



**STUTCHBURY & PAPE
WITH BOURNE + BLUE**

HARBOR HOUSE

**NEWCASTLE,
NEW SOUTH WALES,
AUSTRALIA**

At 6 A.M., you'll find Peter Stutchbury engaged in yoga on the beach near his home north of Sydney—even in winter when it's still dark at that hour. "There's a sense of the unknown—it's a wonderful start to the day," he explains. "I associate with people in the city but I live in a natural environment, and that informs our work." He credits Lloyd Grace, the Australian landscape painter, and architect Richard Leplastrier, who recently won the Finnish Spirit of Nature award, for teaching him the value of people and places.

Over his twenty-five years of practice, Stutchbury has built many houses with his colleagues and collaborators, and though each is distinctly different, the process is consistent. "I spend a lot of time thinking about the problem, visit the site as much as I need to, and test my ideas on the clients before I begin drawing." That painstaking approach won the trust of James and Virginia Leitch, doctors with three small children, who had found a site with a spectacular view, but wanted a more imaginative solution than two other architects had proposed.

Stutchbury went to school in Newcastle and loved the great natural amphitheater of the site. He proposed a deep cut in the hillside that would command a view to the northeast over the bustling harbor, but would conceal the house from the Anglican bishop's residence at the top of the slope. Within this "concrete armchair," as he called it, he placed an inner wall of storage and bathrooms and a wood frame that evoked the waterfront jetties to contrast with the weight of the concrete. Within this frame were double-height living areas projecting forward to either side, and a row of bedrooms over the kitchen and dining area to the rear. The expansive roof is tilted up to catch the light off the water, and deep plywood boxes block direct sun from the two lofty rooms. He produced schematic drawings of these components, and the clients gave him the go-ahead.

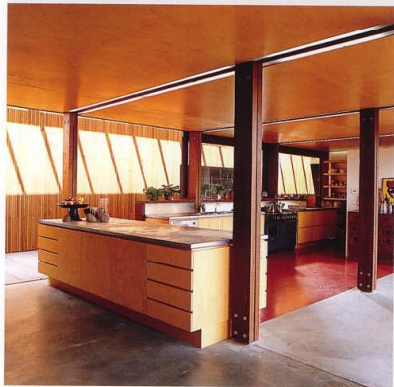
The house is an elaboration of that quintessential feature of Australian building—the porch. Whether it's the shady verandah wrapped around a homestead in the bush, or one of the curved tin canopies that grace every Victorian row house in the city, or the canvas awning that Stutchbury added to the deck of an artist's cottage in the hills outside Sydney, it's a natural means of tempering heat and glare, allowing you to spend much of the day outdoors. Here the entire house resembles a porch, from the

glass-roofed gallery along the south wall to the soaring void beneath the pitched canopy at the front. Living areas flow into each other and out to the garden, especially when the glass sliders are drawn back, as they are for much of the year, blurring the division between indoors and out. The architect's love of openness was reinforced during the two years he spent in New Guinea. The bedroom divisions are flexible, to allow the spaces to be reconfigured when the children are grown (driving the teenage daughter to seek a bit of privacy in the ground-floor guest bedroom). The architect likens the stack of deep boxes that block the sun to horse blinkers, and they double as viewing channels that capture pieces of the distant landscape from the upstairs gallery. The bathrooms are revealed when hinged flaps open into the void of the passage, which serves as an internal street—an urban feature realized on a domestic scale.

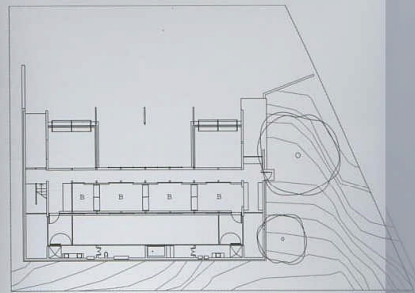
Exposed concrete blocks, smooth concrete floors, zinc flashing and brackets, simple joinery, and a cable-braced roof supported on three slender steel beams gives the 2,800-square-foot house the earthy character most Australians prefer. Stutchbury wanted an alternation of light and shade, as though you were walking through a forest. "Too much light and it loses its authority; too little and it lacks contrast," he explains. To execute his ideas, he picked Shane Blue, a former student who now practices in Newcastle, and together they've invested this simple structure with warmth and toughness, intricate spaces and inspiring vistas. The building requires no air-conditioning and only a minimum of floor heating in winter.

"The house is an ideal project—as a source of innovative ideas that can be adapted to other buildings. You get to work intimately with a client, which is an important learning experience. To translate people's needs into a built form is a remarkable opportunity, and there's an element of surprise—you can never quite imagine how it's going to turn out."

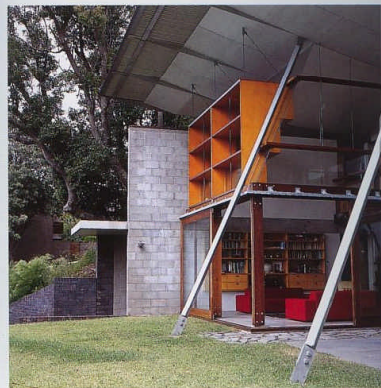
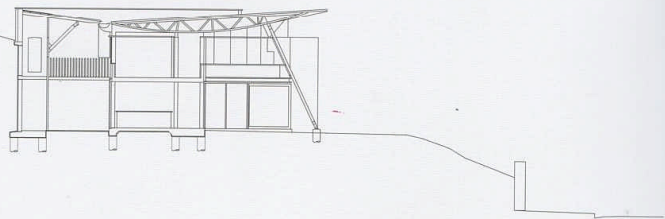
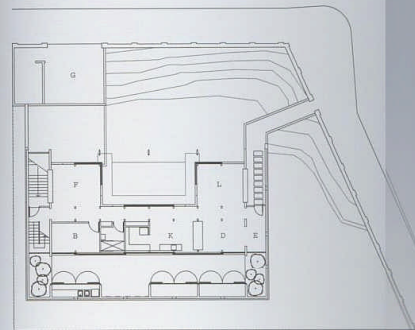




Upper level



Lower level

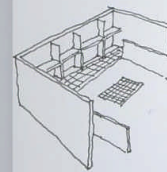


STRUCTURAL
ARMCHAIR.

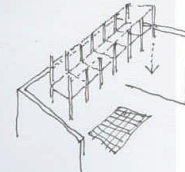
INTERNAL
JETTY.

LIGHT
REFLECTOR.

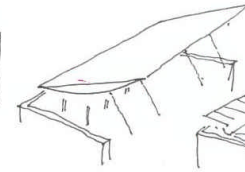
LIGHT
CONTROLS.



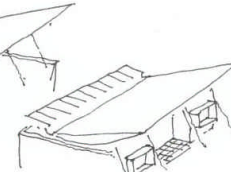
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