



01 A curving wall of timber battens caresses the lawn. It conceals a garage, workshop and service yard.

PROJECT N°

04

Hickford HOUSE by Kennedy Nolan Architects

• MELBOURNE, VIC •

A hard-working plan and a palette of robust materials are skilfully composed to deal with the bumps and scuffs of a busy family.

Words by [Peter Davies](#)

Photography by [Emma Cross](#)

Rachel Nolan and Patrick Kennedy are hard taskmasters – it's not enough for their designs to simply look good; they have to work – hard. "It's something we do in our plans," says Rachel. "We like them to look simple, but they do lots of work."

Take, for example, that tall wall of spotted gum battens that undulates through the backyard. It relieves the boxiness that can afflict a small backyard. It alleviates overlooking from a two-storey neighbour. And it neatly conceals a garage, workshop and service yard – replete with water tank and washing line – freeing up the garden proper for Tonka trunks and the gentle swell of a grassy knoll.

It's not just this wall that's put to good use; the other walls play a multitude of roles too.

The blocky swath of timber that appends the addition to the existing weatherboard house provides capacious storage and a concealed door into the intimate family zone beyond. It also does a neat double act with the curving garden wall, bookending the addition with walls of timber. Inside the front door, a wall-sized mirrored panel encloses the entry space, or it can slide open to reveal a compact galley study. On the eastern edge of the open-plan space, a wall of painted brick brings texture and character to the space – Rachel likens its solidity to that of Jimmy Watson's Wine Bar, a Melbourne institution designed by Robin Boyd on nearby Lygon Street, hidden behind a magnificent wall of white-painted bricks punctured with a few small but carefully



placed windows. “The craft of the recycled bricks really comes up at that scale,” Rachel says. “It’s a very robust material for family life.”

Exhibiting a similar sturdy loveliness, a heavysset cruciform pillar does more than just anchor the rear terrace – in the employ of these architects, it draws attention to the craftsmanship employed throughout the project. “The cruciform timber column is something that we’ve often explored – that idea of the handmade, of seeing the hand of the maker,” says Rachel.

Underfoot, the capricious angles of hand-laid crazy paving play a dual role. Spreading from indoors to out, the stones pave the living room and the terrace and then break up as they scatter into the lawn, connecting the outdoor and indoor spaces. Their unpredictable lines counterbalance the linear regularity of the building form, furniture and joinery.

The kitchen bench too is a hard-working element that evidences the team’s efficient planning. A step up from kitchen to dining and living space means the bench operates at two heights – from the kitchen side, it is the perfectly sized work surface; from the dining side, it is a desk, sideboard or casual table.

Solid materials and a pared-back aesthetic lend the project a hint of seventies charm. It’s not overt or overplayed, but subtly realized in the extension’s detail. “With those early seventies houses, when you saw something new or exciting or innovative in architecture or design, it had such pull when you were young. That period of architecture always appealed to us,” Rachel says. “There’s a lovely weight and mass to those materials – when you break it down, that’s why you love it.”

The gestures here are big – from the bulbous pendant light, like an overturned urn with a gleaming gold interior, hanging above the

dining room table, and the heavy, dark timber beams that span the rear wall, to the oversized sliding glass panels suspended below them. “They’re top hung,” Rachel explains. “Seeing no track in the ground apart from the grout lines is quite lovely.” They open wide to welcome the garden into the addition.

“We do have a big involvement with landscape – we don’t design without thinking about what might happen outside,” Rachel continues. “We’re not landscape architects, but we could imagine this space with a beautiful lemon-scented gum and the smell of it. A tree in lawn – not quite a suburban gesture, quite a park-like grand gesture where a trunk comes down to the lawn.” Like the extension to the house, the garden design is deceptively simple. A small grove of lemon-scented gums has been planted behind the berm in the north-eastern corner of the garden. Rachel says, “We think quite carefully about how you handle those views beyond. This corner’s handled by landscaping, and the wall does something similar on the other side.”

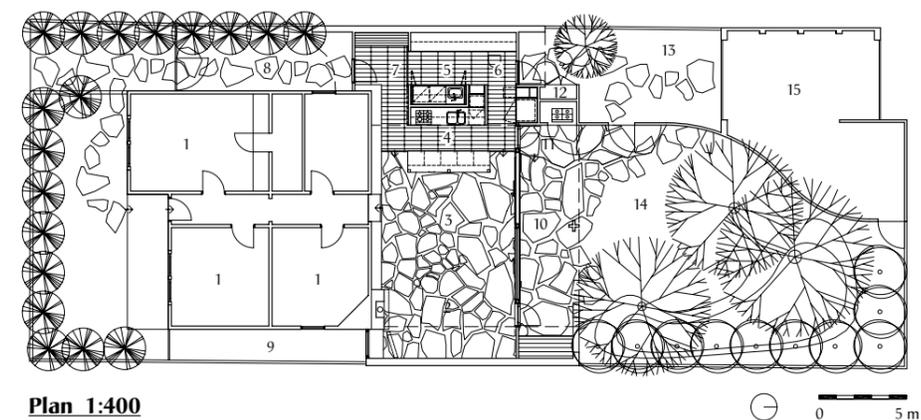
By making each of the elements work hard, the architects have crafted a series of simple, efficient spaces perfectly tailored to a family with young children. The neat lines of the floor plan belie the thoughtful and refined approach that allows it to so effortlessly meet the family’s brief. Spaces are proportioned for activity; materials were chosen for endurance.

“We like that it isn’t all shiny, that it doesn’t start off that way and degenerate from there. It’s about the spotted gum of the rear wall greying off, and the lovely solidness of the bricks. They’re good materials for a family home, because you don’t feel that it’s so precious it can’t wear,” explains Rachel. “You throw the doors open, you have people over. It’s a space to be shared.”

02 A crazy-paved floor flows from indoors to the outdoor terrace, before breaking up as it enters the lawn.

03 The Corian-topped kitchen bench operates at two heights thanks to a step up into the dining and living zone.

04 Dark timber beams, white-painted brickwork and a block of timber veneer storage are robust and family friendly.



Plan 1:400

- 1 Bedroom
- 2 Living
- 3 Dining
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Laundry
- 6 Study
- 7 Entry
- 8 Entry court
- 9 East court
- 10 Garden court
- 11 Barbecue
- 12 Store
- 13 Service court
- 14 Garden
- 15 Garage



Architect

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Practice profile

A ten-person practice undertaking residential and institutional projects.

Project team

Patrick Kennedy, Rachel Nolan, Catherine Blamey, Matilda Blazey

Builder

Greg Scott Constructions

Consultants

Engineer: JSC Consulting Engineers
Landscaping, interiors, lighting: Kennedy Nolan Architects

Products

Roofing: Zinalume Trimdek
External walls: Painted brickwork; black-stained horizontal timber shiplap boards; James Hardie Scyon Matrix sheeting cladding system
Internal walls: Plasterboard, painted Dulux 'Antique White USA'; George Fethers & Co. blackwood timber veneer panels
Windows and doors: Black-stained KDHW window and door frames and strapwork
Flooring: Mintaro black slate crazy paving; Edwards Slate & Stone Black Velvet tiles
Lighting: Flos 265 wall lamp from Euro luce; Tom Dixon Beat light from Dedece
Kitchen: Dupont benchtops in Corian 'Genesis Bisque'; Laminex 'Parchment' flint finish cabinets; Miele oven, cooktop and dishwasher; Abey sink and mixer; AEG Electrolux fully integrated rangehood; Fisher & Paykel fully integrated fridge

Heating/cooling: In-slab hydronic heating; Jetmaster gas fireplace
External elements: Spotted gum curved batten fence; spotted gum bench; black-stained KDHW cruciform column
Other: Horizon sofas covered in green Kvadrat Divina; Flynn table in American oak ebony from Jardan; Black Eames moulded side chairs from Living Edge

Floor area

426 m² site
230 m² floor

Time schedule

Design, documentation: 6 months
Construction: 8 months

05 Top-hung sliding doors open wide to connect the indoor space to the swell of lawn in the rear yard.