

# HOUSES®

THE RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE

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BLISSFUL COUNTRY LIVING  
+ HOT INTERIORS  
TIGHT CITY SITES



rural retreats Higgs, C + C, Suters, O'Brien/Coy and Yiontis/Shepherd  
urban insertions Stanic Harding, Carter Williamson, Gibson  
great interiors SJB, Campbell living by the water Crawford,  
Johannsen, Form Follows Function + NEW BOOKS

LANDSCAPING • CON BASTIRAS IN PROFILE



# LINEAR SOLUTION

The neat, rectangular lines of this harbourside home by Form Follows Function are perfectly suited to the



challenging site. The design combines stone and timber elements to create a cosy haven with inspiring views.



## “Lined by astonishing three-metre square

**THE SETTING FOR THIS PROJECT** was once the territory of Sydney’s Northwood Sketch Club. The locale’s pristine river coves and venerable estates have been captured in the landscapes of Lloyd Rees and the young Brett Whiteley. In drawings and paintings, Victorian boathouses and gnarled angophoras set a romantic foreground to vistas of the city beyond. Bridging a tight suburban cul-de-sac and a wide river frontage, this house mediates the two conditions. A broad transparent living pavilion, placed at the edge of the site, connects to the street through a tail of smaller rooms lining a sheltered courtyard.

Architect Keith Glover and long-time collaborator Trudi Fonua comprise the firm Form Follows Function. Borrowing Louis Sullivan’s celebrated mantra makes a curiously forward statement about the practice’s architectural direction. Accordingly, the architects describe the form of this house as “a pure expression of the site’s proportions and the requirements of the brief”. The project began as a series of alterations and additions to an existing bungalow home. In their search for a more open way of living, the owners eventually considered a more complete solution and Form Follows Function was commissioned to design a new house. The architects have distilled a complex brief into a simple but disciplined plan that is evident from the outset.

A deceptively slender elevation is presented to the street. The expression is modern and minimal – a closed composition of light and shadow, timber and sandstone. The site is pinched here, and a crafted rosewood garage door takes almost the full width. A sliding entry door reveals a tiny forecourt. Like a pinhole camera, the widening site and the view beyond can be surveyed from this small outdoor room.

The house’s most memorable space and organizational device is a 35-metre-long “gallery” that runs the length of the building. From this small forecourt, the gallery connects through the living pavilion and extends to the horizon. The convention of gradually revealing views, element by element, is eschewed for a more direct legibility.

In this manner, the journey through the house appears seamless. While the gallery extends the linear axis of the street, it also seems to extend the street’s public scale. Lined by astonishing three-metre-square sliding glass doors, the space has dramatic proportions. Bedrooms are separated from the breezeway by a change in level. Massive precast concrete elements, craned into position, express the form of these rooms as they hover in the gallery space. There is little evidence of domestic scale – there are no visible doors to the bedrooms. Even the lighting is concealed under the precast concrete, acting as enormous light shelves reflected in the honed sandstone floor. Three-metre-high pivoting doors at each end of the gallery are unencumbered by frames, allowing the space to remain uninterrupted.



**PREVIOUS PAGES, LEFT:** The three-metre-high entrance door opens into the gallery space and enjoys views of the horizon. **RIGHT:** This courtyard space captures the northern sun. **THESE PAGES, LEFT:** The view along the exterior facade of the gallery. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The roof-deck panorama. **BELOW RIGHT:** The kitchen and dining space are devoid of unnecessary detail.

sliding glazed doors, the space has dramatic proportions.”



**“The street facade is modern and minimal,**

The presence of the gallery axis is felt as an invisible force in the living area, dividing cooking and eating from living. With modulation in ceiling and floor, spaces within the living volume are subtly defined and create a variety of spatial experiences. A raised platform in the living space offers views of the river below and forms a casual seat, while the roof lifts in parts towards the courtyard, bringing in northern light. Again, there is a conscious reduction of unnecessary detail: a fireplace and kitchen bench are simple objects inserted into the space; kitchen appliances are neatly recessed into the wall.

A stone base and terraced garden are all that remain of the previous house. In the new project, they are reworked as a landscape plinth holding a fan-shaped platform. This platform both supports the new house and provides an elevated prospect of the river and city, while new materials complement the plinth. The floor is consistently monolithic; polished sandstone in the public areas is carefully matched to the travertine and limestone tiles used elsewhere. In separating areas, the architects often employ a change in level rather than dividing walls. This allows continuity and gives a sense of the materials' weight. Below, within the landscape walls, an excavated cellar and service rooms connect to the level of the garden via a family room.

A ribbon of full-height sliding doors wraps the exterior above the datum of the plinth. Careful consideration of sight lines allows the house to “borrow” the gardens of its neighbours. Fortunately, the house is next to older, established properties with spectacular mature plantings. Considering this and the corrosive environment, the architects decided to construct the doors in timber, continuing the project's abstraction of elements of the site. Asked to elaborate on the consistent material palette employed, the architects respond: “It is the idea of architecture as nature ... rosewood and sandstone were selected for integrity, strength and warmth.”

The doors are meticulously constructed, with amazing tolerances for timber doors of their size. Delicate bi-fold shutters, also made of rosewood, can be adjusted for privacy in the two individual bedroom pavilions perched above. Throughout, the quality of construction is evidence of a positive collaboration between architect and builder.

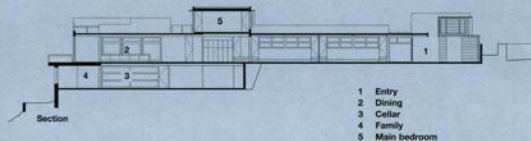
This house has a relaxed inevitability, difficult to convey in images. Likewise the scale of the house is difficult to photograph as it derives from a perceived absence of detail. This scale elevates the project beyond the mere domestic into something more extraordinary. “It is the idea of allowing interiors to recede,” explains Keith Glover. It takes a lot of control to appear this effortless. The dwelling's receding simplicity sharpens the focus of its river setting and leaves the furniture, art and occupants to provide its life and vigour. **PETER TITMUS**



**THESE PAGES, LEFT:** The existing stone base provides an elevated view of the harbour and city. **RIGHT, ABOVE:** The protected courtyard space is perfect for outdoor dining on balmy summer nights. **RIGHT, BELOW:** The warmth of the rosewood timber is amplified by external lighting.

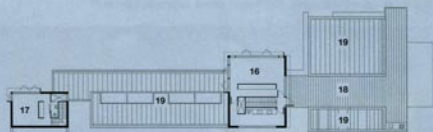
**a closed composition of light and shadow, timber and sandstone."**



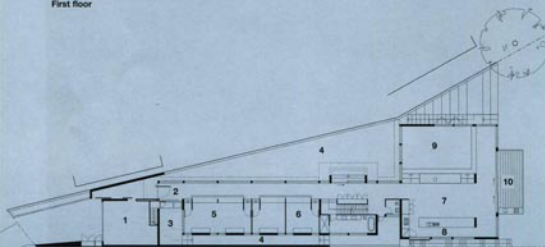


- 1 Entry
- 2 Dining
- 3 Cellar
- 4 Family
- 5 Main bedroom

Section



First floor



Ground floor

- 1 Garage
- 2 Entry
- 3 Pond
- 4 Courtyard
- 5 Study
- 6 Bedroom
- 7 Dining
- 8 Kitchen
- 9 Living
- 10 Balcony
- 11 Cellar
- 12 Family
- 13 Laundry
- 14 Store
- 15 Archives
- 16 Main bedroom
- 17 Guest bedroom
- 18 Timber deck
- 19 Metal deck roof



Lower ground floor

#### ARCHITECT

Form Follows Function

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#### PRACTICE PROFILE

This small practice works on both residential and commercial projects.

#### PROJECT TEAM

Keith Glover, Tuid Fohus

#### BUILDER

Cube Projects

#### CONSULTANTS

**Project manager** Independent Building Services

**Engineer** Luke Tsougranis and Associates

**Landscaping** Secret Gardens of Sydney

**Interiors** Form Follows Function

**Joinery** Tasker Joinery

#### PRODUCTS

**Roofing** Lynaght Timdek metal

**deck roof External walls**

Rendered masonry, painted;

blueboard **Internal walls** Ponder

air plasterboard, painted;

**Windows** Window rosewood

timber windows and screens

**Doors** Window solid-core pivot

doors, painted; Halliday & Balle

hardware **Flooring** Godfrey Hirst

Twynne carpet; Basanna Tiles

'Pietra Orient' limestone tiles;

sealed and polished concrete;

rosewood timber floorboards

**Lighting** Eroluce; Artlight

**Kitchen** Miele ss cooktop and

oven; Qasar canopy rangehood;

Leibner integrated fridge, freezer

and bar fridge; Franke sinks;

Newform tapware **Bathroom**

Duravit Vero vanity basins; Accent

International 'Coof' series

tapware; Rogersonler Zero toilet

suite; Newport wall toilet 'Cube'

toilet suite; Rogersonler bath,

shower and bathroom

accessories **External elements**

Sydney sandstone retaining walls;

Himalayan sandstone paving;

grey granite cobble driveway

**Other** Tasker Joinery; Form

Follows Function custom-made

tables and celer

#### TIME SCHEDULE

**Design, documentation**

18 months

**Construction** 12 months

#### SITE SIZE

1,600 m<sup>2</sup>

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

Marcus Clinton