

MONUMENT⁴⁴

ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

KERSTIN THOMPSON

GEOMETRIC GESTURES

TONY FRETTON

STRONG SILENT TYPE

THE NEXT GENERATION

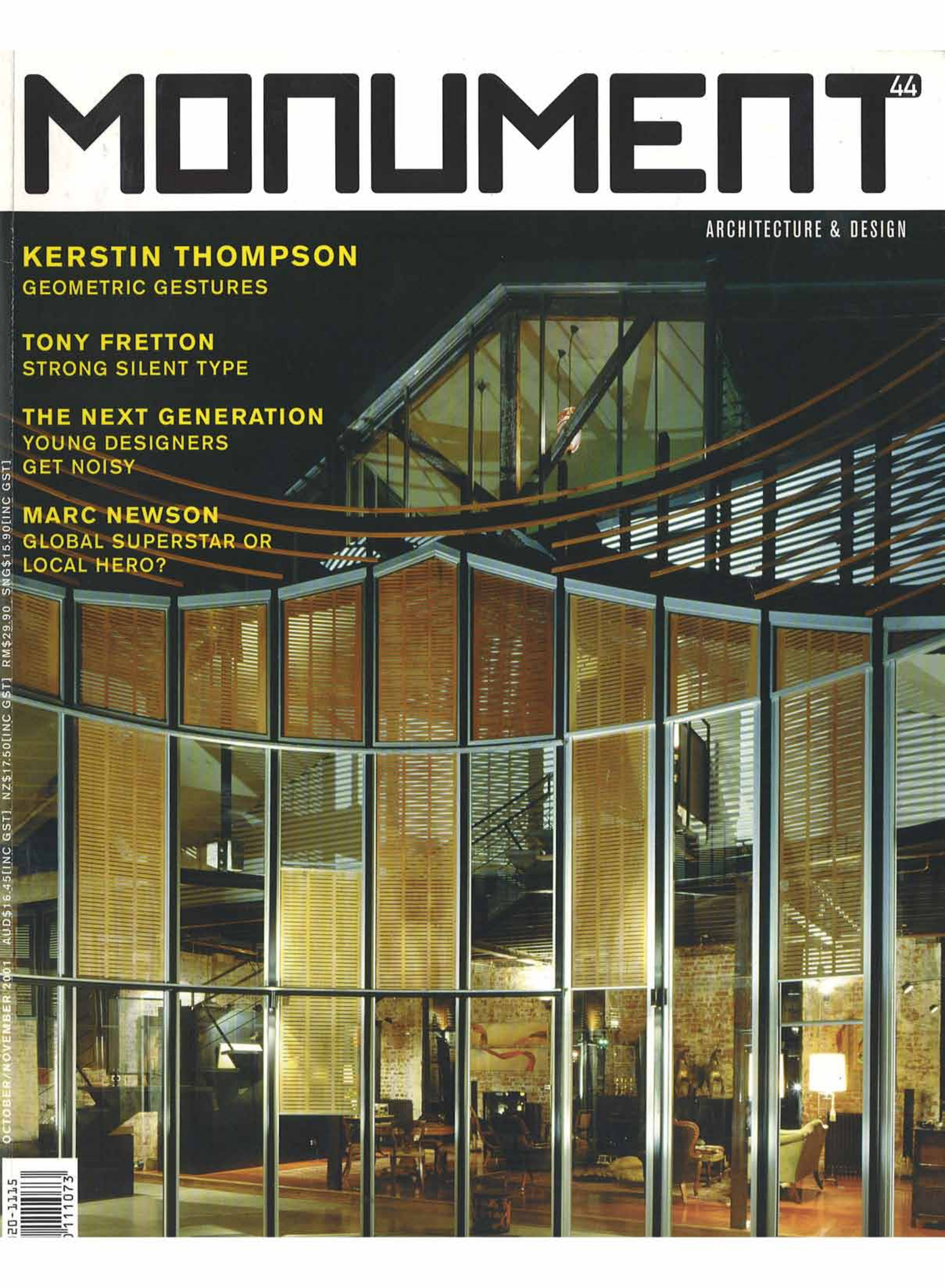
YOUNG DESIGNERS
GET NOISY

MARC NEWSON

GLOBAL SUPERSTAR OR
LOCAL HERO?

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2001 AUD\$16.45[INC GST] NZ\$17.50[INC GST] RM\$29.90 SNG\$15.90[INC GST]

20-1115



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Hood likes to use the music of his
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Within a small urban space, the use of
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explores how three inner-Melbourne
dwellings intertwine to transcend the
'private backyard extension'.

BACK TO TH E FUTURE

THE DOWN-TO-EARTH WORK OF REINMUTH BLYTHE BALMFORTH, IN HOBART, HAS SCULPTOR/ARCHITECT RICHARD GOODWIN RECALLING HIS '50S CHILDHOOD AND APPRECIATING ITS RELEVANCE TODAY. PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD EASTWOOD

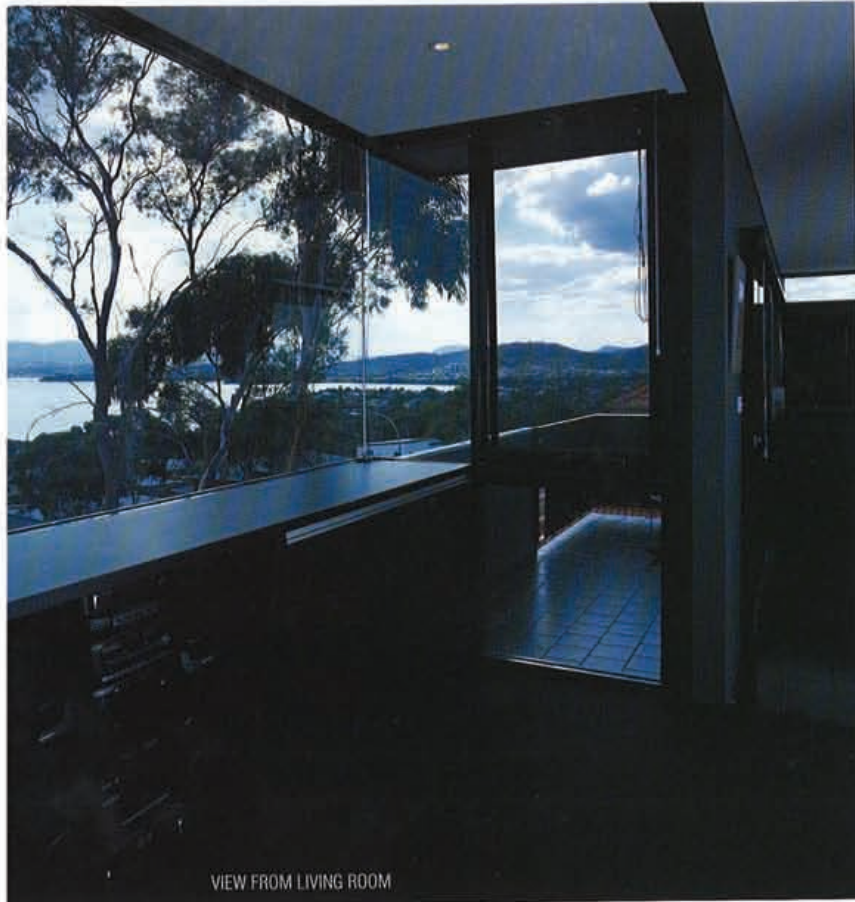
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AS WE DROVE AROUND THE CREST of the hill I was transported back to 1959, when, at the age of 6 my family drove past freshly cracked bungalows perched on bare clay patches with remnant bush bleeding through roughly hewn banks and rock outcrops. This prelude before my father revealed our new suburban dream home, all windows and white wood.

The language is still the essentially the same. Proud lounge-rooms on top of grand garages, the repositories of the family credentials – the cars. The houses were all about front – faces of the fifties peering out onto empty lawns and manicured dreams. It was always the backyard, which housed the Barbie and redundant trampolines. Here in Hobart, as in all Australian cities, the dream lives on – perhaps rediscovered by the “yuppies” via Howard Arkley images – or maybe never forgotten.

The “Sydney School,” including Woolley, Rickard and the like, bred a revolution via the “Organic” philosophy of Frank Lloyd Wright. This movement saw the outside come in and design for climate take hold in Australia. Architecture unfolded itself in a collapse of walls unprecedented before. However, this architecture was only ever embraced in the full by the wealthy. Leafy suburbs like Wahroonga spawned endless samples of the genre. Rarely were they seen on sites which, already bald, hovered above winding culdesac streets in quarter-acre mouthfuls. The Murcutt revolution reinforced the “vernacular” and extended the possibility for poor materials in excellent design. He also provided a rethink of the “outside-in” via the architecture of “climate machine”. But within this genre you were still left with a motel room when the sun went down. >>



VIEW FROM LIVING ROOM



KITCHEN/DINING ROOM

50

>> So here we have it – young architects on a fifties site overlooking an view of the city of Hobart. Like the suburbs of old, this one is perhaps too far out and on the wrong side of the tracks. What RBB Terrior have achieved is worth analysing and provides an interesting critique of all that has come before.

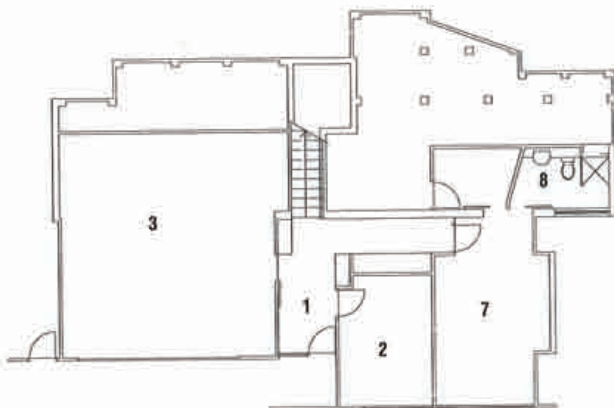
This is design on a budget, which knows its site beyond the quarter acre. It is only when you are in the city and look back across the water that you realise this house is about Hobart and its site in a unique way. Set between ostentatious neighbours the house disappears completely. It literally draws a blank from this distance. The old "look how it blends with its surroundings" of the organic school, becomes "look how the building completely disappears". And yet, when standing in the street in front of the drive, the house proudly presents its modernist credentials and cool grey facades in a way which is hardly about camouflage.

The metaphor to me is that of a "Hasselblatt" camera – literally sitting on the site. Its cool box enigmatically and inscrutably holds a repository of secret images. The balcony above the garage is reduced to a panelled sideline of the picture windows, which frame the big views.

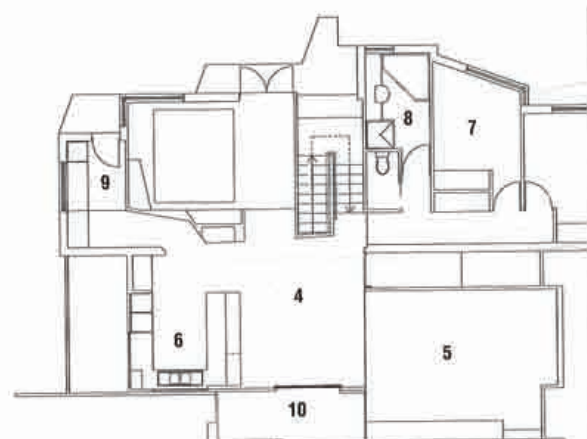
Immediately I walked around the back of the steep site. Once again the "50's" flooded back. Garden yet to grow, grey cream broken stones and saplings struggling as they always do in the bush. The charcoal grey panels of the facade turn to fleshier stone colours and the architecture breaks down to reveal its secrets. The cake has been broken open in a way, which suggests future extension. Such blatant street facadism is at first off-putting, a little too stagy, until one resolves the cleavage with the raw sloping site.

Once inside, the intelligence of this interpretation of Hobart is revealed, as the camera takes shots using a range of apertures appropriate for the task.

LOWER FLOOR PLAN



UPPER FLOOR PLAN



- | | |
|----------|------------|
| 1 ENTRY | 6 KITCHEN |
| 2 STUDY | 7 BEDROOM |
| 3 GARAGE | 8 BATHROOM |
| 4 DINING | 9 LAUNDRY |
| 5 LIVING | 10 DECK |

To enter the house one walks up the driveway and disappears between two dark purple blades. The focus on entry cuts across the layered planes expressed externally and concentrates on the main stair heading to the upper level. As one walks to the base of this stair the emphasis changes as you realise that you are in the core space of the house. The polish of black 2-pack joinery and a void to the upper level confirm the slippage between the front and rear and provide a sense of movement toward the main bedroom in the far southern corner.

Moving up the stairs, one steps out of the brick box, (the interior lined with MDF in a colour just lighter than the bagged finish as a sort of "soft centre") to arrive in front of the dining table which sits on axis with the stair and the view beyond.

RBB TERROIR see the outside as "outside", and to be read in 2D rather than the potential of 3D. This is Bauhaus as our house in the suburbs, but it does it so well that one is infused with a sense of the site rather than a belief that one is physically in it. After all, when all those folding doors finally opened what did we do? We stumbled out to the pool to sit sipping Chardonnay in the bush – no – on the porch. The "outness" was clearly overrated, over publicised, and largely dependent on wealth and the locations it bought.

This particular Tasmanian panorama is a layer cake of Mount Wellington with phallus, the city fringe, water, foreground green and the site browns with trunks. The lounge-room is a triumph of the camera metaphor. Charcoal grey comes inside to dramatise the silhouette of the frame. The view is sliced and presented in a continuum of fascinating slides. Elsewhere and downstairs the middle and foregrounds are selected via a series of slot windows >>

STREET ELEVATION





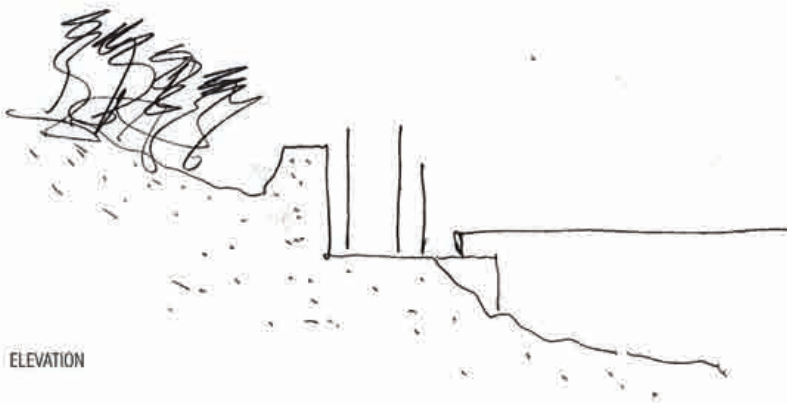
VERTICAL CUTS REVEAL THE BUILDINGS SECTION



RESTRAINED STAIRCASE



VIEW BACK TO ENTRY



ELEVATION

>> which turn looking into "peering". This phenomenon recollects those views one had as a child climbing under floating boulders. The view from the study reduces the occupant's outlook to a sliver of Eucalyptus trunks and leaves in a band, which informs without distracting from the function of study.

Elsewhere one is impressed by a vocabulary of details, which are economic and stylish. FC sheets, metal deck, recessed gutters, galvanised channels and flush tinted glass. These set in a composition most diehard modernists would admire. It is stagy and set-like, but not without a sensibility informed by a love of Miralles at the very least.

On the downside, the back door is very much the back door and I could hear my mother yelling towards the fire-trail "Dinner's ready, if you don't come now, Dad will be after you with the cricket bat". It really looks a little tired, but this is "architecture of slice off and add later". Alternatively it is what it should be – "The bloody backyard mate".

Where else would the redundant walking machine look in context. Perhaps it also reflects a dynamic I feel with this fledgling and talented firm ie: a dialogue between the current tendency of minimalism as style and a genuine unique earthiness born out of an understanding of site, context and social structure.

This is the suburb of the future with elevated design engineered for a range of socio economic groups.

RBB TERROIR might finally start to break the nexus between design and the economics of scale and class, and deliver to young families a house, garage and yard at an affordable price and cool to boot.

Richard Goodwin is a sculptor and architect currently practicing in Sydney. He holds degrees from the UNSW and a Master of Arch. from RMIT. Currently he is Adjunct Professor at the College of Fine Arts UNSW.