The theme of the roof as floating parasol has informed houses and public buildings designed by Sydney-based architect Peter Stutchbury, most notably in his design for the Sydney International Archery Park. There the roof twisted along its length, a dynamic slash above a wetlands landscape. Here in Newcastle, Australia's version of Glasgow or Liverpool, the parasol has a different role in the landscape. It provides a sheltering cleft in the slope of a hill overlooking a spectacular view of the Hunter River, the Stockton Bight and the city's shipyards and steelworks. The parasol was also a response to the protected 'heritage' view of the 19th century Bishop's residence which crowns Cooks Hill. Parameter and design strategy have been carefully conjoined.

The clients were a couple with four young children, and the brief was for a family home, with living spaces on the ground level and bedrooms above, all facing north towards the view. The house appears as a glassy pavilion, formal in plan with beautifully detailed timber box 'display cabinets' built into the window-wall. These 'cabinets' double as brises-soleil (shading devices) and provide privacy from the street below. As with all of Stutchbury & Pape's houses, there is a clear environmental agenda: the simple,
relatively unadorned internal spaces of the house negotiate the double embrace of sun and vista. Nowhere is this negotiation more evident than within a double-height service court that lies deep in the plan and runs the full east-west length of the house. A slice cut into the parasol roof admits light to this crevasse of space, which has its walls shaded by vertical timber battens with shutter-like openings that fold outward. Behind this wall is a sequential run of baths, showers, toilets and basins which the female triathlete client describes as “the London Marathon of bathrooms”. At night, the house takes on a completely different life: it becomes an exquisite domestic lantern, a dwelling beacon high above Newcastle’s harbour.

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