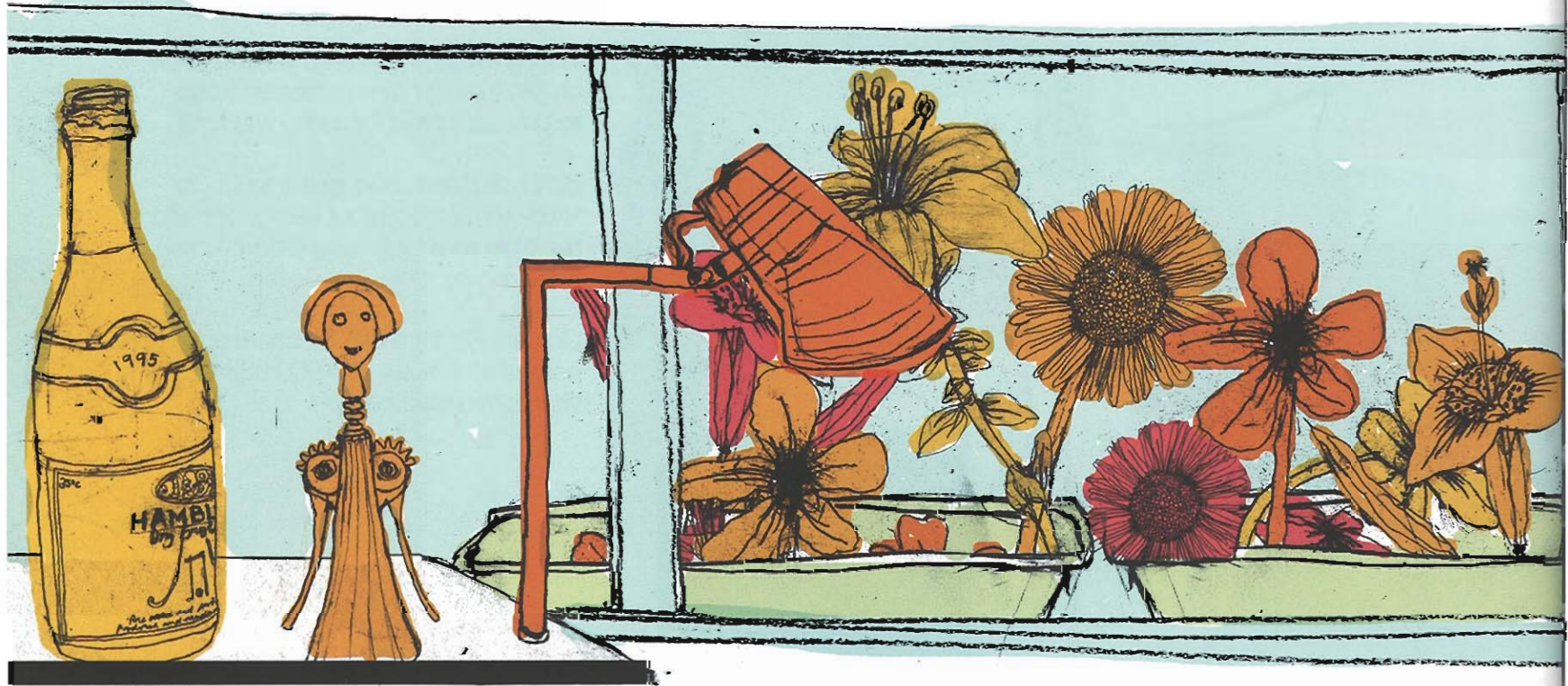
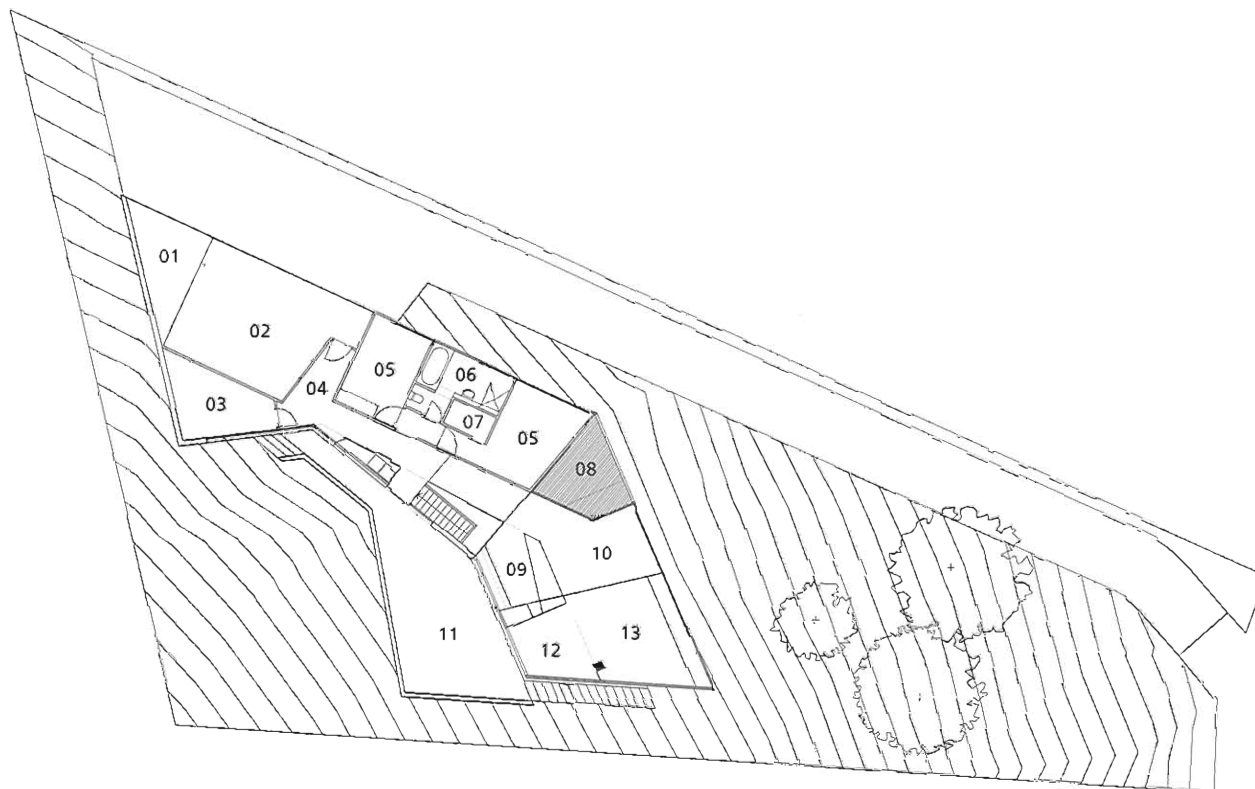


ILLUSTRATION: EVA WOLPERT



- 01 Storage
- 02 Garage
- 03 Study
- 04 Entry
- 05 Bedroom
- 06 Bathroom
- 07 Wardrobe
- 08 Deck
- 09 Kitchen
- 10 Dining
- 11 Courtyard
- 12 Playroom
- 13 Living



Floor Plan

INCREASINGLY WHAT INTERESTS me in architecture is the way in which mastery becomes – or does not become – a platform for making creative innovations in the domain. Such innovations change, to some degree, the way in which we think about that domain, and about what is possible in it. TERROIR – a partnership spread between Hobart, Launceston and Sydney – is currently striving to transcend normative mastery with a series of works that are disarmingly direct in their dealing with the actualities of clients' needs and the available sites. These buildings are, however, often disconcertingly removed from the usual architectural concerns for resolution, be they Modernist, Expressionist or ad hoc. This uneasy fit with current aesthetic preferences (of whatever camp) could simply be a lack of resolution, or it could signal a new approach. A new house by TERROIR at Tolmans Hill in Hobart suggests that there is something more than accident at work.

Possibly – at first sight – the ugliest work I have ever been asked to review, this house is located in a suburb well above the contour that should delimit development in Hobart, as argued by passionate local urbanist Leigh Woolley. Why is it here? Well, the land is affordable, and aching spectacular views of the Derwent River system and its shores, promontories and islands are endlessly and variously available. In this suburb every site seems set upon extruding, as if from some hidden Platonic machine with myriads of 3-D plotter outlets, an archetype of some pre-existing house type, be it Tudorbethan, Georgian, Tuscan or Murcuttian. It does not matter much which, as all are accommodated with varying degrees of difficulty against slopes which make the driveways seem more like launching pads for the rapid deployment of desperate rescue missions than enablers of the usual daily routines of driving to work, shops and the rota of child-support missions to which the inhabitants of these suburbs of the world's most spread out city are condemned. Anything is possible, but frankly not much looks desirable. Peer through the windows of these unfinished dream houses and you find room after room floating in orthogonal innocence, unable to address the slopes beyond the thin walls. They speak of a desperate desire to be somewhere else – flatter and isolated.

And then there is TERROIR's ugly duckling, a black chevron riding across the slope, a hard-to-grasp form that simply defies pre-existing types. We are shown around by one of the wildly enthusiastic owners, while one of the architects pushes plastic tractors out of the way to make for that elusive, purist photographic shot. I continue to suspect that TERROIR's rhetoric is still unconsciously laced with old Modernist concerns. Slowly it becomes apparent >>





03

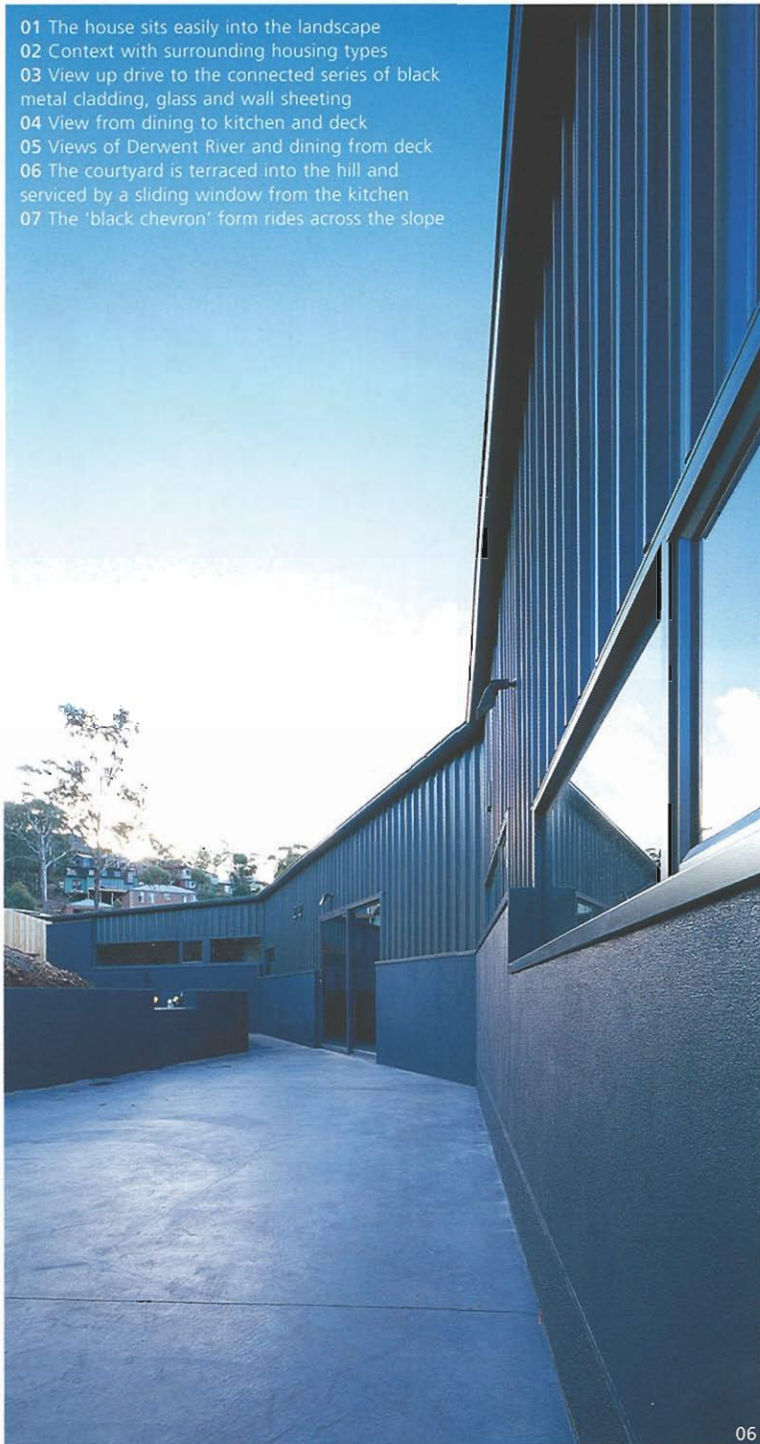


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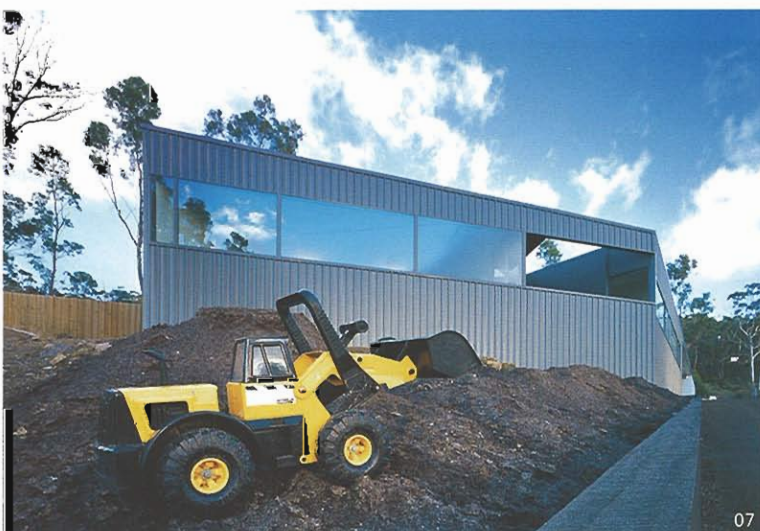


05

- 01 The house sits easily into the landscape
- 02 Context with surrounding housing types
- 03 View up drive to the connected series of black metal cladding, glass and wall sheeting
- 04 View from dining to kitchen and deck
- 05 Views of Derwent River and dining from deck
- 06 The courtyard is terraced into the hill and serviced by a sliding window from the kitchen
- 07 The 'black chevron' form rides across the slope



06



07

>> that this concatenation of black metal cladding, glass and wall sheeting is a very clever thing. The driveway is taken all the way up the long boundary of the site on the lower side. It is thus at the slowest possible gradient. Cars enter a garage from which they can reverse back out on the level and depart with plenty of flat ground for manoeuvres around the adjacent front door before engaging with the slope again. From this contour a line is struck and extended in three segments around the portion of the flank of the hill that the subdivision lottery has enclosed in this land parcel. The architects have determined an eaves line 2.8m or so above this crux point and projected a roof falling back towards the hill at three degrees, and a curtain of walling is hung from this line in three dumb planes. Inside, a funnel of spaces widens away from the entry hall giving a drama to the slow emergence into the living areas, and leaving a study or third bedroom behind in its originating horn. Horizontal glazing slots afford spectacular views of proportionate scale to all of the rooms. At one folding point the glazing and the roof are omitted, and there is an external deck. And in the opposite elbow of the plan and facing north-ish there is a courtyard, serviced by sliding window from the kitchen, and terraced into the hill. Even from this area there are views across the shiny surfaces of the kitchen to the equally shining water planes in the valley below. An internal stair leads down to an unfinished room that can be opened out to a lower lap of land when needs must and money is available. The kitchen affords views into the living space and into the courtyard, a family-monitoring cockpit. A tightly adjacent children's rumpus area is screened from the living area. Once experienced from inside this black box design is disarmingly well thought through. It is a triumph of architecture over type, showing that even these ridiculous sites can be made liveable if architectural intelligence is applied and the various canons are abandoned.

Why do I call this building ugly? Because in its ruthless pursuit of what is needed it does not conform to a pre-existing archetype of the beautiful building. It is not Provençal nor does it owe anything to Murrutt. "The ugly object belongs to a world of ineluctable individuality, contingency, and resistance to the ideal," argues Mark Cousins ("The Ugly", *AA Files*, Nos 28,29,30). And why does it so resist? Because through it, the architect is reaching for a higher order or beauty that reconciles what is, with what is currently deemed to be, what ought to be. "The unfolding of a beauty whose form as a totality is all the more triumphant for having overthrown the resistance to itself in its 'moments' of ugliness." In *The Rise of the Creative Class* (Basic Books, 2002) Richard Florida uses a similar definition of creativity: the ability to bring together, into a new whole, elements that were seemingly, in the previous generation, utterly apart.

So as I contemplate the bottom edge of the pressed-metal wall cladding, cut precisely, but with a formal arbitrariness to a profile that clears roots, rocks and rubble at its skirt, the critic in me wonders whether this is carelessness, or indeed 'ugliness'. Is it as one always hopes – "beauty whose form as a totality is all the more triumphant for having overcome the resistance to itself in its 'moments' of ugliness"? As the building settles in and I contemplate the sheer mastery of its command of this site and the needs of the client, I happily conclude that this is indeed a new and quite wonderful beauty.

M

Project name Tolmans Hill House
 Architects TERROIR Pty Ltd
 Principal architects Scott Balmforth and Gerard Reinmuth
 Principal interior designers TERROIR Pty Ltd
 Senior project team Scott Balmforth, Gerard Reinmuth, Daniel Lane, Paul Sayers, Sonia Aitken
 Construction manager Cordwell Lane Building
 Engineer Gandy and Roberts Pty Ltd
 Quantity surveyor Steve Gay (Davis Langdon Australia)
 Sub-contractors Plumbing – Southern Plumbing; electrical – Garry Longey Electrical; roofing and cladding – Raymark Roofing; windows – Richards Aluminium
 Budget \$240,000
 Time to complete Design and documentation – 9 months; construction – 6 months
 Council Hobart City Council
 External materials Roof and wall cladding – metal decking Colorbond (slate grey); windows – powdercoated aluminium; glazing – clear glazing
 Interior materials Walls and ceilings – Plasterboard; joinery – 2-pack polyurethane; floor – carpet, tiles and Tasmanian Oak with liming stain
 Fixtures and fittings Elite Appliances, Reece Plumbing
 Hardware Access Hardware