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UNIVERSAL MEDIA CO
Issue 14.5
AUS $14.95*
NZ $14.95 (Incl. GST)
ISSN: 2200 - 2197

House on a Hill

Multigenerational country living — an exploration in form and light

TRIPLE TREAT

A series of three pavilions make up this eco-friendly single-storey abode that treads lightly on the earth

WORDS CARROL BAKER **PHOTOGRAPHY** ALYNE MEDIA

RIGHT
A light-filled corridor with louvres to catch the cross breezes connects indoors and out

This comfortable, light-filled home is a slice of urban paradise, with water views and leafy surrounds. It's also just a stone's throw from the city. The design celebrates its location, framing views of the Brisbane River.

The dwelling stands in place of the original residence on a gently sloping block. While that home was not retained, the existing levels and contours remain. "These were carefully considered and integrated into the new design, ensuring the home responds harmoniously to the natural topography," says Sarah Waller, principal architect from Sarah Waller Architecture.

Given its location, height restrictions imposed by council had to prevail. The brief was to locate the single-storey house as close as possible to the water, in keeping with these restrictions. The final design positions living and dining spaces in the main pavilion, which stretches across the length of the block to capture the sweeping views across the river.

The interiors are light, bright and welcoming. The three pavilions are joined via a breezeway that artfully embraces the leafy courtyard space and a sparkling swimming pool at the centre. Sarah notes the pavilion concept offers sovereignty as well as connection and inclusion. "Each pavilion functions independently while remaining part of a cohesive design approach," she says.

The main pavilion cantilevers off a blockwork retaining wall. It's an impressive sight to behold. "This was supported by raked columns, minimising the impact on the land and allowing the natural slope to flow almost seamlessly beneath the building," explains Sarah.

The family home was intended as a gathering place, a space where kids who had flown the coup could return home when they chose. The other two pavilions are the master pavilion which houses a bedroom and balcony, and a guest pavilion with a private courtyard.

DETAILS

HOUSE River House
LOCATION Brisbane, Qld
DATE COMMENCED
November 2023
DATE COMPLETED
March 2025

EDITOR'S FAVOURITE

The Vulcan Abodo timber cladding makes a striking visual and eco-friendly statement

"Each pavilion functions independently while remaining part of a cohesive design approach"
– Sarah Waller

PROJECT
RIVER HOUSE

The dwelling is made up of four bedrooms, three bathrooms, open-plan living, kitchen and dining, as well as a media room, powder room and a four-car garage. It's a visually compelling contemporary home that's both modern and timeless.

Sarah says carefully curated sightlines draw the landscape into the abode, allowing the natural surroundings to become part of the interior experience. "This blurring of boundaries between inside and out softens the minimal architectural language and anchors the home within its environment," she notes.

The colour palette is monochrome; the home recedes and becomes part of the landscape and its vernacular. Select materials enhance and define the architectural language. Featured is Vulcan Abodo timber cladding, and a New Savior limestone benchtop from CDK. Sarah says when paired with off-form concrete walls, this establishes a minimal yet tactile atmosphere layered with texture and interest. "Throughout the day, the shifting sunlight creates a dynamic play of shadows, further enriching the experience of the spaces," she explains.

This project was complex. A collaborative approach between structural and hydraulic engineers and input from the builder, with the architects at the helm, ensured a successful outcome was achieved.

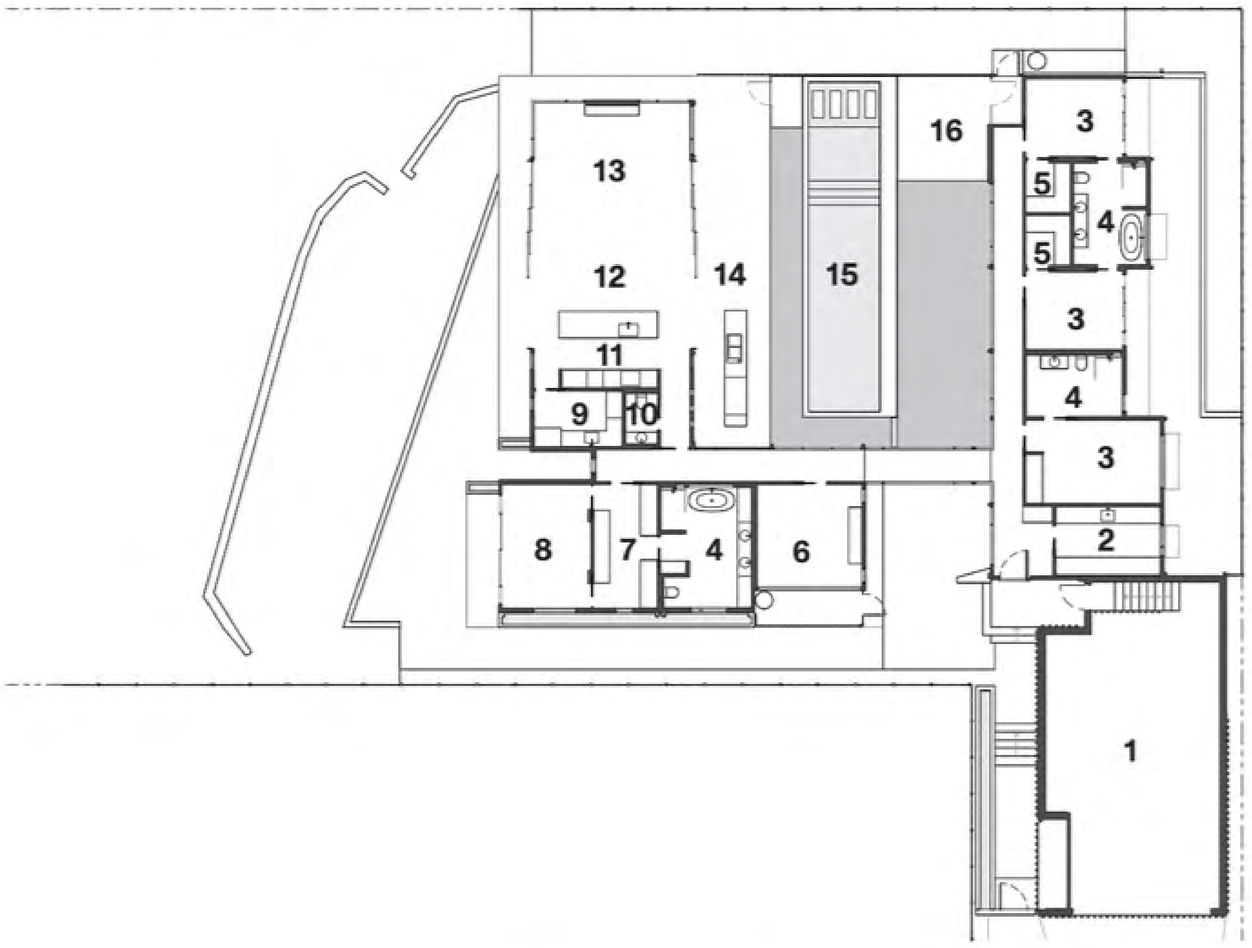
Eco-friendly measures include the cantilevered design and raked columns, and the large overhangs above the outdoor terrace. Cross ventilation was prioritised throughout the layout.

This project is exemplary for a host of reasons. Among them is the way it works with the heritage overlay to create something quite beautiful and unique. The front and back serve to complement and contrast with each other. "The garage reflects the predominantly white Queenslander-style architecture of surrounding homes," explains Sarah. "The sleek, modern, black and moody aesthetic reveals itself only at the rear as you transition into the main house."

ABOVE
Orienting spaces to capture views was at the very heart of this design

OPPOSITE
A stunning bathroom, complete with picture window, reinforces the connection to nature

PROJECT
RIVER HOUSE



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

LEGEND

1 Garage
2 Laundry
3 Bedroom
4 Ensuite
5 Robe
6 Media
7 WIR
8 Master bedroom
9 Butler's pantry
10 WC
11 Kitchen
12 Dining
13 Living
14 Outdoor terrace
15 Pool
16 Sun terrace

OPPOSITE
The built form hugs the swimming pool, which provides a cooling element

PROJECT TEAM

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INTERIOR DESIGNER Sarah Waller Architecture, **sarahwallerarchitecture.com.au**

STRUCTURAL TEAM

Structural engineer Westera Partner
Hydraulic engineer Chilton Woodward

FIXTURES & FITTINGS

Roof sheeting Colorbond Klip-Loc
Joinery Nikpol
Wall cladding Abodo Vulcan; James Hardie; Standing Seam Lysaght Enseam
Window hood Heka Hoods
Lights Unios
Light switch Hager
Appliances Fisher & Paykel
TV Samsung
Sink (kitchen & laundry) Blanco
Basins Alape Unisono
WC Caroma Forma
Tapware Scala (Reece)
Vanity Issy Halo III
Cistern and push plate Geberit
Bathtub Kado Lussi

FURNITURE & FURNISHINGS

Sofa, table, chairs King Living

WE LOVE

The well-placed off-form concrete walls that serve a dual purpose. They're an architectural feature and provide thermal mass