

KIAH HOUSE

More and more Australians are working from home. Kiah House explores a new approach to the home office, while also fulfilling the owners need for a *strong and positive sanctuary*.

WHAT IS THIS?

Kiah House is an addition to a weatherboard cottage in North Fitzroy, Melbourne. The extension comprises two separate pieces of architecture, the master bedroom 'haven' - which sits beside the original house extending to the northern boundary, and the separate office poised above. The original Victorian-era house, built in 1927, has been respectfully restored and updated with a new kitchen and bathroom.

THE BRIEF

The owners, Angela and Rahul (and their three cats) had a clear idea of what a home meant to them - "a sanctuary". They wanted a light and airy house, with a "strong and positive vibe", to entertain friends and family and also to relax and meditate. Influenced by Japanese gardens and the Buddhist retreats of Kyoto, the design responds to the client's desire for peace and mindfulness.

MORE THAN JUST A PLACE FOR SHUT-EYE

A bedroom can be far more than just a dark space at the quiet end of your home. A bedroom can be a contemplative, meditative space that at one time is wrapped up cosy and tight in layers of beautiful heavy curtains and then open to the outdoors the next. At Kiah House we were charged with the task of creating spaces, both private and shared, that spill out into the garden and yet adaptable enough to create solitude and privacy when needed.

The master bedroom 'haven' has a dedicated Buddhist prayer space and opens up to the garden and ponds via sliding double-glazed glass panels blurring the lines between inside and outside. The towering lemon scented gum tree is enclosed by a small deck area, a place for the owners to "sit and meditate".

The roof of the retreat is turf, covered in plants and edible vegetation (*Disphyma Crassifolium*) to provide an abundance of insulation as well as creating a buffer in the event of falling gum tree limbs. Accessed via a modest ladder, the green expanse also means the study is not overlooking a dull roof, instead Rahul looks out on a thriving roof garden.

STREETVIEW

Kiah challenges the suburban binary of the 'front yard' and the 'backyard'. In this small enclave of North Fitzroy, an unusual road lay-out has led to some houses having two street frontages at either end of the block (see diagram). At the rear of Kiah, high fences

and ugly garage doors dominate the neighbours houses, while across the road, on the northern side, old weatherboard homes form a traditional street front.

We found the defensiveness of the rear elevations to be odd. We decided that the backyard should be a second front yard. Kiah engages with the northern street and the northern neighbours. The new deck is elevated enabling views and interaction with the street. The new bedroom retreat faces directly onto the street, with operable louvres that allow Rahul and Angela to connect as much, or as little, as they wish. The new bamboo fence allows view and light between the garden and the street. A pedestrian gate creates a new 'front door' to the northern street where previously a high and defensive fence turned its back.

IT HANGS SUSPENDED

At Austin Maynard Architects we are interested in the rapidly changing nature of work. The number of employed Australians who work from home has dramatically increased to over 30% of the entire labour force. Today roughly 3.5 million employed Australians work from home on a regular basis. The kitchen table or an awkward corner of the lounge is not a productive or feasible way for many Australians to get work done at home. A dedicated workspace is required. But does this mean that we need to dedicate a spare bedroom to office space? And how do we create a clear separation between work and life? How do we isolate or escape the stresses of work if it has a permanent presence in our homes?

Rahul is a film maker who enjoys working from home. Rather than opt for a study nook or a converted shed in the back garden, he asked for a dedicated place to work in each day. Elevated above the original house and accessed via a spiral staircase, Rahul's office provides a very different spacial experience to the rest of the house. The office sits above the deck, up in the canopy of the gum tree, with elevated views of the dense green roof of the master retreat and beyond. The office is long and narrow, lined in timber, with perforated steel shelving. Like all of the newly built spaces, Rahul's office looks out onto the garden, yet this space is elevated and feels separated and private. A different space for a different household function.

TREE HUGGING (pretty literally)

An old towering gum tree dominates the backyard. It has been the wise old elder of the home for decades. Rather than shy away from it or cut it down as some of the neighbours requested, we encircled and embraced the tree, metaphorically and physically. From the retreat you can reach out and touch the beautiful old gum. From the office you are in amongst it, amid the branches and leaves.

THE 'ONSEN'

The bathroom at Kiah takes you to a different place. The sunken brick bath, big enough for two, has an earthy character similar to the ancient Onsen. A strong connection to a small private garden, created in the gap between the new addition and the old house, offers a relaxed feeling of bathing within the landscape. The bathroom leads up to the kitchen via a secret passage, concealed behind cabinetry.

I AM AN ISLAND

The large island bench is the focus of the kitchen at Kiah. Angela is a passionate cook who loves spending her free time creating modern gastronomic dishes. She wanted a high functioning kitchen with double ovens, zip taps, sous vide and custom designed storage space that could be cosy and intimate from day-to-day, yet could also open up for entertaining large gatherings. Importantly, this is not a typical island bench, this is a sculptural highly crafted piece of furniture. Half timber bench top, half stainless steel, it is both homely and commercial. The back of the bench top flips up to give extra practical kitchen surface when needed.

ORDER 55 MURAL

The mural on the side and underneath of the timber lined office is called 'Awakened Flow' by Seb Humphreys (aka Order 55). We first worked with Seb at [Alfred House](#), where he painted on an old brick wall with a tall, aggressive, flaming mural. The mural at Kiah has a very different energy. Seb has responded to the rich gardens and the peaceful nature of the home and its occupiers, to create a gentle explosion of colour that contrast beautifully to the spotted gum cladding.

"The mural seeks to bring forth the innate power within nature. By using the soft palette of the underlying woodgrain, the wood is reimagined as a container of hidden information that is emancipated from its dormant locale within the structure. Once released this energy transforms; expanding as it morphs into lighter fluid aqua shades and then is released back into its original confines.

To me this draws many analogies to the story of the house, the birth of a new space, The home taking a breath and expanding its rib cage as it fills itself with a renewed sense of being."

Seb Humphrey's Order 55

SUSTAINABILITY

Once a cold uninsulated weatherboard cottage, Kiah House is now a high performing sustainable home.

The timber used throughout the kitchen is over 100 years old, salvaged and recycled from the CSR sugar mills in nearby Yarraville.

The Red clay bricks in the bathroom were all salvaged and recycled from demolition sites around Victoria, cleaned by hand without the use of chemicals or machinery.

Although the site is small we have maximised natural light and air to all spaces. The openings and windows have been designed to optimise passive solar gain, thereby drastically reducing demands on mechanical heating and cooling. All windows are double glazed. The green roof provides additional insulation, helping to maintain a constant temperature in the bedroom retreat. A large water tank captures roof water and is reused to flush toilets and water the garden. High performance insulation is everywhere, even in the walls of the original house. Where possible we have sourced local trades, materials and fittings. Solar panels with micro-inverters cover the new roof.

WORDS FROM THE OWNERS

Rahul. "We are in love with our home! We so thoroughly enjoyed the process of the 12 month build. Between the architects (Austin Maynard Architects), the builders (CBD contracting), our landscape gardener (Damon Fuhrer Landscapes), our home technology experts (Lifestyle Connect) and our interior decorator (Amanda Grillini), we all worked to create this amazing space that we very luckily get to call home. These people have become friends and having worked together in a creative state of mind, we all collectively share this unique bond which we are extremely grateful for. Angela and I promised ourselves (for this reason), that no matter what, if someone passing by wanted to have a look at our space, we would never say no. We've kept that promise so far. It's not just our house to enjoy. We think and believe that if we can share that joy with others, that is the best gift you can give someone. Making someone happy."

Architect: Austin Maynard Architects
www.maynardarchitects.com

Project Team

Andrew Maynard, Mark Austin, Natalie Miles, Ray Dinh

Site / Floor Area:

Site area	309m ²	
Existing house	95m ²	
Addition	68m ²	(53m ² ground + 15m ² first)

Total Floor area: 163m²

Completion date

March 2017

Builder

CBD Contracting

Engineer

R Bliem & Associates

Mural

Seb Humphreys - Order 55

Landscape Design

Damon Fuhrer Landscapes

Green roof

Fytogreen

Cabinetry

Grange Joinery

Interior stylist

Amanda Grillini

Artwork

Varuni Kanagasundaram

MATERIALS & FITTINGS:

Joinery by Grange Joinery

Study: Spotted Gum timber cladding

[Lexan Thermoclick](#) polycarbonate sheeting (Study wall east)

Operable Louvre Screen to north - Shadefactor MC75

Custom black chainlink / painted CHS screen to west

Skyrange steel doors & windows

Door hardware: Designer Doorware

Spiral Stair - Enzie

Room divider curtain - custom made by Barlow and Hunt

Fluffy Pendant light - Fandango by Kenneth Cobonpue

Lounge fire - Lopi Flush Wood Hybrid Fyre

Kitchen Ovens x 2 Gaggenau

Side Tables - Paxton from La Maison

Kitchen timber - Messmate, recycled timber by Timber Revival

Three pendant chandelier Black Sambucca designed by Melbourne based glass sculptor Ruth Allen

Curtains - Hydronic heating panels, Hydrotherm Hydronic heating, brand Bosch Buderus Radiators

Custom recycled red brick bath

Custom cedar batten bath mat / platform

Custom white perforated steel study desk & shelves

Walls - Dulux White On White

Staircase - Dulux Alphatec Signal Red

Front door - Dulux Alphatec Signal Red.

APPLIANCES:

Rangehood: Qasair Rangehood

Oven: Gaggenau 400 Series Oven

Warming Drawer: Miele

Cooktop: Siemens induction

Sink: Oliveri Sonetto double bowl sink

Sink Mixer: Focus Kitchen Sink Mixer with Pull-Out Spray

Heat Lamps: Anvil Bonnie Heat Lamp

Dishwasher: Miele fully integrated dishwasher

Fridge freezer: Westinghouse 690l double door fridge

BATH FITTINGS & FIXTURES:

Ensuite:

Basin: Custom solid Ironbark timber vanity unit with CNC carved basin

Mixer tap: Rogerseller Pinch Progressive Mixer & 200mm Outlet Rose Copper

Shower rose: Rogerseller Strata Shower Rose 200mm Rose Copper and ceiling arm

Bath spout: Rogerseller Pinch Wall Bath Outlet Rose Copper

Toilet: Caroma urbane compact Invisi series wall faced suite with In wall Cistern

Bath 01

Basin: Moku Grey Granite Basin

Mixer tap: Rogerseller Arq Wall Mixer & 250mm Outlet Rose Copper

Shower rose: Rogerseller Strata Shower Rose 200mm Rose Copper and wall arm

Shower Mixer: Rogerseller Arq Shower Mixer Rose Copper

Toilet: Caroma urbane compact Invisi series wall faced suite with In wall Cistern

Tiles: Kiklo Penny Round tiles by Perini Tiles

200 WORD SUMMARY

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