

Sharif Abraham

Architects

Level 1/358 Lonsdale st,
Melbourne, 3000
Australia

Clifton Hill House

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Melbourne, Victoria

Photos - Matthew Stanton



The site is located 5 Km from Melbourne's central business district. It spans two streets and has two front-ages. An original Victorian-Art Deco house faced the main street. The client's brief was to refurbish this house, providing two new bathrooms and adding an open plan living space to its rear. Our objective was to design an addition that was sympathetic to the original house, whilst at the same time advancing the stylistic and spatial qualities of its architectural style.

The addition is a collection of sculptural roof forms oriented to provide outlook and sunlight to the interior as well as responding to the setback regulations of the local building code. Made from concrete with fine stucco finish and aluminium edging, the

walls are pierced by large sheets of glass and high windows, establishing transparency and lightness to the form and a sensitive relationship with the future garden.

The interior spaces contrast curved black timber with white walls. Ceilings trace the inside of sculptural roof elements to create double-height spaces and then curve down to create intimate spaces. A linear element replicating the trunk of a tree extends the full width of the room, establishing visual continuity with the kitchen and the garden beyond. The timber (Ebony Macassar) is sourced from the trunk of a single tree. The outside of the trunk, where the grain is younger, is located high in the space and it progressively descends to the joinery





The corridor and the bathrooms are intended as counterpoints to the architecture of the original house, posing questions about the nature of old and new and at the same time suggesting possibilities for their reconciliation.

<http://www.sharifabraham.com>

and intimate spaces where the core is dense and dark. The consistency of the application of the veneer to the upper portions of the walls is intended to make the living areas feel more intimate whilst at the same time maintaining the roof height needed to capture sunlight continuously throughout the day.

Between the addition and the original house, a new courtyard is located to provide light to the inner rooms and living spaces. From one corner of the courtyard a discreet staircase leads to an upper deck which is located between the roof forms, where panoramic views of treetops over the roof of the original house are achieved.

A corridor with a continuous light beam emanating from its ceiling, guides the inhabitants away from the addition and into the original house. It leads to the two new bathrooms. The first bathroom is clad in black tiles and presents a dark cavernous experience by surfacing the floor, walls and ceiling with dark textured tiles. The darkness of the interior is intended to focus on the user's (naked) flesh. By contrast the other bathroom is open to the courtyard and is flooded with natural light. It includes a dressing area with cupboards at one end. Here, continuous bronze tiles unify the space and accentuate the natural light as it moves across their surfaces.

