

# HOUSES®

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## CREATIVE DESIGNS FOR CITY AND COUNTRY LIVING

SUCCESSFUL ALTS AND ADDS



FLOORING OPTIONS FOR INSIDE AND OUT

**homewares with a difference**

TERROIR IN PROFILE: MAKING EACH HOUSE UNIQUE

TALKING WITH FURNITURE DESIGNER DAMIEN WRIGHT





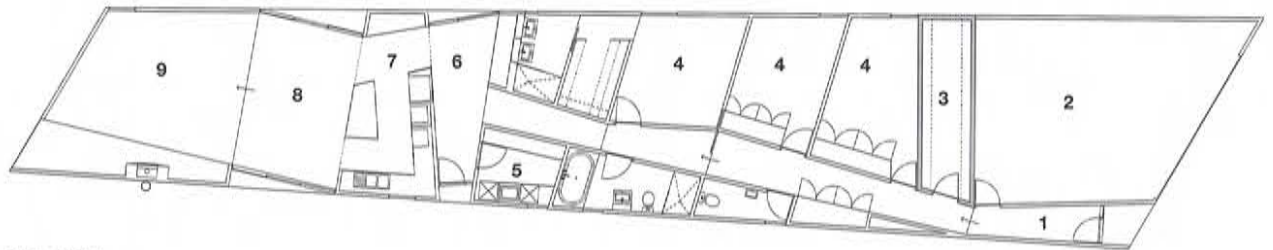
**Scott:** We started looking at the site for the Acton Park house in terms of its physicality, which was a flat suburban development not far from Hobart airport. The landscape is very low, long and flat with a big sky. It was formerly farmland, and it's being overwhelmed by five-acre developments. The curious thing about these developments, which consist of big plots of flat land with McMansions stuck in the middle of them, is that they express an aspirant character where the homeowners think they are adopting a semi-rural lifestyle that will be very private. Actually, it's quite the opposite. Instead, it becomes the world's greatest concentration of ride-on lawnmowers, and because of those open, flat distances the residents look over and into everyone else's property. It had this uncanny quality, which got us talking about films that were made at the time, such as *American Beauty*.

**Gerard:** The placement of the house was at the rear of a very long site, in anticipation of two other houses that we knew would soon crop up in front of it. So we were taking preventive measures to address the problem of future development near the front of the site. This was one of the first houses in the development, so we placed this house where it could look straight down the fence line. Also, by being at the rear of the site it sits in the shadows of an existing stand of mature pine

trees. The house is like a quiet shadow among them. The fairly simple exterior contrasts with a dramatic interior. You move through the house through a corridor that runs along the back, so all of the bedrooms get the view, but each one has internal walls angled and arranged to capture particular parts of that view, which is different from a simple linear arrangement of rooms laid out along a gun-barrel corridor.

The corridor slices diagonally through the middle of the house. The result is that, having entered the bedrooms at the rear, you then find yourself walking through the home to pop into the living areas, which we had flipped to the front of the house. Within this very slim container we divided the house into two parts. In particular, we exploited its spare, barren nature – the way it sits in the middle of these residential blocks. It opens itself up, so people can see what is going on inside; we did that deliberately so from the rear of the house you can see straight through it.

**THESE PAGES:** The tightly packed interior is spread apart at the centre to expose occupants to their neighbours. It's a deliberate gesture in response to the semi-rural estate, where flat blocks mean people can see inside neighbouring houses despite the assumption of privacy, leaving residents inadvertently exposed.



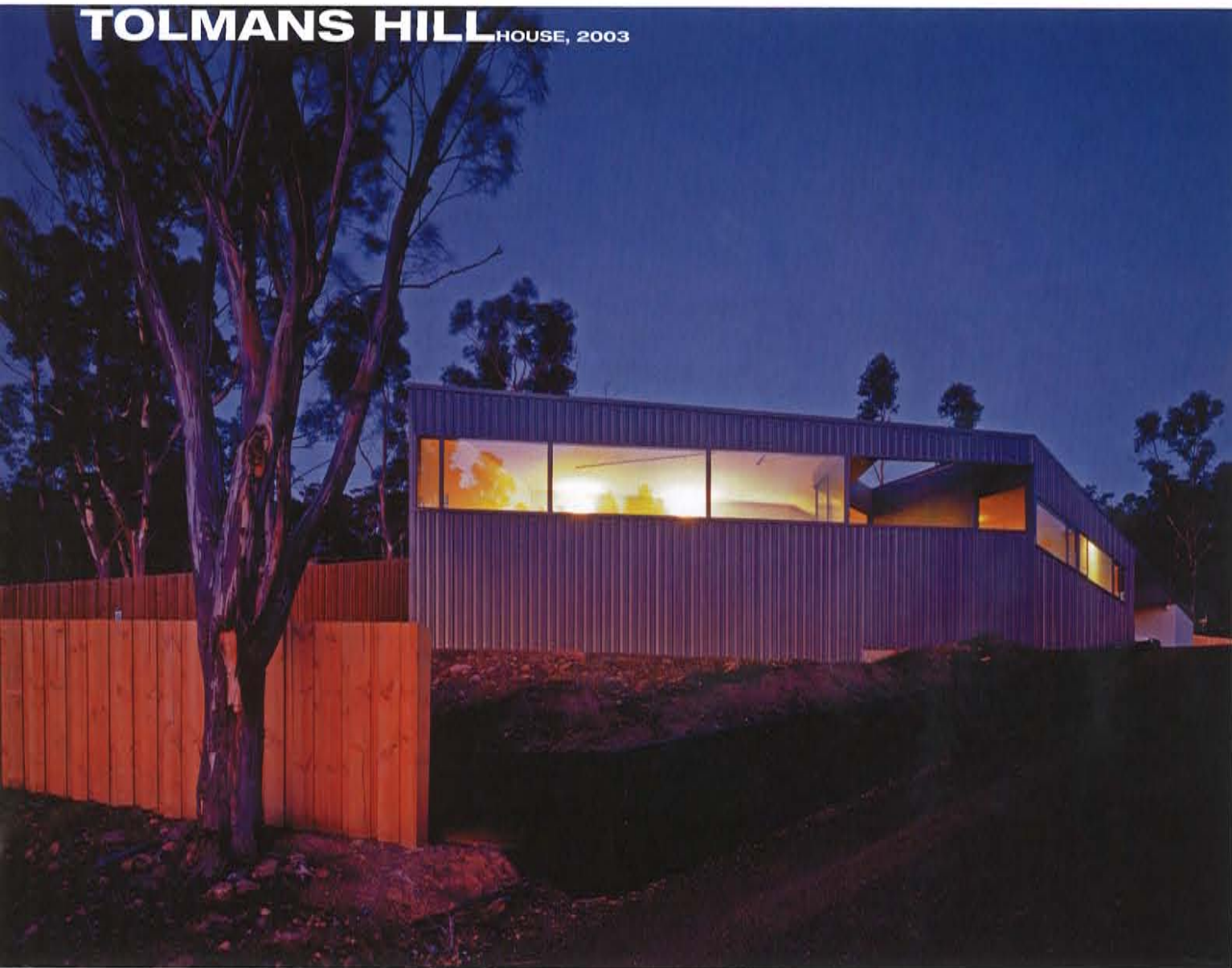
Plan 1:250

- 1 Entry
- 2 Garage
- 3 Cellar
- 4 Bed
- 5 Laundry
- 6 Study
- 7 Kitchen
- 8 Dining
- 9 Living

0 5 m



# TOLMANS HILL HOUSE, 2003



**Gerard:** Tolmans Hill had represented the beginning of our own design language; it explored the idea of taking a line for a walk. The path from the city of Hobart is extended up to the site, which has pretty amazing views of the city and the Derwent River. It then continues up to the rear of the site, switches back and arrives at the living room, which then projects back toward the view. So we started to understand the house as one part of a longer journey.

The house itself was in a relatively new subdivision; a lot of the houses there are large and loud, which is curious given that it's one of these hillside bush settings. We sought to maintain as much of the natural vegetation as possible. This was difficult given the small lot sizes, which are anathema to the original planning of that subdivision. Therefore the house pushed the limits of the available building envelope and it was a very economical project.

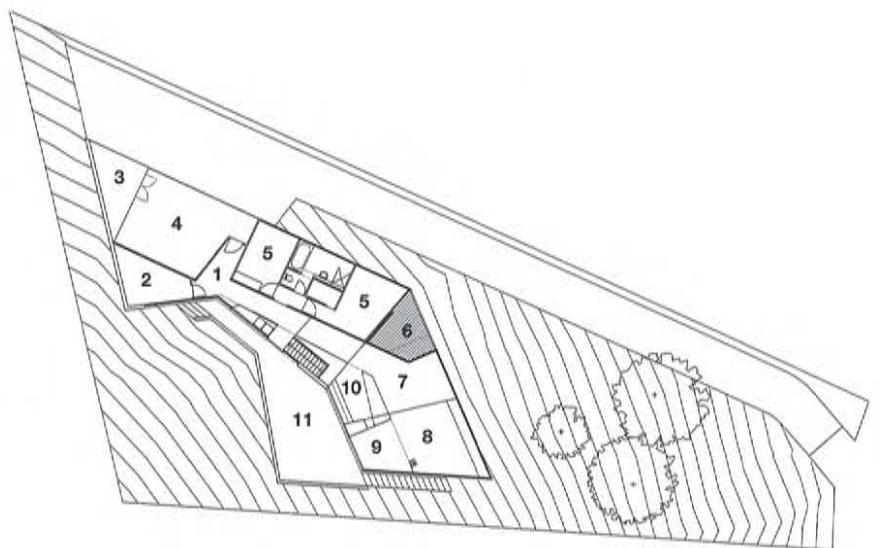
**Scott:** It was for a young couple, basically their first house, with a taut exterior clad in grey metal that would be visually recessive within that bush setting. We wanted this to be a simple shadow within the loudness of the others. When you are inside, the plasterboard and coloured joinery provide a wondrous interior experience – a surprise from what you might have expected after seeing the outside of the house.

I think with our early houses, of which this is one, the clients probably took a greater leap of faith because we didn't have an extensive portfolio. Nevertheless, the clients here were interested in something contemporary and sought a solution that both suited their tastes and differed from their neighbours, within a tight budget. As this was one of the first houses in this subdivision, the clients saw the site in much the same way we did – as one part of this hillside overlooking an amazing view. We didn't stand on site with them discussing the next-door houses and how we would deal with the challenges they presented because they simply didn't exist. But at the end of the day, the clients shared our understanding that their house was well positioned, particularly with regard to the view, sun amenity and the manner in which we arranged it within the site.

**THIS PAGE:** A simple palette of slate grey metal cladding seems to dissolve the house into a shadow. **OPPOSITE:** The living area is the termination of a line that traces a path through the site. It meanders from the city of Hobart, around the block, into the house, and out toward views of the Derwent River.



- 1 Entry
- 2 Study
- 3 Storage
- 4 Garage
- 5 Bedroom
- 6 Deck
- 7 Dining
- 8 Living
- 9 Playroom
- 10 Kitchen
- 11 Courtyard



Plan 1:500





**Gerard:** The Liverpool Crescent house is a great example of a Terroir project in action. We had designed a house based on some developing interests we had at the time, but the clients were not really into it. We'd designed a cafe for them previously – with a lot of monumental concrete – and they came back to us because they'd really enjoyed it. But our new approach was not of interest to them. We advise our residential clients to look at our website and tell us which projects they like and which they don't; they are all different because they are all for different people. This house was no exception.

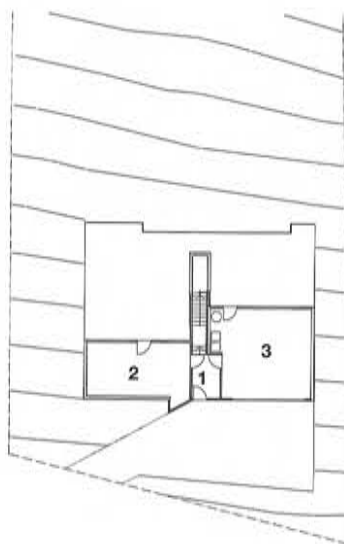
**Scott:** The client wanted that concrete aesthetic transferred to their residential site. It was a steep south-facing location looking out over the suburb of South Hobart. The steepness and the south-facing nature of it meant that it received very little sunlight during winter. We pushed the house to the south end of the site, and from there we gained the maximum view for the living area. Essentially, this was about providing a tight, cubic house on the exterior again, and the south-facing nature of it meant that we weren't inhibited by sunshading requirements. Because the sun came from behind there is a north-facing courtyard dug into the hill at the back of the house, which provided a sun trap for the occupants.

There is a variety of roof lights, including a narrow slot that looks as though somebody took a band saw to the roof. It cuts a dramatic vertical shaft of light down through the staircase, and there are other roof lights that feed into a funnel that takes light right down to the lower level. The internal red-stained plywood creates quite a dramatic interior in contrast to the very tight, spare-looking exterior. It was something we understood as a "Tasmanian thing" – the need to be mindful of how much money we are spending on the outside, spending more of that money, perhaps, where the client benefits from it more, which is on the inside. It happens to run parallel with a general research theme for the practice – the issues of the "contemporary sublime," the wondrous nature of, say, an iPod, which is completely blank on the outside but contains a variety of technologies on the inside which, frankly, we may never completely understand.

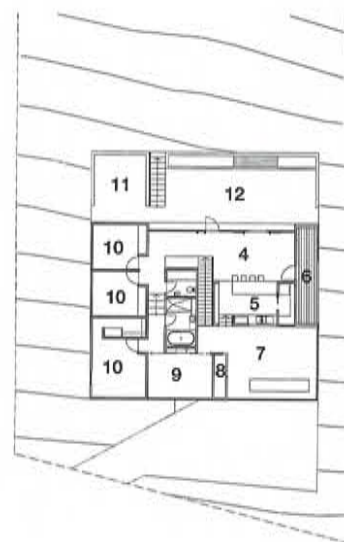
**THIS PAGE:** Monumental concrete and spider-red-stained plywood are a dramatic interior scheme in contrast to the muted exterior. Terroir prefers to create surprising and theatrical interiors rather than build ostentatious facades. **OPPOSITE:** Externally the house reads as a blunt cube, subjugated to the hillside.



- 1 Entry
- 2 Store
- 3 Garage
- 4 Dining
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Deck
- 7 Living
- 8 Lightwell
- 9 Study
- 10 Bedroom
- 11 Service courtyard
- 12 Courtyard



Lower level 1:500



Upper level 1:500





**Scott:** Smith Street is a more difficult one to talk about, since it's my own home, but it's part of the lineage of the previous houses we've discussed, particularly in terms of the taut exterior. The exterior here was an old warehouse, which had been subdivided down the middle. The existing street frontage was retained and doesn't reveal what's happening inside. That was deliberate. If anything it's a representation of a notion that had fascinated me in particular. But in a more general sense, I'd say this represents the fact that the practice is interested in developing these internal environments.

It was also an opportunity to work closely with the builder; the ability to play, finesse details and work things out as the project went along was important in this project. It has quite a stark and tough-looking interior, but we also notice aspects of a soft sensuality. One of the original doors of the warehouse can roll open automatically so we can expose the entire house to the rear yard during summer.

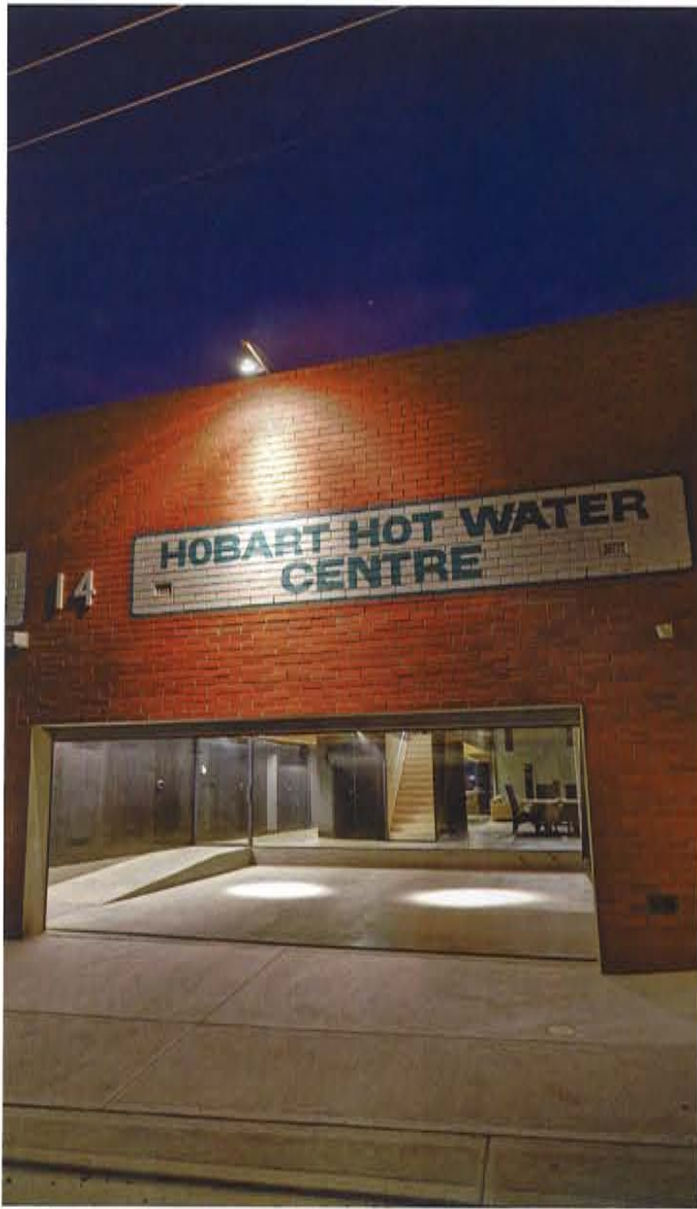
This being my own home, there was probably less of the usual design dialogue taking place at the start, but the project still required those moments of discussion throughout the design process because that's just the way we operate. As probably any architect would say, it was a very tough thing to do, but the hardest thing of all was just starting. Once I did that, it was fine. It was just taking that first leap, forcing

myself to move on from all the ideas that I had thought of as possibilities and start putting them in place.

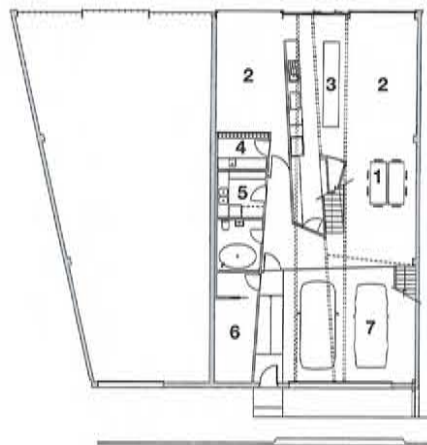
Smith Street began after Gerard and I completed the RMIT Masters project, and all of those houses were integral to our understanding and reflective processes throughout this project – the Liverpool Crescent and Acton Park houses in particular.

**Gerard:** Since it was Scott's house, I could just sit back and watch, like a tourist, instead of being directly involved all the time. It consists of a judicious series of adjustments, with a directness of detailing which is quite astounding at times. The whole environment is resolved with an extreme level of rigour; there is not one "bloop" detail, and this is typical of Scott. I think it's an amazing house to visit, both as a rigorous piece of architecture and as a place which houses a family in surroundings that challenge preconceptions about domesticity.

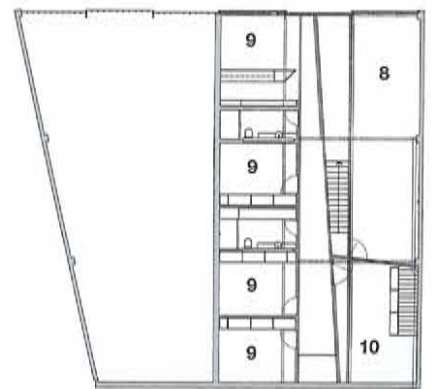
**THIS PAGE:** The original warehouse door can be rolled up to open the length of the house in summer. **OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT:** Maintaining the existing street frontage was an important consideration. **RIGHT:** Steel detailing throughout the double-storey house deliberately contrasts with sentimental ideals of domesticity.



- 1 Dining
- 2 Living
- 3 Kitchen
- 4 Cellar
- 5 Laundry
- 6 Store
- 7 Garage
- 8 Study
- 9 Bedroom
- 10 Playroom



Ground level 1:400



Upper level 1:400





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#### Featured projects

Acton Park House, 2006  
 Tolmans Hill House, 2003  
 Liverpool Crescent House, 2005  
 Smith Street Warehouse, 2008

#### Awards (selected)

2009 CCAA Public Domain Awards, CCAA Precinct Category Commendation  
 Terroir  
 2008 Institute Awards, ACT Urban Design Commendation  
 Commonwealth Place Amenities  
 2008 Tasmanian Institute Awards, Small Projects Awards  
 Fish349 Function Room  
 2007 Interior Design Awards  
 Fish349 Function Room  
 2007 Dulux Colorbond Awards, Commercial Exterior  
 Commonwealth Place Amenities  
 2007 Green Building Council of Australia, 5-Star Green Star Office Design Rating  
 86-88 George Street (the first for a state heritage-listed office building)  
 2007 Kenneth F. Brown Architecture Design Awards, Honourable Mention Peppermint Bay  
 2006 Institute Awards, Residential New Commendation  
 Liverpool Crescent House  
 2006 Institute Awards, Interior Architecture Commendation  
 Fish349  
 2006 Interior Design Awards, Emerging Practice Award  
 Terroir

#### Publications (selected)

*10x10\_3* by Shumon Basar et al., Phaidon, 2009  
*The Phaidon Atlas of 21st Century World Architecture*, edited by Phaidon Editors, Phaidon, 2008  
*AV Arquitectura Viva* Magazine, Otras Publicaciones, 2008  
*Wallpaper Architect's Directory*, IPC Media, 2007

Photography Ray Joyce (Acton Park and Liverpool Crescent), Brett Boardman (Tolmans Hill), Jonathan Wherrett (Smith Street)



**TOP:** New steel beams span the full length of the interior to create an upper floor, revealing exposed floor beams with long strips of continuous, diffused fluorescent lighting to the lower level and kitchen. **BOTTOM:** Internal walls run parallel with full-depth views from the street to the rear yard.