

OAK
HOUSE
BY
KENNEDY
NOLAN



Colour and geometry permeate this bold addition to a double-fronted Victorian terrace house that offers new-found connections to an established oak tree.

Words by Alexandra Brown
Photography by Derek Swalwell

The project that would become Oak House was first drawn up in 2013. Anticipating the possibility of a long planning approval process for alterations and additions to their double-fronted Victorian terrace home, the clients began working with Kennedy Nolan well before they would be in a position to start construction on the project. Things moved forward faster than expected and, months later, the drawings were ready but the clients were not. Capitalizing on this protracted design phase, Kennedy Nolan has worked closely with its clients to make a series of bold but thoughtful additions to the existing dwelling that reflect a deep knowledge of existing conditions and sensitivity to changing family dynamics.

The house is a careful balance between bold, almost postmodern, geometric forms, and a series of subtle, site-specific gestures and modestly scaled spaces that promote a strong sense of intimacy while maintaining visual connections. Throughout the project, the architects have complemented the warmth of terracotta tiles, Douglas fir cabinetry and red powdercoated aluminium with a number of burnt orange and pink-inflected finishes. Many spaces also manage to incorporate cool grey concrete and splashes of bright blue with apparent ease.

The initial design for Oak House established a series of large site moves that continued to underpin the project as it was constructed more than five years later: the north-facing courtyard arrangement, connections to an established oak tree in the centre of the property and the decision to give over the second floor of the house to the clients' two sons were all there in the original design. At the same time, however, the experience of living in the older terrace house allowed the clients time to get a sense of what its spaces might become and reconsider the details of the design as their young family began to grow up.

01 The bold geometry at Oak House is balanced by subtle site-specific gestures and modestly scaled spaces that respond to family life.



A paved courtyard that opens out to the northern winter sun from the kitchen and dining area was initially imagined as a pool where young children could be closely monitored from a number of adjacent rooms within the house. There is still a small pool on the property, but it's now tucked beside the garage at the rear entrance to the site. While remaining clearly visible from the house, this entertainment area has become a space for older children and more independent modes of play. Meanwhile, freed from the responsibility of holding and securing a space for swimming, the main courtyard brings people together around an outdoor fireplace, framed by a dramatic gridded-steel brise-soleil and the textured brickwork of the neighbouring property.

From the courtyard, it is possible to register some of the deceptively complex operations of the beautifully designed brise-soleil. More than just a unifying facade element, the structure protects both the ground and first floor of the project from the summer sun, while allowing the northern winter sun to reach well into the polished concrete slab of the adjoining kitchen and dining area. Maintaining access to ventilation and light across the first-floor bedrooms and day-bed niche, the depth of this finely executed oxidized-red frame also provides a high degree of privacy to these areas.

The move toward a more contemplative hearth space within the courtyard at the centre of the home has also shifted the focus of the sitting rooms on either side of this area. While the lounge situated within the existing footprint of the house turns inward through the use of warm, textured curtains, a sunken concrete room at the very centre of the property sits under the eponymous oak, generating striking views up through its extensive canopy.

Since the project's completion in October 2018, this concrete reading room has become a much-loved quiet space, pushed out to the northern boundary of the site and to one side of the everyday circulation paths of the house. It is also a room that sits beyond the bold lines of the granite kitchen table, which often acts as an initial gathering point for guests. In fact, this was another lesson from the process of living within the original space: despite the intimate scale of the terrace house rooms, the clients and their visitors would often find themselves conversing and laughing around the kitchen table. Instead of losing this experience entirely within the new space, the architects allowed the kitchen table to continue to act as an anchor, while also generating a more expansive zone through the middle of the house.

A project like Oak House – bold but sensitive, eclectic yet unified – speaks to a considerable level of trust and collaboration between client and architect. In this case, the close relationship built over a number of years has produced an exciting, refined set of spaces, which respond carefully and thoughtfully to the evolving needs of its occupants. ☺

Products

Roofing: Lysaght Trimdek in Colorbond 'Night Sky'

External walls: Smooth rendered concrete; Skheme Rosso terracotta tiles; powdercoated aluminium brise-soleil in Colorbond 'Manor Red'

Internal walls: Painted timber lining boards; Skheme Rosso terracotta tiles

Doors: Steel-framed doors in Colorbond 'Manor Red'

Flooring: Honed concrete flooring with exposed aggregate finish; Tisca Saba carpet from Halcyon Lake; Dalsouple Daltex Pastille Alpha vinyl in 'Bleu Paon'

Lighting: Artemide Aggregato Saliscendi pendant; Dioscuri wall light and Shogun lamp

Kitchen: Custom joinery in Oregon timber and Laminex laminate in 'Black'; Artedomus Antilia vitrified tiles; De Fazio granite benchtops; Fisher and Paykel dishwasher, fridge and freestanding cooker; Ilve range-hood; Astra Walker tapware

Bathroom: Signorino terrazzo; Oregon timber joinery; Astra Walker tapware in 'Eco Brass'

External elements: Eco Outdoor Endicott cobblestone paving

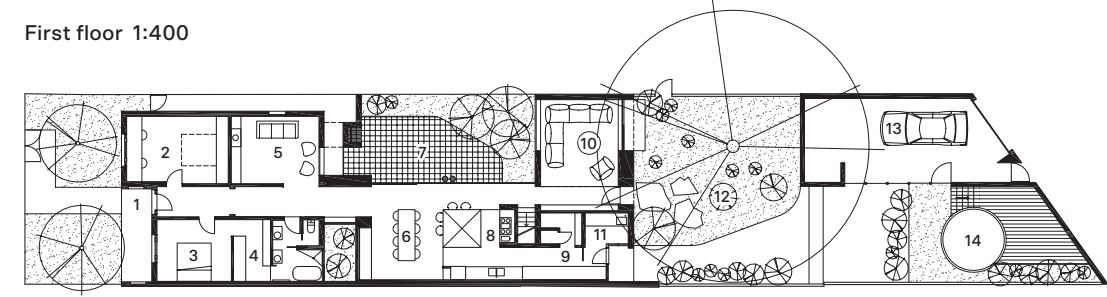
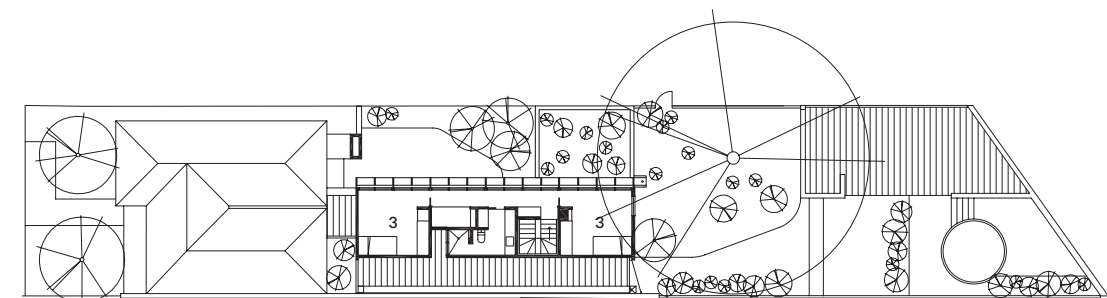
Furniture: Arflex Marengo sofa from Poliform; Mark Tuckey Oxo Scorched coffee table; Thonet Hoffmann dining chairs; Artek Stool 60; Fermob Luxembourg chair from Design Nation; Grazia and Co Anchor side table



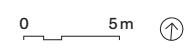
02 The oxidized-red brise-soleil acts as a unifying element along the northern elevation and protects the house from summer sun.

03 A sunken concrete reading room bridges the courtyard and the garden, offering connection between the outdoor spaces. Artwork: Joseph McGlennon.

04 The proportion and bold lines of the bespoke kitchen table anchor social activity in the home.



- 1 Entry
- 2 Study
- 3 Bedroom
- 4 Walk-in robe
- 5 Living
- 6 Dining
- 7 Courtyard
- 8 Kitchen
- 9 Pantry
- 10 Reading room
- 11 Laundry
- 12 Garden
- 13 Garage
- 14 Pool

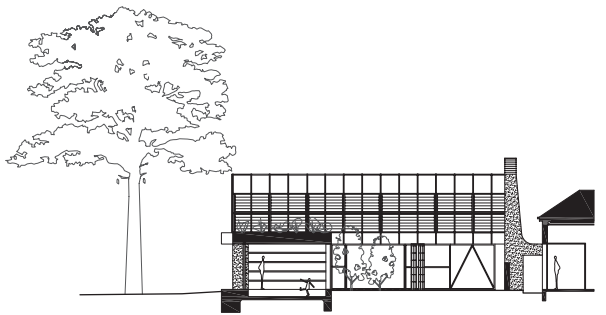




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06



Section 1:400

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05 Orange and pink-
inflected finishes are
teamed with pops
of bright blue and
Douglas fir timber
joinery elements.

06 Sited beneath
the armature of
the eponymous
oak tree, the home
captures views to
its verdant canopy.

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Oliver Gardens