



Member Profile

Hal Walter

I started my practice in 1991 in the recession. I bought some land, registered as a builder, and built two high quality townhouses. They attracted hordes of young people interested in design but few from the market that could afford them. Even ignoring my own time, I only broke even. However, most of the good projects I have had since were for clients who had visited the development when it was for sale.

My approach is straight forward and can summed up as follows:

I aim to produce buildings of the highest quality that are:

enjoyable to be in and around,
powerful but calm,
minimalist but rich

generated by:

the site and the purpose of the building,
the dreams of the client,
exciting use of space and light,
thermal comfort and efficiency,

and realised by:

innovative analysis of function,
thinking in three dimensions,
expression of structure and materials,
fastidious detailing, accurate documentation,
strict quality and cost control during construction,

in an environment of:

friendly professionalism,
consistent client contact,
ongoing research,
and respect by builders earned through competence.



Kew House

My wife and I bought the site with another couple. I designed two individual houses, subdivided the land and built both. My house also contains my office.

The site slopes down steeply to the north and offers superb views across Yarra Bend Park. The only access to the property is from a lane along the south (uphill) boundary.

The design is encapsulated in the word sanctuary.

A massive wall perforated only by a slot of horizontal glass shields the house from the lane. The opposite, north side is high enough to be private from properties to the north and is mostly transparent, focusing on the view.

The building consists primarily of two boxes: one is the house and the other - separated by small courtyards - is the office. Recesses for balconies, windows, shading devices and the structure for the vertically sliding garage door sculpt the crusty, grey rendered boxes. In places the outer carapace peels back to reveal recessed walls finished in smooth off-white cement render. The only protrusion is the entry; accordingly, it is clad in lightweight materials: copper and timber.

You enter through a wide pivoting front door set between the protruding copper walls. A limestone stair descends to the lower levels. A slender steel and timber stair floats through the high entry to the upper levels. The living room, at the second highest level, has a four-metre high glass wall facing north. The eaves provide full shade in mid-summer but in winter the sun bathes the whole floor. The roof of the office forms an island-like terrace for the house nestled into the upper branches of a huge peppercorn tree.

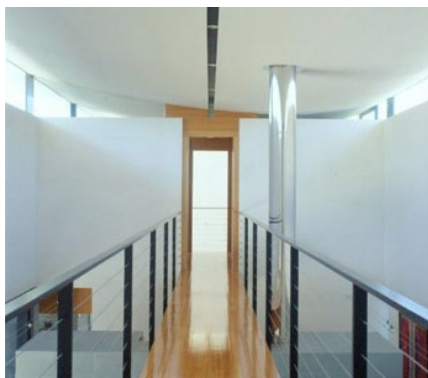
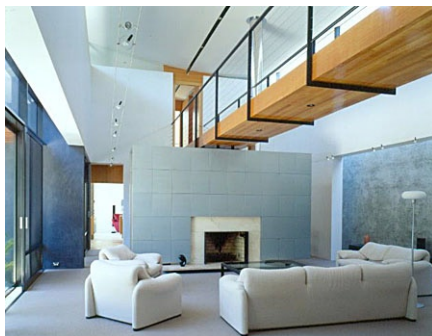
Toorak House

Though on a hilltop, the site is mostly flat with limited views. It has a west frontage of 13m and is 46m deep.

The client, a couple, wanted an individual building of its age; not another of the clichéd, pseudo-historical edifices that were ravaging Toorak. They required large rooms, high ceilings, plentiful natural light, visual flow between inside and out, and thermal control and privacy without curtains.

The building stretches along the south side of the site to provide every room but one with a north aspect. Walls projected out from the first floor ensuite and second bedroom screen high-level sight lines without reducing daylight or views of the garden.

The roof form, whilst sculptural, is economical with one timber truss profile used throughout. It provides the large overhangs to screen summer sun with minimal structure. The single 5-degree roof pitch allows low-cost corrugated steel roofing and a single gutter and drain.



What I'm ... Hal Walter

What are you reading?

Fiction - Secret Smile by Nicci French,
Non-Fiction - Evo (UK car mag), The
Architectural Review (UK).

What are you listening to?

Leonard Cohen, Brian Eno.

What is your biggest frustration?

Lowest common denominator speed limits and
lack of driver education.

What are you exultant about?

Great design.

Which architect do you find most inspirational?

Most formative - Tadao Ando; Current - Peter
Zumthor.

What is your favourite film?

The Unbearable Lightness of Being.

What's your favourite building material?

Stone.

What's your greatest extravagance?

Fast Cars!

What would you never give up?

Travelling in Europe.

What would you never do again?

Post Modernism.

**If there was a building that Architeam could
sponsor you to visit, which building would it be?**

Zumthor's Thermal Spa, Vals, Switzerland

datum