



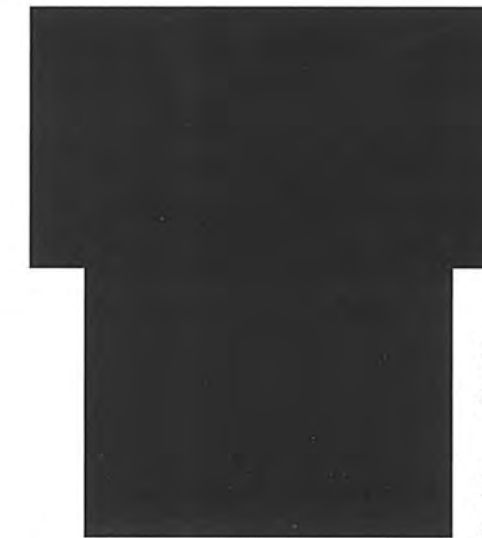
# THIS IS COHESIVE ARCHITECTURE; AUTHENTIC AND CREDIBLE

PART RESIDENCE, PART SCULPTURE, NOXON  
GIFFEN'S MANNING ROAD HOUSE OFFERS A BOLD,  
CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION OF TIME-  
HONOURED SPATIAL PRINCIPLES.





Every detail in Manning Road House's interior appears painstakingly considered. PHOTOGRAPHY PETER CLARKE



here are attitudes to architecture that seep into cultures and shape mainstream practice, resulting in buildings that share a common intellectual heritage.

Some might call it style.

But the identifying movements of the art – Modernism, Baroque,

Federation, the Constructivists and Post-Modernists, for example – are more than stylistic. They define changes of thought; they are the constructed records of cultural evolution. In other words, they are the body of evidence that is our history. Strange thing is, most architecture is not rationally related to an historic sequence of events. And most building (without architecture) is devoid of any valid connection to progressive history at all – except that it is constructed.

Noxon Giffen's Manning Road House falls somewhere in between the two traditions. It's a building that is engaging to study on plan and fulfilling to enjoy as a three-dimensional object; edgy, but not breaking any theoretical boundaries.

There's a certain amusement in viewing an architect's plan when it verifies the site by slicing, cutting, wedging and making a pattern out of a place intended for habitation. This concept provides a vicarious pleasure for us; when setbacks play a relevant role in the design, angles are there as if drawn by a deity, and simple lines (walls) used randomly to articulate space.

In three dimensions, Manning Road House's huge and heavy walls appear to float over thin black glazing frames, dating back to the modernist credo of solid and void. Even a fireplace chimney balances precariously over its hearth, showing what we can achieve with structure and a good engineer. This is tough architecture, masculine, yet the spatter of daylight from skylights moderates the sharpness and muscularity of the house.

This concept of light and space is amplified by cuts and voids which rise through the house over two levels, and open to the sky to shower sunlight deep into the dwelling. These tall void spaces are suggestive of Peter Eisenman's House VI, and before that the cleavages of Matta-Clark's New Jersey house in 1974 (though there is room to place a double bed in this bedroom).

There is a sense of disentanglement about the shafts of light that reach from ground to second-floor ceiling. The device enables the architect to identify spaces without solid walls. Using a similar device, the external metal-clad wall allows window inserts, so the walls appear as a solid skin but are in fact permeable.

Noxon Giffen has taken a large scalpel to their site, sliced it mid-axis, then carved diagonal ends to the forms along with small 'pinches' into the wall fabric. It creates a kind of forthright, simple sculpture, perhaps more to do with packaging than creating an interactive spatial experience. But architecture provides the latter in any case; there is no choice, because people will use the construction. The interior of the house opens out to the garden and a patio where a huge mesh sunshade provides both shade and a sense of enclosure, effectively making the open space a room. Interiors are ordered as if sourced from a commercial catalogue. There is a restraint about the bare white walls, functional joinery and polished floors which appear to be a chaste abstraction, not the place which messy humans inhabit. That may change over time as painting, hangings, people, rugs and bookcases fill the empty voids.

This is an architecture that shows a single-mindedness, not necessarily a style, nor even a harsh theoretical doctrine. Nevertheless, it is cohesive architecture; authentic and credible. It is the product of the contemporary architectural zeitgeist, where the author collects information and learns how to do things, maybe adopting a house style or referencing someone admired. Noxon Giffen produce work which reflects on their interests, experiences, education and a personal or corporate sense of creative development. They generate a personal diary rather than a cultural doctrine.

Our built environment is littered with the products of these busy people and their compatriots, and much of it is composed of fine buildings which earn respect not as steps along a historical narrative, but through composition, materiality, planning and methodology.

**CONTRIBUTOR:**  
**NORMAN DAY**

is a Melbourne-based architect practicing in the Asia-Pacific region. He is also Adjunct Professor of Architecture at RMIT.

Pages 48 and 49: Manning Road House's south-western elevation. PHOTOGRAPHY PETER CLARKE



A spine of skylights provides a softening element. PHOTOGRAPHY PETER CLARKE



Uplights illuminate the kitchen niche. PHOTOGRAPHY PETER CLARKE



White walls underline the house's expansive spaces. PHOTOGRAPHY PETER CLARKE



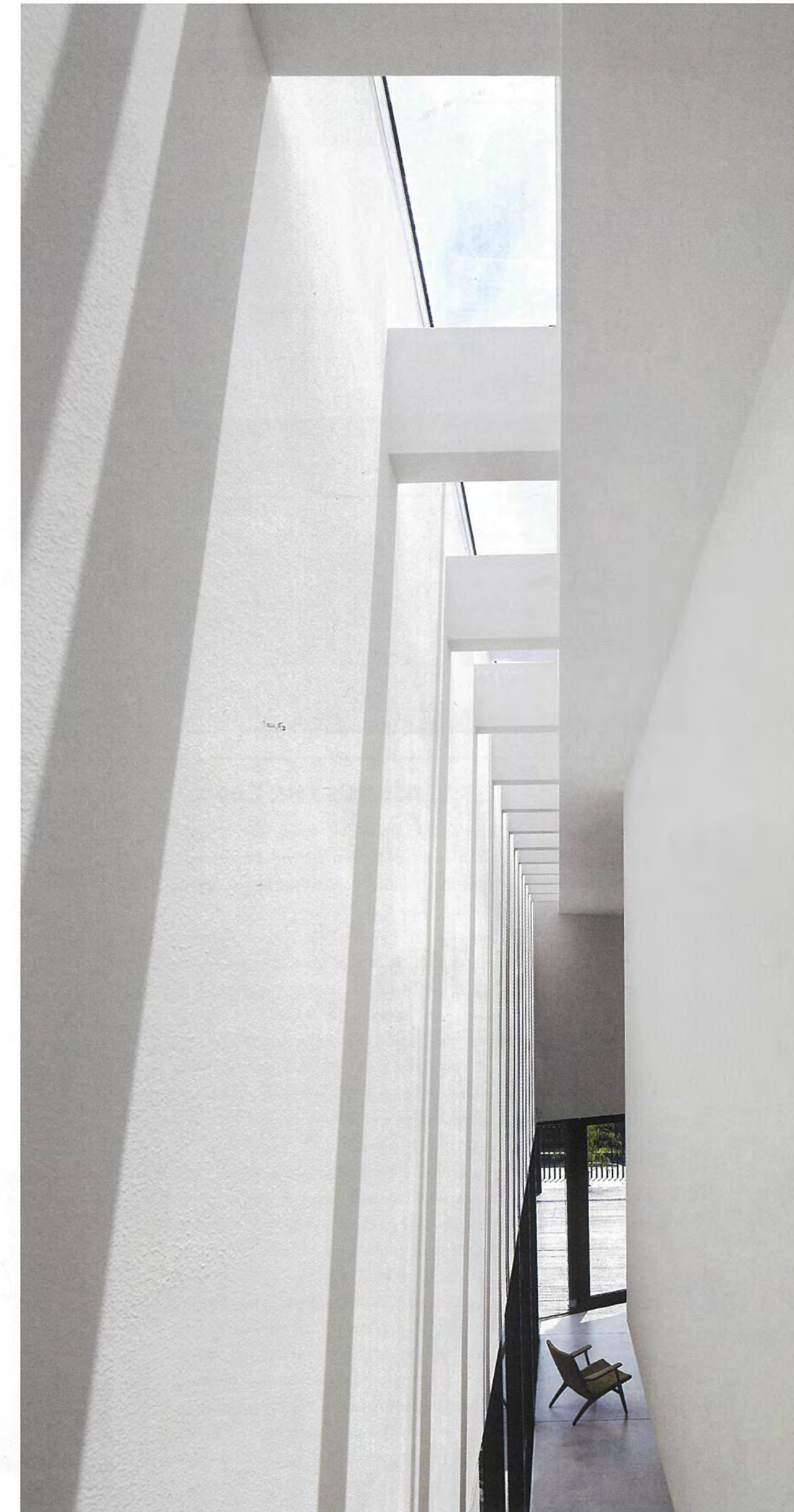
### ARCHITECT STATEMENT

*"Manning Road House is situated in Melbourne's established south-eastern suburbs amongst predominantly historic red brick and tiled homes. The brief called for a contemporary home for a young family of five, with additional accommodation for visiting family and friends.*

*"Two interconnecting interior volumes are linked via a central 23-metre-long continuous linear skylight, which generates a flow of movement through the spine of the house. A variety of open communal and intimate private spaces provide the framework for evolving family life.*

*"The sculpted volumes respond to the site and environmental influences while also acknowledging the street and neighbourhood planning controls. Light scoops reach out to capture northern light into the bedrooms while skylights and screens animate the interior. Crevices between the volumes bring landscape, light and ventilation into the heart of the dwelling, providing a seasonal display of light and shadow via windows and screens.*

*"A vented skin of Corten weathered steel wraps the building whilst openings with timber batten screens provide privacy and filter light. The palette is raw and elemental; materials are imbued with richness and softness through the play of light and space." Justin Noxon*



Shadows cast by the skylights track the sun over the day. PHOTOGRAPHY PETER CLARKE



A Corten steel exterior contrasts with the stark purity of the white interior.  
PHOTOGRAPHY PETER CLARKE

### MATERIAL NOTES: EVOKING THE LAND

The red Corten steel cladding of Manning Road House is an assertive material statement, especially in a residential setting. The decision to use this material is founded in a friendship enriched by the colours and textures of the Australian landscape. Justin Noxon explains:

“One of the clients is an old friend, and we travelled around Australia together many years ago. He would always say: ‘One day you’re going to do my house.’ So we always knew at the outset that the house would have an elemental and raw quality reflecting that time. The whole house is a personal expression and deliberate reference to experiences we shared, particularly on that trip, which was its gestation period. As the client moves around it, it’s meant to evoke those shared experiences. So Corten brings a rich, raw, material element which directly recalls the red Australian earth.

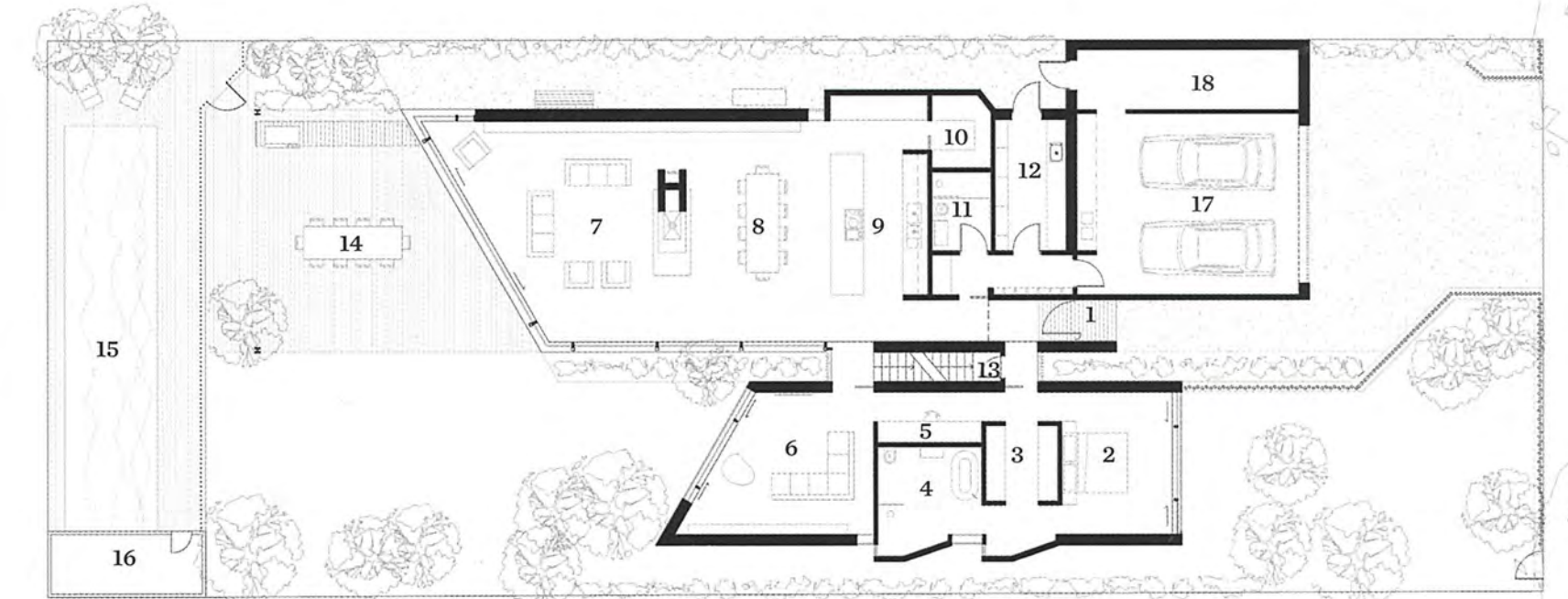
“We did look at other materials before deciding to go with Corten, however. The clients were interested in dark zinc and we also looked at timber. We ultimately decided that in this setting, with lots of period red brick houses with red tiled roofs, that perhaps Corten was more suitable. The beautiful thing about Corten is its deep orange tones. While it’s evocative of the outback landscape, its colouring is also sympathetic to its suburban setting. Here’s this very contemporary and quite big house in a predominantly historical setting, and yet it’s quite gentle. Because Corten takes on the quality of the changing light it has a softness to it; it’s raw, strong and contemporary but it’s also very warm. Its orange-red is also a complementary colour to green foliage, so it sits very well in the garden landscape. It’s also low-maintenance, which is a very big benefit of course!”



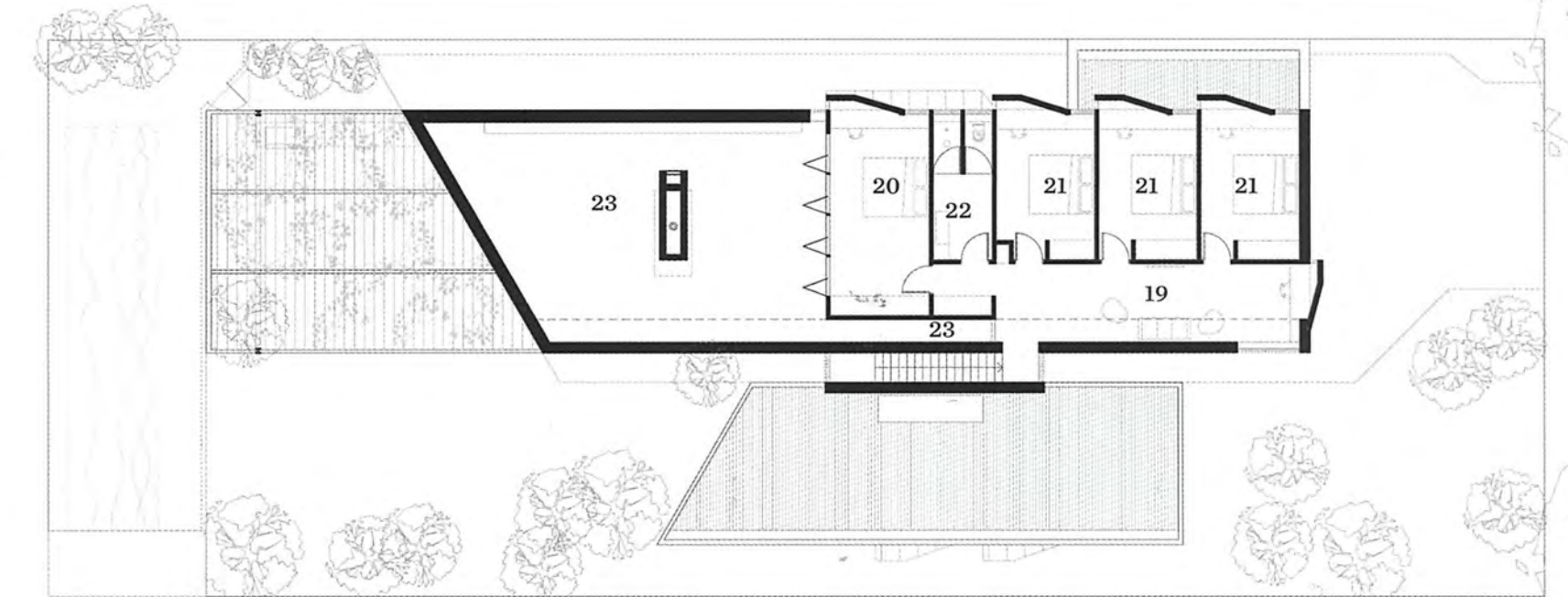
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#### FLOOR PLANS

- 1 Entry
- 2 Master bed
- 3 Robe
- 4 Ensuite
- 5 Study
- 6 Family
- 7 Living
- 8 Dining
- 9 Kitchen
- 10 Pantry
- 11 Powder room
- 12 Laundry
- 13 Cellar below
- 14 Deck
- 15 Pool
- 16 Pool equipment
- 17 Garage
- 18 Store
- 19 Media
- 20 Guest room
- 21 Bedroom
- 22 Bathroom
- 23 Void



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

### KEY MATERIAL INFORMATION

- BATHROOM** Catalano from Rogerseller (sanitary ware), Tonic from Rogerseller (tapware), White rectified from Classic Ceramics (wall tiles), Waterslide from Rogerseller (shower rose)
- CARPET** Tufted level loop pile in Edwardstown from Reliance Carpets
- CLADDING** Corten pre-weathered steel from McKinna Sheetmetal
- COLUMNS** Black painted steel from Bluescope Steel
- DECKING** Spotted gum with Cabot's decking oil from Provans Timber and Hardware
- DOORS** Black matte powdercoated aluminium from Select Windows
- FLOORING** Polished concrete from Hansen Yunken
- JOINERY** Spotted gum veneer from Ideal Cabinets
- KITCHEN** Stone Italiana in Jaipur Pepper from Creative Stone (bench), Abey Oxygene from Rogerseller (mixer), stainless steel from McKinna Sheetmetal (splashback), Franke Undermount Kubus from Good Guys (sink)
- PAINT** Dulux Natural White from Z+G Burcil
- ROOF** Lysaght Klip-lok
- SHADING** Cedar battens from Tait Timber and Hardware
- WATER TANK** 20,000L underground spray-on concrete in situ tank by Warwick Constructions

### PROJECT TEAM AND DETAILS

- ARCHITECTS** Noxon Giffen
- STRUCTURAL ENGINEER** Simpson Design Associates
- BUILDER** Warwick Constructions
- HYDRAULICS** Steve Paul and Partners
- LIGHTING CONSULTANT** Lighting Design Partnership
- LANDSCAPE CONSULTANT** Craig Eldridge Design
- BUILDING SURVEYOR** Philip Chun & Associates
- DESIGN AND DOCUMENTATION** 18 months
- CONSTRUCTION** 14 months
- FLOOR AREA** 410sqm