

HIS & HERS
HOUSE
BY FMD
ARCHITECTS

- 1 Porch
- 2 Entry
- 3 Bedroom
- 4 Lounge
- 5 Dining
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Deck



Plan 1:400

0 5m



Sculpted around the simple daily enactment of the owners’ newly shared life, this addition to an inner-Melbourne terrace represents a binding together of stories, memories and moments.

Words by Hayley Curnow
Photography by Peter Bennetts

Sitting among well preserved Victorian and Edwardian homes in the inner-Melbourne pocket suburb of Clifton Hill, His and Hers House by FMD Architects is a celebration of connection and coming together. The clients, Pam and Arthur, had each engaged Fiona Dunin, director of FMD Architects, in the past; to design the celebrated Cross Stitch House (2013) for Pam and an addition to Arthur’s archetypal terrace that hadn’t yet come to fruition. A shared project to mark the start of the clients’ married life, His and Hers House completes the reconfiguration of Arthur’s terrace by melding together the original plans with qualities drawn from Cross Stitch House.

From the cool, dark interiors of the terrace’s refurbished entry hall and bedrooms, the addition presents as a bright and airy inversion. The striking, skewed pitch of Cross Stitch House is echoed in the expansive living volume; the transposed silhouette a memory of “her” previous life. The angular ceiling plane is punctuated with dramatic, triangulated skylights, forming an interlaced geometry of two shapes meeting at a point, an infinity symbol of sorts that speaks of the continuity of the clients’ love.

The raked ceiling soars to 4.5 metres at its highest point, giving a generous sense of scale and volume to the main living area. The space is richly layered with warm honeyed timbers, including crown-cut Tasmanian oak and plywood cabinetry. Subtle tonal shifts are visible in the Tasmanian oak flooring, with knots, sap-lines and cracks giving a sense of humility to the timber and celebrating the beauty of natural inflection.

A lush courtyard is thoughtfully brought to the heart of the house, establishing a sunlit centre around which daily activities can intuitively occur. Timber-framed glazing exposes the full width of the living area to the garden, encouraging outdoor living while providing excellent solar access and passive ventilation. The northern orientation of the courtyard effectively extends the living volume while increasing the thermal comfort and environmental efficiency of the home.



Melbourne,
Vic



Alteration +
addition



Family

3



3



2

M²

Site 218 m²
Floor 158 m²



Design 8 m
Build 7 m

Having previously lived in the leafy Melbourne suburb of Ivanhoe, Pam was accustomed to an extensive garden. While comparatively small in size, the courtyard of His and Hers House, landscaped in collaboration with Eckersley Garden Architecture, provides much amenity and delight for the couple. The perimeter is brimming with soft foliage steadily climbing to create a dappled canopy from which delicate coloured glass pendants are gently suspended. A discreet water feature bubbles and splutters – a cooling, ambient addition.

As the home hugs the boundary of the block, there is little presence to its exterior form other than from the courtyard vantage, where modest compressed fibre cement cladding has been thoughtfully detailed to “make a simple material a lot more refined,” explains Fiona. Embedded strip lighting lines the angled junction of wall and window, animating the geometries of the house when lit at night. From these angled architectural planes to the triangulated cabinetry pulls, “there is continuity down to the smallest detail,” creating a design language for the home that is devotedly referenced throughout.

Inside the home, the main bedroom and ensuite are accessed via a ramp along the house’s southern edge, allowing for wheelchair access to see the couple into their senior years. The raked ceiling slopes to its lowest height along this axis to negotiate planning regulations while maintaining the southern neighbour’s access to natural light.

This otherwise transitional space is optimized for storage, utility and display. Custom joinery lines the full length of the wall, with the pared-back palette of timber, white tessellated tiles and mirror providing a fresh and unassuming backdrop for the couple’s combined collection of artwork, furniture, plants and books; and for “new connections, experiences and stories,” as Fiona asserts. With the ceiling sitting no higher than the original fence height, the chamber-like corridor gives a sense of spatial compression that enhances the transition to the lofty private zones beyond. The main bedroom turns its back to the rest of the house, affording a sense of privacy and seclusion for the couple. Custom sliding doors painted in a rich ochre colour open to an intimate private courtyard, complete with a mirrored gate to increase the sense of space, maximizing the possibilities of the narrow site.

An inherent wash of natural light is maintained throughout the house and the landscape is ever-present. “Although the rooms are small,” says Fiona, “every space has a garden aspect.” This gives a sense of generosity and delight that allows the house to transcend typical experiences of bathing, resting and working, transforming the couple’s daily life.

With its quiet, suburban sensibility, His and Hers House intrinsically links internal and external spaces through a continuation of form and volume. Underpinned by the fundamental tenets of a well-designed home – natural light, passive ventilation and sensitive material selections – the house supports the simple, daily enactment of the clients’ new, shared life while serving as a metaphor for their eternal bond and commitment. ©

Products
Roofing: Lysaght Klip-lok in Colorbond ‘Shale Grey’ and Custom Orb in Colorbond ‘Woodland Grey’
External walls: James Hardie Scyon Axon cladding in Dulux ‘Grey Pebble’
Internal Walls: Plasterboard walls in Dulux ‘Whisper White’; Provans Tasmanian oak in Bona Traffic
Windows: Custom solid Victorian ash frames in clear oil
Doors: Custom doors by Basis Builders
Flooring: Provans Tasmanian oak flooring in Bona Traffic; Rugs Carpet and Design Savanna carpet
Lighting: Mark Douglass glass pendants; Masson for Light track lighting
Kitchen: Fisher and Paykel integrated fridge; V-Zug oven and cooktop; Qasair rangehood; Laminex laminate benchtops in ‘White’; custom door pulls
Bathroom: Inax Yohen Border tiles in ‘YB102’ from Artedomus; tiles from Academy Tiles and Surfaces; Reece basins; Astra Walker tapware; Caroma toilets
Furniture: Feelgood Designs dining chairs; Jardan lounge, armchair and coffee table; outdoor dining table by the architect

01 Twin skylights meet to form an abstract infinity symbol, which represents the owners’ relationship.



02 The roofline takes cues from Cross Stitch House, designed by FMD Architects for one of the owners in 2013.

03 A ramped hallway, lined with shelves for displaying treasured objects, connects the kitchen and living space to the main bedroom. Artwork: Emma White.





04

04 Tasmanian oak is used in flooring, wall lining and joinery as a unifying material with slightly varied tones and textures.

05 Faceted shapes are the basis for a design language that unites interior and exterior spaces.



05



06

06 A central, northern courtyard, brimming with foliage, answers the owners' desire for sunlight, ventilation and prospect.

07 The house hugs the boundaries of the block, with pocket courtyards providing a garden outlook to every room.



07

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