



SKYWARD LAYERS

Arkhefield's beautifully articulated family home in a busy residential area of Brisbane is literally stacked in all the right places.





BEARING IN MIND THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE SITE, THE UNIQUE IDEA OF CREATING 'LAYERS' FOR THE HOUSE ALSO EMERGED OUT OF A NEED TO INCORPORATE A DIVERSE PROGRAM WHICH ENTAILED MULTIPLE LEVELS THAT WOULD APPEASE THE NEEDS OF BOTH THE CHILDREN AND ADULTS INHABITING THE SPACE.

The designers of the Brisbane-based practice Arkhefield are not one to shy away from challenges, as one can tell from their conceptual framework for the newly-built Balaam residence.

Confronted with the problem of devising a private, family-friendly abode within the space of a very public urban area – the riverside plot accommodating the project was apparently hemmed in by a cluster of apartment blocks – the 40-strong firm decided to take advantage of the lenient conditions laid out by local planning regulations in negotiating the height of a built structure in the area by building upwards. Bearing in mind the constraints of the site, the unique idea of creating 'layers' for the house also emerged out of a need to incorporate a diverse program which entailed multiple levels that would appease the needs of both the children and adults inhabiting the space. Composed of carefully articulated folds, the overall design was one which heeded the "often discordant needs of a large growing family." Arkhefield's structure comprises a rational configuration which sees the screened façade defining the children's rooms situated to the north while entertainment spaces for the parents are pushed to the southern end of the house – 'peeling' back to afford onlookers spectacular views of the riverfront.

With the objective to rouse an interplay between function and aesthetics, designers created a





500 square metre open 'garden zone,' generating a green space that would serve as a play area for the children as well as a stylish respite from the urban grittiness of the surrounding context. The innovative arrangement of spaces also directly contributed to the dynamic character of the house as evidenced in areas such as the entryway of the house which is chicly enhanced by the dramatic inclusion of a cantilevered plunge-pool on the first floor. One additionally cannot underestimate Arkhefield's choice of materials in regards to the project: the presence of timber in the garden zone – in the form of light weathering 'follies' – as well as in the exterior deck and ceilings endows the house with a warm rustic vibe while the contrasting use of glass and white off-form concrete throughout both the external and internal sections serves to consolidate the architectural entity, underscoring an underlying preference for edgy, modern

lines. The seamless integration of an efficient ventilation system at the very heart of the design perpetuates a basis for comfortable living and presents itself as an 'inner life-force' which filters through the many conjoined areas that define the Balaam residence. But while Arkhefield's combined solution involving height and layers was concocted to resolve the client's privacy concerns, it was also the firm's feeling - with respect to the context of the area - that the residence should simultaneously acknowledge and contribute to the public realm in which it occupies. By animating the street and the river boardwalk, the Balaam residence succeeds in presenting itself as an innovative work of architecture as well as a large-scale sculpture capable of provoking dialogue and adding to the rich texture of the burgeoning Australian architecture scene.

www.arkhefield.com.au

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900m2

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