

A NOD TO NEUTRA

A LARGE, OPEN STRUCTURE WITH STRIKING FORMS MADE OF STONE AND WOOD, THIS RESIDENCE PAYS HOMAGE TO RICHARD NEUTRA'S KAUFMANN HOUSE WHILE MAINTAINING LINKS WITH THE ROBIN GIBSON COTTAGE THAT PRECEDED IT ON THE SITE

ARCHITECT *Shaun Lockyer Architects*
WRITER *Kirril Shields* PHOTOGRAPHER *Scott Burrows*



or any who've seen photos of, or even experienced Richard Neutra's 1946 Kaufmann House, similarities may be drawn between it and Shaun Lockyer's One Wybelenna house. From the centrality of the combined dining and living spaces, through to the use of stone walls, Lockyer's design appears to make many references to Neutra's Californian abode. Even the garden layouts of both houses display obvious similarities.

While One Wybelenna appears to pay homage to the Kaufmann house, the design was also strongly influenced by a Robin Gibson cottage that originally existed on the site. This small building was itself, as Lockyer notes, "strongly influenced by the likes of Neutra". Having spent time in California studying the school of architecture Neutra subscribed to, Lockyer was confident – given Brisbane's climate, the site on which the building would stand, and the existent Gibson cottage – that the strong reference to Neutra was an appropriate architectural decision.

Subsequently, the materials used by Gibson, the cottage's original floor-plan, and the reference to Neutra, have greatly shaped One Wybelenna. The result is an impressive house with an almost equal ratio of bedrooms to bathrooms, a separate guest quarters, and an elevated office space that sits above the kitchen and is supported by a somewhat intrusive wooden beam that feels out of place in an otherwise refined atmosphere.

For Lockyer, the principal architect, this was a dream job. The clients never sought to compromise his architectural choices, and they remained open-minded about design decisions that the architect deemed important; one reason the house is so

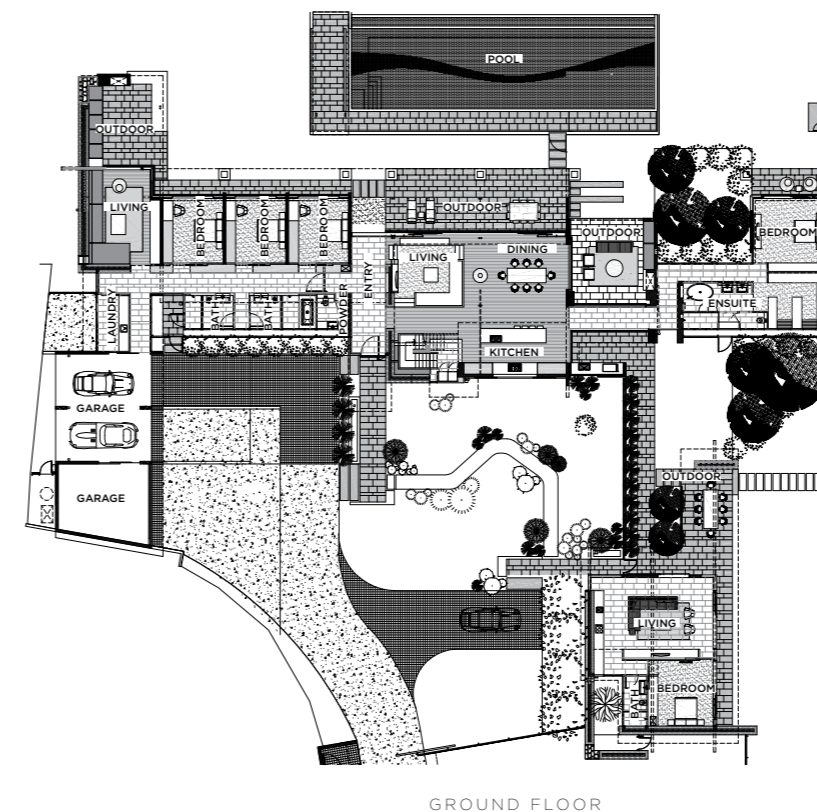
strongly aligned with particular design principles and aesthetic judgements.

Similarly, the house was expensive, the clients providing the fiscal means that allowed the design to take shape without the usual economic restrictions that are common in architecture. As Lockyer notes, this provided a rare opportunity in Brisbane, where the majority of his firm's work is, for the most part, limited to extensions or more modest housing projects.

Such working conditions make it sound as if Lockyer was the driving force in his moulding of One Wybelenna. However, the architect not only paid homage to Neutra's design, but also adopted the Austrian-American architect's mantra regarding clients: it is they who take priority, not the artistry embedded in the design. Therefore, there is much included within One Wybelenna that is the result of client input.

The guest house, for example, sits on the original footprint of the Robin Gibson cottage; the smaller residence had to be demolished due to age and disrepair. A number of the original garden's walls have been retained, and the stone taken from Gibson's cottage was used to rebuild the guest annex. As Lockyer states, this "connects the project back to the Gibson cottage". Similarly, the type of stone chosen to construct One Wybelenna is the same as the stone Gibson chose. Another example of the clients' involvement in the design can be seen in the old swimming pool. The clients wished to emphasise sustainability, so the former pool has not been demolished, but is now concealed under a layer of turf and is used as a water tank.

BELOW: Tallowwood is used for the stair, joinery and as part of the interior and exterior walls to create a bright, natural complement to the bluestone walls.
RIGHT: Native Australian species are joined in the garden by desert succulents such as agave.



GROUND FLOOR

PROJECT DETAILS

- PRINCIPAL DESIGN ARCHITECT:** Shaun Lockyer
- PROJECT ARCHITECT:** Shane Marsh
- ARCHITECT:** Lucy Hyndman
- INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Corinne Bolton
- DRAFTSMAN:** Richard Pain
- STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Rod Bligh - Bligh Tanner
- ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEER:** Rob Dickie
- LANDSCAPE DESIGN:** Jim and Micky Stewart of Boss Landscapes
- ARBORIST:** Peter Bishop of Bunya Solutions
- CERTIFIER:** Building Surveying Professionals
- TOWN PLANNER:** John Gaskell
- ACOUSTICS:** Roger Hawkins of Palmer Acoustics
- AUDIO VISUAL:** Joe Hegyvari of Domaine Mode
- CONTRACTOR:** Bruce Mole of Thallon Mole Group
- POOL:** Rothwell Pools
- DESIGN AND DOCUMENTATION:** 6 months
- CONSTRUCTION:** 14 months
- FLOOR AREA:** 1012m²
- BATHROOM:** Polished stainless steel

- fittings from Rogerseller, honed and filled travertine tiles from Classic Ceramics, Abyss slate tiles from Eco Outdoor
- DOORS:** Surian cedar from Timberware with Sikkens HLS finish
- FLOORING:** Tallowwood from Boral with Integrain Satin Finish, filled and honed travertine tiles from Classic Ceramics, Abyss splitstone slate tiles from Eco Outdoor
- JOINERY:** Book-matched tallowwood veneer from Sharp Veneer, white 2pac finishes, black Laminex board (internals). All cabinetry built by Cronks
- KITCHEN:** Nero Marquina bench from Fine Stone, white 2-pack finishes, cabinetry by Cronks, stainless steel Oxygene hi-tech sink mixer from Abey, Miele appliances.
- STAIR:** Solid tallowwood
- WALLS:** Internal walls: book-matched tallowwood veneer from Sharp Veneer, solid bluestone, gyprock. External walls: solid bluestone, tallowwood shiplap cladding & battening, rendered masonry walls from Boral



Given the homage to the Kaufmann house, there was also the desire to play with light and shade, juxtaposing the weight of the stone with wood and zinc; a contrast that extends from the exterior into the home's interior. In doing so, Lockyer replicated an approach taken by the school of Californian architects. He built substantial stone bookends, then, in between these solid walls, he used the lighter material to construct high-ceilinged rooms. This creates a pleasing aesthetic, ensuring the house is never too dark due to the height of the ceilings and the lightweight materials used in the construction of the rooms. Yet, for all the light the design lets in, there is also comfort to be found in the solid masonry.

For the most part, the often difficult blending of the clients' wishes with the architect's artistic vision works well at One Wybelenna. The client's specifications have been met without hindering the home's strong architectural and aesthetic qualities. However the house may be too similar to Neutra's Kaufmann House to be considered a completely original design. Even the gardens – which include adopted desert perennials such as agaves, mixed with Australian natives – appear to be a deliberate mimicry of the vegetation surrounding Neutra's famous house in California.

These observations should not tarnish the overall impression of Lockyer's house. This is a big home that has been privileged with clients who wished to build a long-lasting abode with architectural merit. It is a house that has provided a Brisbane architect with the means to pay homage to another of his profession. And the result is a pleasing addition—if not slightly overt in its nod to a certain style of American architecture – to the conversation of architecture in Brisbane, and to the city as a whole. ■



Architect statement

This project is special to us in a number of ways. It was borne out of recognition of something that everyone else thought was redundant (the old stone cottage) and sits on a large piece of land, with a client willing to commit to realising a challenging vision. The project engages with sustainability initiatives – both first principal and other – uses materials normally unaffordable to us and allows for planning simply not possible on most sites – the house is nearly 50m long. The result is a bold, but retrospective architecture that, while luxurious, tackles important ideas about space. Containment and volume, intimacy and extroversion. Privacy and public. All these things are set against a backdrop of tactile materials and a sense of permanence. We wanted this to be a house that endures and reflects the joy and passion that went into making it.

SHAUN LOCKYER

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:

An exterior view reveals the generous scale of the house; The open nature of the building allows for plenty of light and air to circulate; Walkways between different spaces demonstrate the strong links between inside and out; An example of the tallwood joinery.