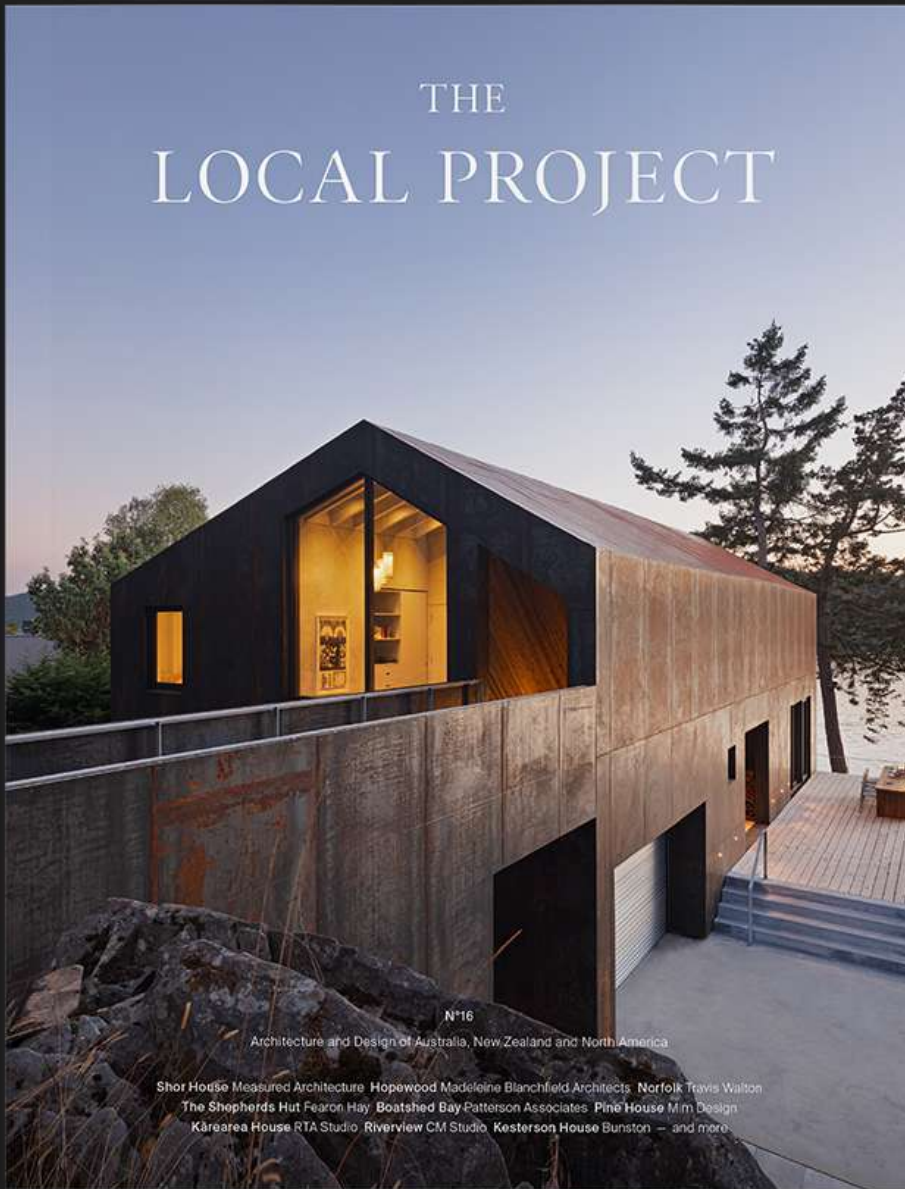


THE LOCAL PROJECT



N°16

Architecture and Design of Australia, New Zealand and North America

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Pine House

Mim Design



A masterful blend of modernism and nature, Pine House shines with its panoramic views, an innovative layout and an enviable connection to the coastal landscape of Port Phillip Bay.

Words
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Photography
Timothy Kye

Styling
Film Design and Jess Hillip

Situated on a knoll in Port Phillip Bay, Victoria, and built on the lands of the Koorring people of the Kulin Nation, Pine House appears so inherent to the landscape as the built rocky reefs, tidal flats and freshwater and marine wetlands that neighbour it. The *beside dwelling*, designed by Melbourne-based design practice Mimi Design, reaches lightly on the land, embracing the elements on either side of the threshold.

Miriam Fanning, founder and principal of Mimi Design, explains that the priority was optimising the site's potential while exemplifying the energy of its homeowners, a family of five. "Having lived in a pre-existing dwelling on the block for many years, they approached us to design a new home that would better accommodate their growing family, create a strong flow between indoor and outdoor spaces and offer improved access to the site's striking views across Port Phillip Bay and the cityscape beyond," says Fanning. "It was an opportunity that was easily missed in their previous home."

Inspired by the location, the practice sought to soften the lines and volumes of the coastline throughout the interior design, furniture and styling, which was completed in collaboration with stylist Jess Hillip. "We sought to imbue qualities of the landscape into the experience of the home, connecting the family to their surroundings," she says.

Where most interior design studios would have angled views horizontally, Mimi Design did so vertically, inserting the spatial arrangement by designating the common areas upstairs and the bedrooms downstairs. "We approached the levels as two interlocking stacked boxes and embedded the structure into the rounded terrain," says Fanning.

Each level is mirrored from the other: the broad podium is concealed in pale carbon neutral teak by Kross, while the upper level, elegantly cantilevered, is wrapped in Accoya timber and punctuated with ribbon windows that reveal panoramic views of the sea and skyline. If views are important, so too is privacy, which the practice ensured by appointing a stone-lined courtyard at the centre, with private wings on either side that ensure an enduring oasis of calm. "The courtyard functions as an inviting alcove for the family, well protected from coastal breezes," says Lisa Ramsay, an associate at Mimi Design.



Min Design saw potential in every inch of the site. A driveway designated as a recreation space for the family's teenage children, was situated to the south, with a four-car garage carved out below. The upper level, a horseshoe-shaped, gallery-style pavilion encircling an infinity pool, was built atop the hillside. The garden below, skilfully landscaped by Ben Scott Garden Design, was brought even closer with a flight of stone stairs. "The ground floor is designed as a dedicated zone for young adults, with views across the landscaped footpath," says the designer.

The gentle folds of the earth are echoed indoors, first in the trees, by way of a sculpted wall, and later in the staircase and kitchen walls that unfold as a tapestry of highlights and shadows. The double-sided fireplace and the furniture scheme opens up additional views in spirit, surrounded in light wood. *Kaiseki* benches, the former helps define the exterior material scheme indoors, its mass and adjoining half-height screen providing a delineation between the dining and lounge spaces.

The latter, a arrangement of undulating tables, tables and objects in warm shades, occupies the upper central pavilion, harking to the sun-dappled, meadows and panoramic ocean vistas. "The charming intersection of soft curves is the result of many iterations in shades and form that set the tone for

the interior beyond," reflects Ransom. The casual locale finds equal expression in the lounge through timber ceilings and sandstone flooring.

The kitchen, also situated on the upper level, is a lesson in tactful restraint. Defined by leathered Viscount white granite – "a robust material that addresses the practical demands of the family yet feels soft in its application," says Finning – it is offset by white, oiled oak floors and veneer cabinetry that serve as soothing antipodes to the striking palette. The bench hardware is of particular note. "It feels subtle yet earthy, resonating with the natural tones of the outdoors across views and established gum trees," she adds.

In some places, *Pine House* seems anachronistic, as others, almost seamless. Enveloped by earth tones, swathes of white marble and polished plaster walls, the home is thoughtfully decorated with loop-pile carpets and curated art. The Min Design team regarded the home as they would a gallery, treating furniture as sculptural elements. For instance, in the primary suite, a freestanding headboard and bedside tables are designed in alabaster installations in polished planks. "We designed the furniture and decor to create a sense of refuge, with sculptural textures and rugs in deep ink and plum tones lending depth and resonance," says Finning.



The traditional furniture in this house creates a striking contrast with the home's clean lines, with the presence of simple white marble and polished plaster walls.



As for whether there were any challenges in the course of the family dwelling, Fanning unsurprisingly cites the pandemic as the greatest. "The construction of Pine House was impeded by the lockdown, as well as rising costs, material shortages and general uncertainty," she says. "The tenacity of our clients and the dedication of our builder never wavered, however, and ensured that this project could be realized to its full potential," says the interior designer, who collaborated with Fortens Projects for the build.

Nevertheless, she insists the effort was worth the reward. "What first began as a phone enquiry developed into a trusting, five-year journey with our clients," she adds. "The result is a residential sanctuary that reflects the skyline, the bay, views and the family of four, five and six children."

Architecture and interior design: Min Design
 Build: Fortens Projects
 Landscape design: Ben Scott Gardens Design
 Furniture: Min Design and Jona Hays

