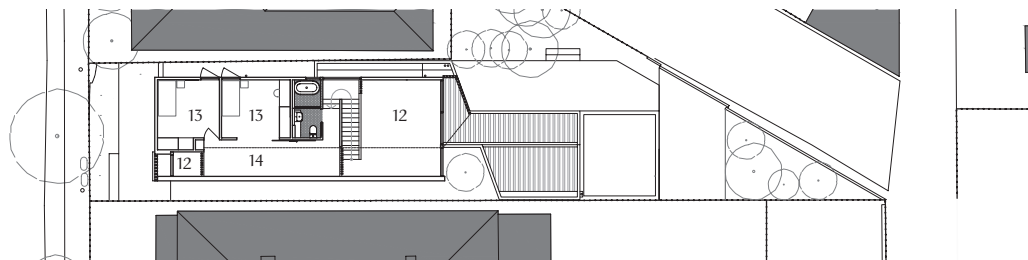


# Tess & JJ's House by Po-co Architecture

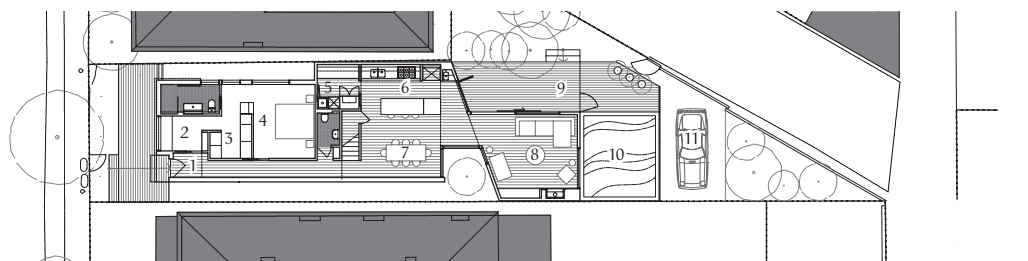
• MELBOURNE, VIC •

This clever new home, set on a narrow site in an inner-city suburb, is a light and airy place of retreat from the city while still enabling a connection with it.

Words by Katelin Butler  
Photography by Tatjana Plitt



First floor 1:400



Ground floor 1:400



- 1 Entry
- 2 Study
- 3 Robe
- 4 Main bedroom
- 5 Scullery/laundry
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Dining
- 8 Living
- 9 Deck
- 10 Pool
- 11 Off-street parking
- 12 Void
- 13 Bedroom
- 14 Play zone

01 The kitchen/dining area is an impressive double-height volume, with views directed to treetops and battened screens for privacy and shading.







02

**02** A paired-back material palette is used throughout the home, including American oak, marble and white joinery.

**03** The upstairs zone is like a cubbyhouse for the children, with small angled and battened peepholes.

according to sightlines into the property and carved into to allow the southern neighbours continued access to light. At the time that their new house was being designed, clients Tess and Jonathan Joseph also owned the house to the north, meaning that boundary realignment was possible. The realignment meant that all aspects of the brief could be accommodated, including a small pool and backyard.

For Tess and her family the project was a five-year plan. “JJ [Jonathan] and I have two young children: Lachlan, who is six and a half years old, and Evie, who is four and a half. We enjoyed the opportunity to think about how a space would work specifically for our family.” With the requirement for an isolated space for Jonathan to work away from the children, Fiona designed a compact study at the front of the home that faces onto the leafy cul-de-sac and is also connected to the main bedroom suite. The upstairs zone is like a cubbyhouse for the children – the ceiling above the upstairs circulation space follows the roofline, which angles down to avoid



03

4 (family home)

3

2 +1 powder room

Site: 297 m<sup>2</sup>  
Floor: 117 m<sup>2</sup>

Design: 1 yr  
Build: 10 mths

overshadowing the neighbours. Upstairs is a flexible zone that can be used as two bedrooms or as one bedroom and a rumpus room that opens out onto the circulation via a large sliding door. A small angled and battened peephole at either end of the upper-level circulation space ensures that the children feel connected to what’s happening in the main living areas below and can see who’s coming and going through the front door.

Having lived abroad in London and Rome, Tess knew that copious amounts of space weren’t required for the home to function efficiently. A European-style laundry is tucked adjacent to the kitchen and storage is added wherever it will fit. Priority was given to providing the impression of space for the main living areas – the most impressive of these is the main kitchen/dining area, a double-height room with windows from floor to ceiling. This is a wonderful, light-filled space with views directed to treetops and battened screens for privacy and shading. The “wow factor,” as Tess calls it, is amplified through the transition from the dark, compressed hallway that leads from the front door into the naturally lit, airy room. There is a feeling that you are slightly removed from the tightly packed inner-city suburb. With large sliding glass doors opening onto a north-facing deck to expand the floor area and a compact bar at the end of the kitchen, the space is perfect for entertaining. “During this period of your lives with

young children, you don’t go out to socialize as much. So we wanted this home to allow us to entertain,” says Tess.

A north-facing lounge area connects to the double-height volume and, in comparison, is a cosier, more contained space. The small garden features established birch trees that allow sun in during winter and provide shade in summer. The eastern wall is solid to provide privacy from the apartment blocks to the rear of the site, other than a single fixed window at floor level, which gives a view of the pool and the movement of reflected light across the water.

Fiona was pregnant with her first child during the design process, so Tess managed the project once construction started and along with the builder, Christian McCalman of Build2, carried it through to completion. “It was a winning team, particularly with my commitments at the time,” Fiona recalls. “I wasn’t as heavily involved in the construction process as I normally would be, but Christian respected the design intent and checked in with me along the way.”

The success of Tess and JJ’s House doesn’t rely on an impressive coastal view or heroic architectural move. Instead, clever manipulation of space and light has allowed the narrow urban site to feel much larger than it is, and more private than might otherwise have been possible in the dense setting. The dwelling offers a lovely place of retreat from the city while still enabling a connection with it. ☒





04

04 With large sliding glass doors opening onto a deck and a bar at the end of the kitchen, the space is designed for entertaining.



05

05 The design of the street elevation marks this as a new building, but it is still in keeping with the surrounding houses. Photograph: Fiona Poon.



06

06 The upper level is a flexible zone, with one of two bedrooms opening out onto the circulation via a large sliding door.

#### Architect

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#### Project team

Fiona Poon

#### Builder

Build2

#### Consultants

**Engineer:** Ranepura Consulting Engineers

**Joiner:** Bulmers Cabinet Makers

**Landscape:** Glasshaus

#### Products

**Roofing:** Lysaght Custom Orb Accent 35; Silvertop ash rainscreen in Quantum stain

**External walls:** Silvertop ash cladding in Quantum Aquaoil stain; cement bricks in Dulux 'Whisper White'

**Internal walls:** American oak timber screening in Quantum Aquaoil stain

**Windows:** Morris Windows and Doors hardwood timber windows in Quantum Aquaoil stain; Aneeta sashless sliding windows; Breezway louvre windows

**Flooring:** EC Carpets Residence wool carpets in 'Twenty six'; Tongue n Groove oak flooring in 'Oslo'

**Lighting:** Lucretia Lighting fixtures; Pulse LED bluetooth speaker lights from Machtig

**Kitchen:** Caesarstone benchtop in 'Frosty Carrina'; American oak benchtop in Osmo Top Oil; Carrara marble plinth, honed; moisture-resistant MDF robes

**Bathroom:** Porcelain tiles from Perini Tiles; tapware and fixtures from Centre Plumbing Plus

**Heating and cooling:** Hydronic heating by Hub Air; Real Flame Elegance gas fireplace

**External elements:** Radial Timbers New Deck decking; pool by Falcon Pools; fencing from Watts Fencing and turf from Performance Grass