

Old Be-al House

Project Completion:	2017
Project Location:	Melbourne, Australia
Project Team:	Fiona Dunin, Alice Edmonds, Jayme Collins, Rob Kolak
Photographer:	John Gollings
Builder:	Dimpat Construction
Structural Engineer:	Perrett Simpson
Landscape Architect:	N/A
Floor Area:	129 m ²

Architect's 350-Word Statement

'Old Be-al' is the loving nick-name given to the beautifully old, gnarled Mallee river redgum at the rear of this classic, single story brick veneer home from the inter-war period in Melbourne's inner-east.

Underpinning our design notions and considerations for this home were two instinctual ideas: that of our client's fondness for 'Old Be-al' and associated desire for an enhanced connection between the house and the old-growth eucalypt landscape; and our own determined appreciation for the house's original brickwork, something we hoped to celebrate and re-cast within the existing dwelling.

While considering the client's brief of a two-bedroom, two-bathroom house, our design managed to reduce the overall footprint of the house and provide generous flowing living spaces with deep connection to the natural suburban landscape and the heritage of the existing house.

The reference to Old Be-al is constantly reinforced within the detailed design. The custom-made entry light mimics its branches, as does the pulls on the joinery and even the custom towel rails in the bathroom. The dynamically angled ceiling of rhythmically spaced timber cross-beams that extend out to an expansive timber decking are in dialogue with the upper canopy of the surrounding trees. The rhythm of the bushland also finds expression in vertical mullions and horizontal bracing beams, reminiscent of both the trunks and the canopies of the adjacent trees.

The form of the building also reflects the structure of Old Be-al, with the angles of the split trunk mirrored on the new roof forms and associated parapets and canopies.

Two hit-and-miss brick walls at the perimeter of this open space have act as functional shading device for the western sun as well as privacy screens to the robe, bathroom and living spaces. Through offering permeable elements they enhance appreciation for both the material itself and for the home's unique personality and heritage.

Through the partnership and appropriation of quintessential architectural materials in a new and dynamic way this project invigorates the life of the client through encouraging new connections between home, heritage and landscape.

Architect's 150 Word Statement

A classic, single story brick veneer home from the inter-war period was the subject of this imaginative rejuvenation and extension in Melbourne's inner-east. Our client's fondness for the aged eucalypt at the existing house's rear and of its connection to the famous 'Old Be-al' gum in the Mallee inspired the formal qualities of the design, most notably in the ribbed ceiling of the living spaces and the overall house's re-orientation towards this backyard focal point. This renovation proposed a reduction of the footprint of the house that was enabled through generously flowing living spaces with deep connections to the landscape and heritage of the existing house and surrounds. The continued influence of Old Be-al saw a marriage of materiality in the front and rear of the house, with hit-and-miss partial brick elevations filtering the passage and fall of light in the newly opened living spaces of the house's interior.

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