



IN A NEW LIGHT

Text
Rachael Bernstone
Photography
Tom Ferguson

“The glass floors, timber stair and glass balustrading create interest and a vertical connection”

When the original scheme was rejected by council, Tom Ferguson devised another way of bringing light through the compressed four-storey volume of this inner-city terrace house, turning the stair void into a lightwell – where opaque glass floors and translucent glass balustrades framed the steel and timber stairs.

“It was a challenge to get light into the central space and to make the stairs more special and significant in terms of connecting the house vertically,” says Ferguson. “Without it, there was not enough verticality, but the glass floor and steel stairs incorporate the void into the lower ground to make that connection through the entire house. As a result, the house is an interesting internalised space rather than being floodlit by the central courtyard of the original scheme.”

To overcome the narrow dimensions of the plan, Ferguson designed a piece of fire-engine red joinery opposite the stair on the ground floor. It occupies the transitional zone between the dining room at the front and the kitchen in the centre of the open-plan living space.

“The joinery was incorporated when we decided to go ahead with the void, in the space that we had originally planned to use for the dining room,” explains Ferguson. “Being beside the stair, it’s not a practical place for furniture, but the inclusion of joinery breaks up the gun-barrel effect of long terrace houses. It’s also an effective counterpoint to the kitchen, because your eye is drawn to one side and then the other, and the gloss paint finish reflects light back into the space to deceive the eye.”

Combined with the pale timber floor boards, and the changing intensity of natural and artificial light throughout the day, the red joinery also reflects diffused colour into the first and lower-ground floor landings.

The unexpected play of light is one of the features he’s most happy with in the finished project. “The inclusion of the void during the construction process was significant to the success of the main floor,” he says. “Sometimes you’ll plan something in design and it’s only when you get on site and see how it transpires that it becomes clear – that’s the way you have to go.”

Another of his favourite outcomes is the way the living room, which drops away from the kitchen by three steps before opening to an enclosed outdoor deck, changes the dimensions of the entire main floor. “The stepping down at the rear, with the full-height and full-width glass opening, makes it feel like the whole house is opening up at the back,” he says.

Despite design and construction challenges, the renovation met the clients’ expectations, and both they and Ferguson are happy with the final outcome. “I’ve worked on smaller terrace-house style renovations, but this was a major undertaking in terms of the whole thing being gutted,” Ferguson says. “We started out with the potential to incorporate a central courtyard and to move the building volume to the back of the site, but it didn’t go through council. In the end, we haven’t ended up with a lesser result. As it is, the glass floors, timber stair and glass balustrading create interest and a vertical connection. While that technique has been used before, it’s on a reasonably large scale here, over the entire four-storey stair void, and it really works.”

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Architect Tom Ferguson Architecture & Design
 Builder Onsite Construction Services
 Structural Engineer Simpson Design Associates
 Kitchen Joinery HK Kitchens
 Additional Joinery C&M Joinery

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Finishes

Bathroom wall tiles are Classic Ceramics 400x100. Joinery in the dining room is 2 Pak Polyurethane Dulux Gloss in 'Raspberry Fool'. Kitchen benchtops are Laminex Freestyle and stainless steel. Ground and first floor flooring is 130mm Blackbutt modified tung oil. Attic flooring is Pirelli rubber. Bathroom floor tiles are Anthracite Limestone from Artedomus. Terrace and roof decking is plantation Kwila.
 Artedomus (61 2) 9557 5060
 Classic Ceramics (61 2) 9560 6555
 The Laminex Group 13 21 36

Fixtures & Fittings

Doors and windows by Aspect 360. External doors by AWS Commercial Aluminium. Internal sliding doors by CS Cavity Sliders. Bathroom fittings by Rogerseller. Kitchen appliances by Kleenmaid.
 Aspect 360 (61 2) 9517 1874
 AWS Commercial (61 2) 8783 7611
 CS Cavity Sliders (61 2) 9905 0588
 Kleenmaid 13 13 08
 RogerSeller (61 2) 8396 8700