

PROJECT N°

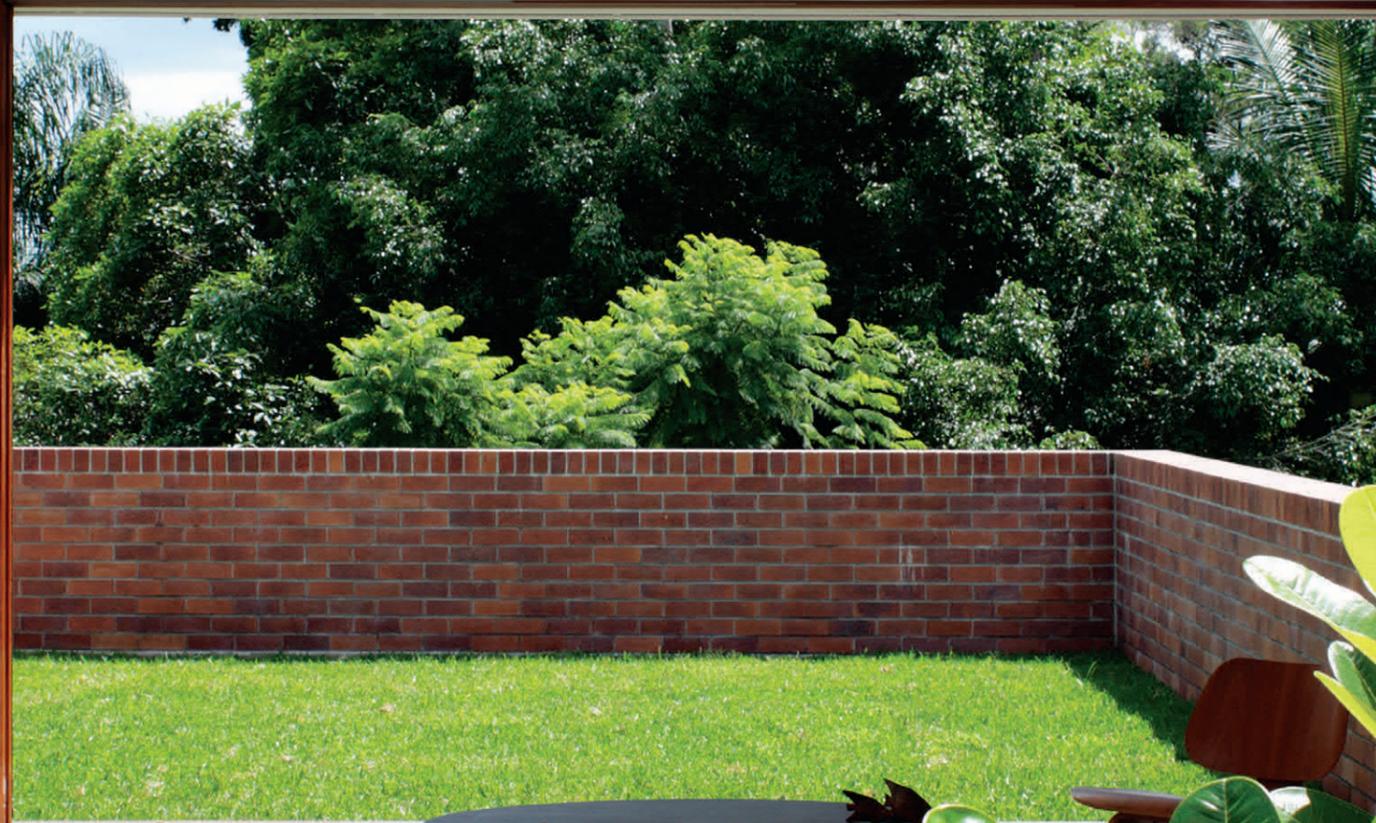
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Bardon
HOUSE
by James Russell
Architect

• BRISBANE, QLD •

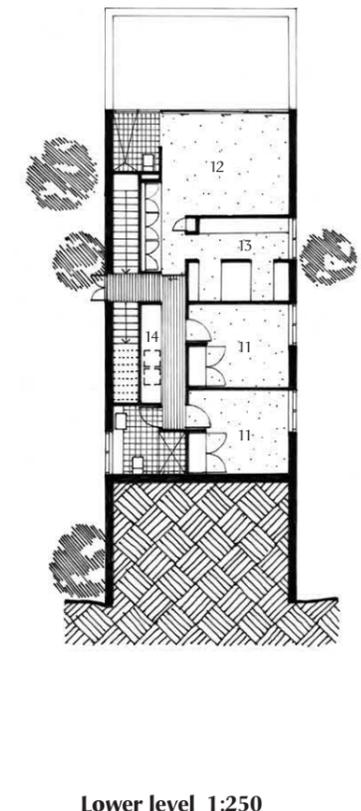
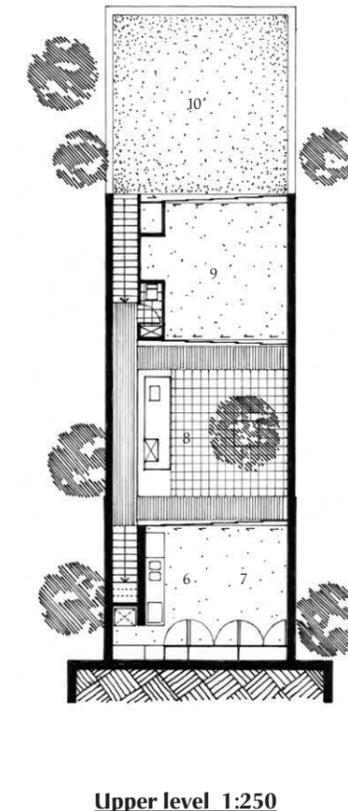
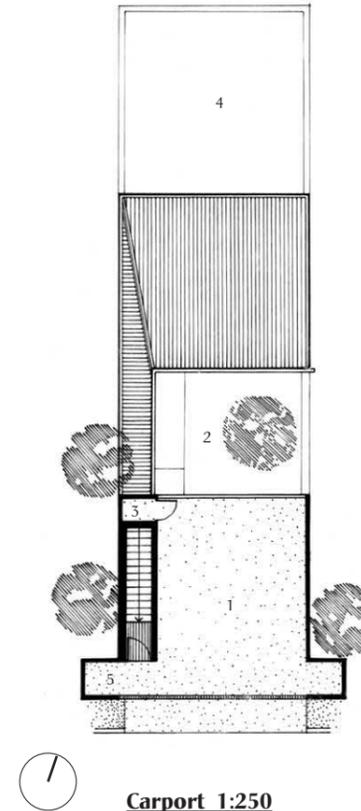
This new home strategically negotiates a steep site by creating a pleasing but workable journey from the roadside to the gully below.

Words by Margie Fraser
Photography by Jon Linkins





- 1 Carport
- 2 Courtyard below
- 3 Store
- 4 Lawn below
- 5 Entry
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Meals
- 8 Courtyard
- 9 Living
- 10 Lawn
- 11 Bedroom
- 12 Main bedroom
- 13 Walk-in robe
- 14 Laundry



It was a glorious winter day when architect James Russell arrived on this site for the first time. As is often the case in Brisbane's older suburbs, the block was steeply sloping. It was also covered in a scree of unenchanting scrub and overgrown grass. The 400 m² slice had been carved from the side of a neighbouring "Queenslander" and left to its own devices. The northern aspect was encouraging, but it was not until James scrambled up a tree that paradise was revealed.

"From up there, I could see all these magnificent trees in the gully below. The sun was catching their foliage – it was very exciting. With that, and the perfect northern aspect, it was pretty easy to see how the house could be organized."

Relieved of much of the familiar burden of "managing" a difficult site, James set to work to create a pleasing, workable journey from roadside to gully. The alternative option of elevating the house from street level to protrude over the slope was dismissed in favour of connection with the ground, while still enjoying the outlook. The gully is a council-owned park that runs down to a creek and a pedestrian walkway takes a winding route through it. More wild than manicured, and known only to the locals, it was begging to be borrowed as scenery for the house.

The house is composed of four trays of space that step down the hillside to the garden below. The first to be encountered is the open carport, level with the street. The only indication from the street that there is more on offer is an unimposing red door to one side, which could happily be mistaken for the opening to a storage cupboard. Whittling away at pretensions to grandeur is a James Russell trademark. In the sharpening process, an elegant restraint prevails. The back wall of the carport is slashed with a long slot window that frames a band of the green canopy, pre-empting much larger frames to follow.

A long stair on the western edge of the house links street to ground. Devised as a partially enclosed passage, the knockabout, hose-out laneway can cope with the wet or muddy feet of gardeners and pool loungers (the pool is yet to come) and occasional washings from big storms.

James recalls that early discussions with his client focused on a series of living and entertaining spaces linked by an outdoor journey. "Rather than having a long journey with a squashy corridor opening, finally, to the backyard, here the sequence is shorter and broken into parts."

The first arrival point is a sun-drenched (or moonlight-drenched) courtyard. This walled space was originally intended as a green zone

bifurcating the living room to the north and the kitchen to the south. Vanessa decided paving it was more conducive to gatherings than a planted plot. A brick preparation bench replete with barbecue and sink is its hearth, and a frangipani tree on the side will provide shade in the future. The space is used year-round for dining and lounging. During downpours, diners and chefs can retreat into the kitchen, a cave-like space tucked under the carport. On the other side of the court, the living room opens onto a rectangle of lawn enclosed by a brick parapet. The view to the trees and sky from this outer ledge is the most open of all the views gained from the different levels and rooms of the house, and induces an almost giddy effect. Handsome reverse veneer brick work is used on upper-level walls and encasements, meeting the requirements of local character codes that stipulate lightweight cladding. The lower levels use double brick. With its stretcher bond laying, the work once again captures a refinement born of, as James puts it, "not trying to be tricky."

The next tray in the descent houses bedrooms, bathrooms and a laundry. The main bedroom enjoys a dress circle position. With glazed doors pushed to one side, the room is separated from the sky only by a metal balustrade. A bathroom on the edge enjoys a full panorama

01 The living room on the upper level opens onto a rectangle of lawn enclosed by a brick parapet.

02 The kitchen spills out into a protected, paved courtyard space.

of the canopy, with a nonchalance about privacy that many would find disconcerting. Two other bedrooms make the house suitable for share house tenants or families alike. A possible fourth bedroom could be found in what is currently Vanessa's expansive walk-in robe – a personal luxury in an otherwise modest rationing of space. The bedroom floors are unadulterated and undressed structural concrete. The corridors and landing leading to them are slatted timber, and thus serve as wet areas. Villaboard walls allow for the wet treatment. An "Italian clothesline," as James describes it, is suspended outside the landing. Some metres above ground, it is accessed through closeable casements and operated by pullies.

The final descent is to the garden. Inhabited, for now, by a water tank and weeds, the area will one day host a pool, garden and gateway to the gully walkway and creek. It's a journey worth making. 

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03 The house is composed of a series of framed views that are experienced as you move through the spaces.

04 At the street level only the carport is seen, with the slot window framing the greenery beyond.

05 The main bedroom features glazed doors that can be pushed to one side to allow the full wall to open to the elements.

Architect

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Practice profile

A small practice focusing on residential projects suited to the climate in Queensland – whereby the occupant is encouraged to embrace the environment and surrounding conditions.

Project team

James Russell, Patrick Ozmin

Builder

A Briz Builder

Consultants

Engineer: AD Structure

Products

Roofing: Zinalume metal roof decking; concrete with membrane system, drainage cell, soil and grass

Internal walls: PGH bricks; Hardies fibrecement sheeting, painted white; formed concrete ceilings

Windows:

Allkind Joinery timber-framed windows, painted white

Doors: Allkind Joinery hardwood doors, painted

Flooring: Structural concrete, sealed

Kitchen: Spotted gum veneer on joinery, 2-pac polyurethane finish; Ilve Quadra Modular ss bench

Bathroom: Hansa fittings; 200 x 100 mm and 20 x 20 mm white ceramic tiles

External elements: Ironbark decking with oiled finish

Floor area

300 m² including covered outdoor areas

Time schedule

Design, documentation: 9 months

Construction: 9 months