

KESTERSON

BY BUNSTON

Previously owned by Victorian Architect Allan Powell; this building was known as the office of Powell & Glenn Architects. Our project brief was not to add amenity but rather to convert a former office into a family home.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians, the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation, carers of the Lands, Waters and Skies on which this project sits. We Recognise First Nations Peoples ongoing connection and caring to Country and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and emerging.

TEAM

Architect – BUNSTON
Builder – Barkers Burke Construction
Photographer (Existing Conditions) – Angus Brown
Photographer (Completed Construction) – Tasha Tylee
Stylist – Millie Morton
Joiner – Fenn Interiors
Metal Fabricator – SteelScale
Structural Engineer – Maurice Farrugia & Associates
Landscape – Core Pave
Stone Mason – Breccia

SITE

Bunurong Land
St Kilda, Victoria

TIME

Design: 2021- 2022
Construction: 2022-2023

CONTEXT

It's suspected that the original house was built in 1875, when architect Simon Smith called for tenders from plasterers, plumbers and bell hangers to complete work on behalf of Mr William Kesterson. Kesterson owned several properties in the area including the Prince of Wales Hotel. After Kesterson died in 1879 his will was contested for the next 50 years. According to his will his properties could not be sold until the death of his last daughter which occurred in 1929. Thus, between 1875 & the mid-1930 the house was managed and tenanted by Kesterson's executors. The house hosted an array of colourful tenants over this period; one of the more interesting tenants in the 1880s and 1890s was actor George Richard of Ireland (1834-1913). George Richard was known for acting alongside George Coppin & J C Williamson.

In 1982 the house was purchased by architect Allan Powell and soon became the robust & busy offices of Powell & Glenn Architects. Allan over this period lived next door, in Crigan house which he designed and built. When our clients purchased the house in 2020, they bought with the intention of minor renovations to convert the former office into a home by the bay.

CLIENT

“SOLD!”

December 12th 2020.

Standing on the curbside making the final bid, it had all seemed so clear... all we needed was an upstairs bathroom, a kitchen and some cupboards – we can do this!

And so began our maiden voyage into home renovations.

Six months later, having engaged the services of an interior designer who convinced us she was the person to transform the former office building into a home, it soon became obvious that we needed more technical expertise.

How do you choose an architect when you know so little about their world? We contacted a few who duly came to the house and enthusiastically waved their arms around suggesting, “This wall could come down,” and “we could move this doorway a few metres,” it was all rather intimidating. Fortunately, some friends came to the rescue and suggested we chat with Zac, a young, up-and-coming architect.

At our first meeting with Zac, in August 2021, he was keen, considered, and realistic. He listened to our vision and laid out a plan of attack. First things first, get some accurate room measurements, followed by some draft plans.

This was the start of what was to be a very successful and harmonious project. Zac put us in contact with the builder, whom he suggested would suit both the house and us, and he was right. Zac ‘being right’ was true in most instances. That’s not to say we didn’t push back on some of his ideas, but he had a clear vision for what could be achieved and the patience and tenacity to see it through.

We moved out of the house in March 2023 and moved back in December 2023. What was achieved in those nine months was truly incredible. Yes, we got a kitchen, an upstairs bathroom, and some cupboards, but we got so much more! Due to the age of the property, we discovered we needed to completely rewire it, replace the slate roof and upgrade the plumbing. The back of the house was knocked down and rebuilt (with the same bricks) to a slightly larger footprint, allowing for a much better use of space and the inclusion of contemporary design elements, such as elegant, sliding steel doors opening onto our courtyard garden and an extensive skylight bridging the gap between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ parts of the house.

There were days when decisions on what finishes to choose were overwhelming. Indeed, there were several times when we second-guessed them and on the odd occasion might have over-reacted when seeing something installed and it not matching the image we’d had of it in the showroom. Through it all, we were grateful to Zac for calmly guiding us through the process and reminding us, “Not to judge an unfinished picture,” and “To trust the process.”

Our house is now definitely a home - our sanctuary, we love it and our friends who visit love it too. Few can believe what was achieved in such a short time, and that is a testament to the hard work, vision and dedication of the team who led the transformation.

Ken & Ros Muir

ARCHITECT

On reflection, this has been an incredible introduction into what modernist architect (friend and mentor) Peter McIntyre would label as a ‘life of Architecture’. The project demanded almost daily discussions and weekly visits; each was seen as an opportunity to make the project better, tailoring the detail to our clients needs. From the project have come many lessons and relationships that I will treasure for the rest of my life. The clients, the builder and some of the trades people have since become lifelong friends. I am incredibly grateful for our trusting clients and the dedicated craftsmanship shown by Robin and team.

Zac Bunston

ARBV Registered Architect

BUILDER

As a builder, I prefer to visit a potential job in person before committing to the tender. On first impression, I was struck by the beautiful old Victorian building; the thought of creating a new story within was exciting. Although the project posed a list of challenges, such as restricted access and limited parking the potential to restore and create new functional spaces presented a worthy task. I embraced the challenge of executing BUNSTON’s designs regardless of how difficult they sometimes appeared. I am driven by client satisfaction and always strive to achieve the best outcome regardless of how challenging this can be. I am proud to have left my footprint on this amazing heritage home and hope that it is enjoyed for many more years to come.

Robin Riotto,

Registered Master Builder

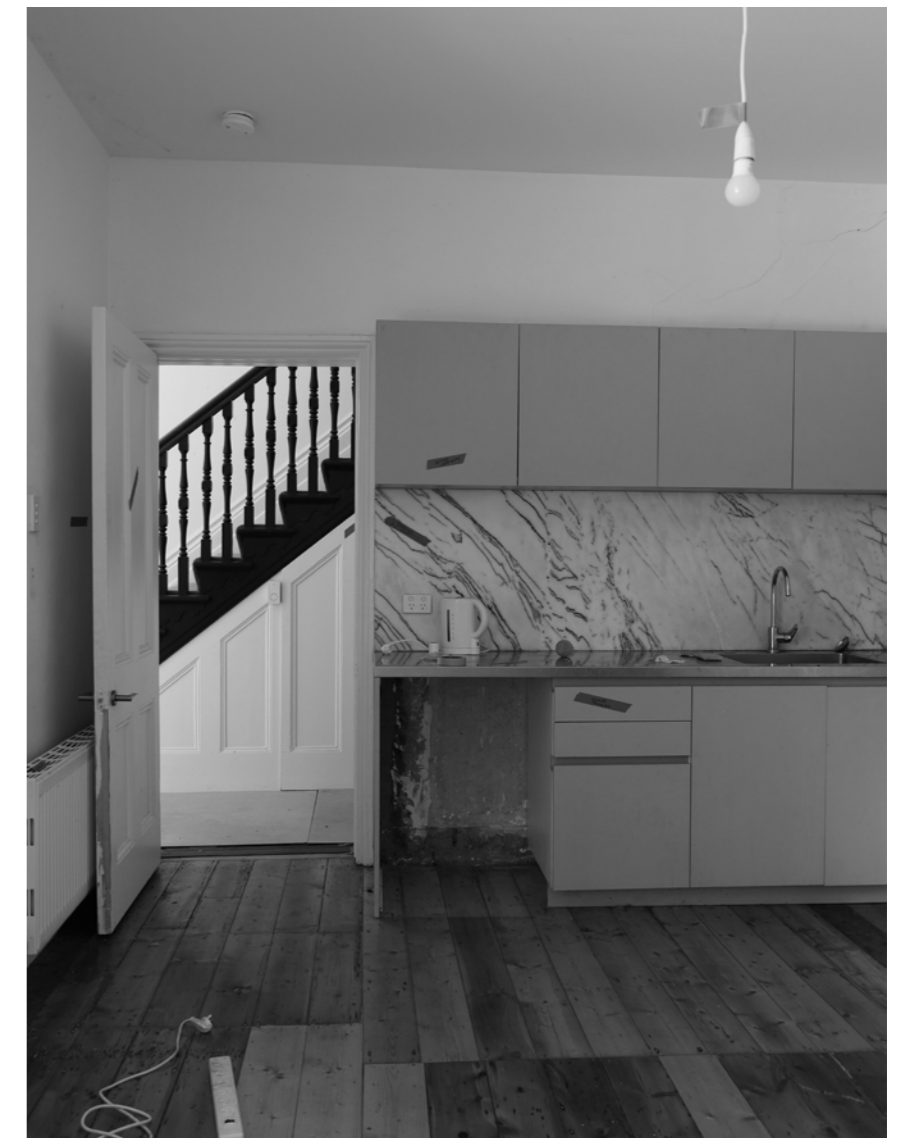
The non-original rear addition was demolished; from the demolished walls each brick was cleaned stacked and re-laid without leaving the site. The project team shared a vision to salvage the existing fabric wherever possible. Throughout the build hidden gems and quirks revealed themselves, we saw these as opportunities to acknowledge the building's past whilst facilitating a new direction.



There was an assortment of pokey, south-facing rooms all of which appeared 'worked in'; the living was less noticeable. Prior to construction commencing we attended our client's annual mince pie Christmas celebrations. It was fascinating to see the house in this setting; observing the guests navigating between these spaces. The house was far from ideal for entertaining, but our clients made it work. We were excited at the realisation that the following year, the mince pies would be served in a new setting.

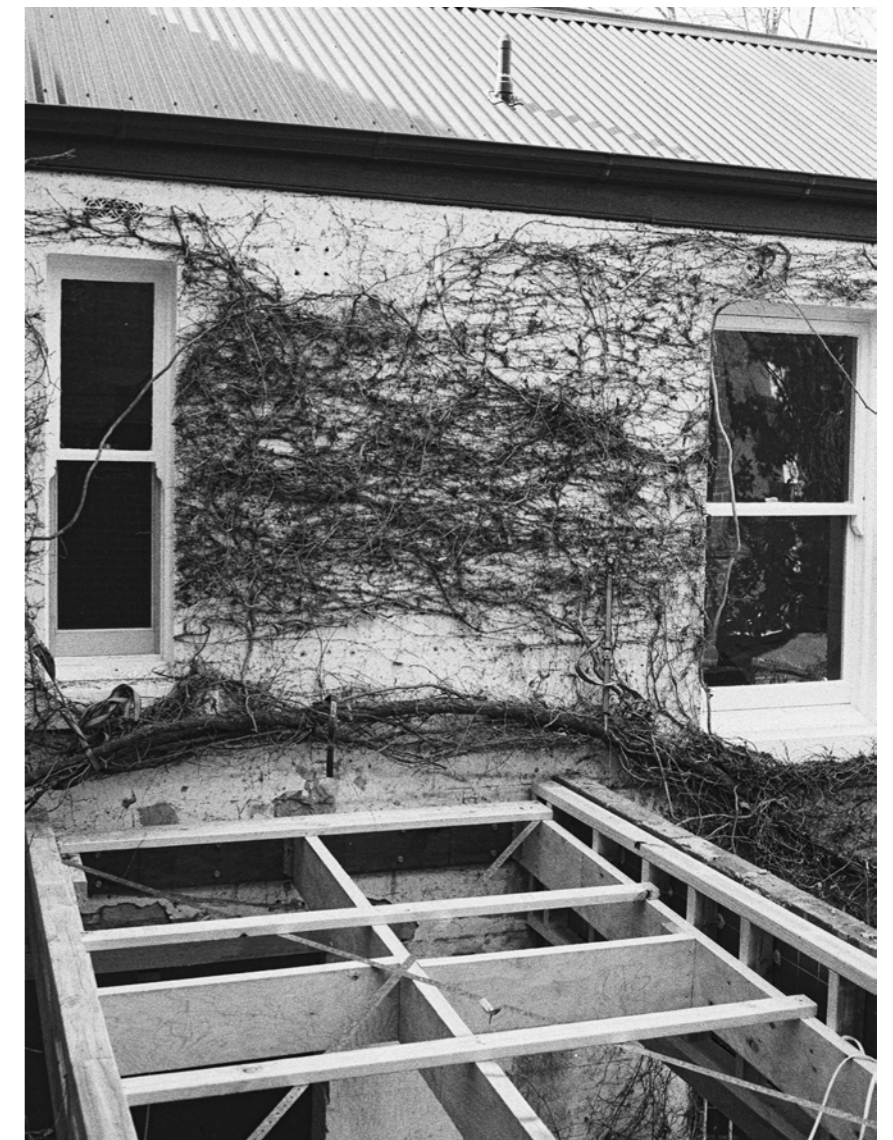


Pictured, depicts the previous staff kitchen. When we first visited the house, our clients were using Bunnings racks as a pantry and a fridge sat in the middle of the room. The benchtop and mixer as pictured were salvaged and reused in the new laundry. Our plans relocated the kitchen into the centre of the house and the previous staff kitchen became a detached dining room centred around an existing fireplace.





One of our client's initial attractions to the property was the Boston ivy – the rear façade is covered. During construction, we went to great lengths to preserve and protect its root source. This photo describes the only built junction between the new and old. The parapet's height is defined by the vine body. The new and old are linked by a glass roof. From below we experience this junction; the new and old, perhaps joined by the ivy.





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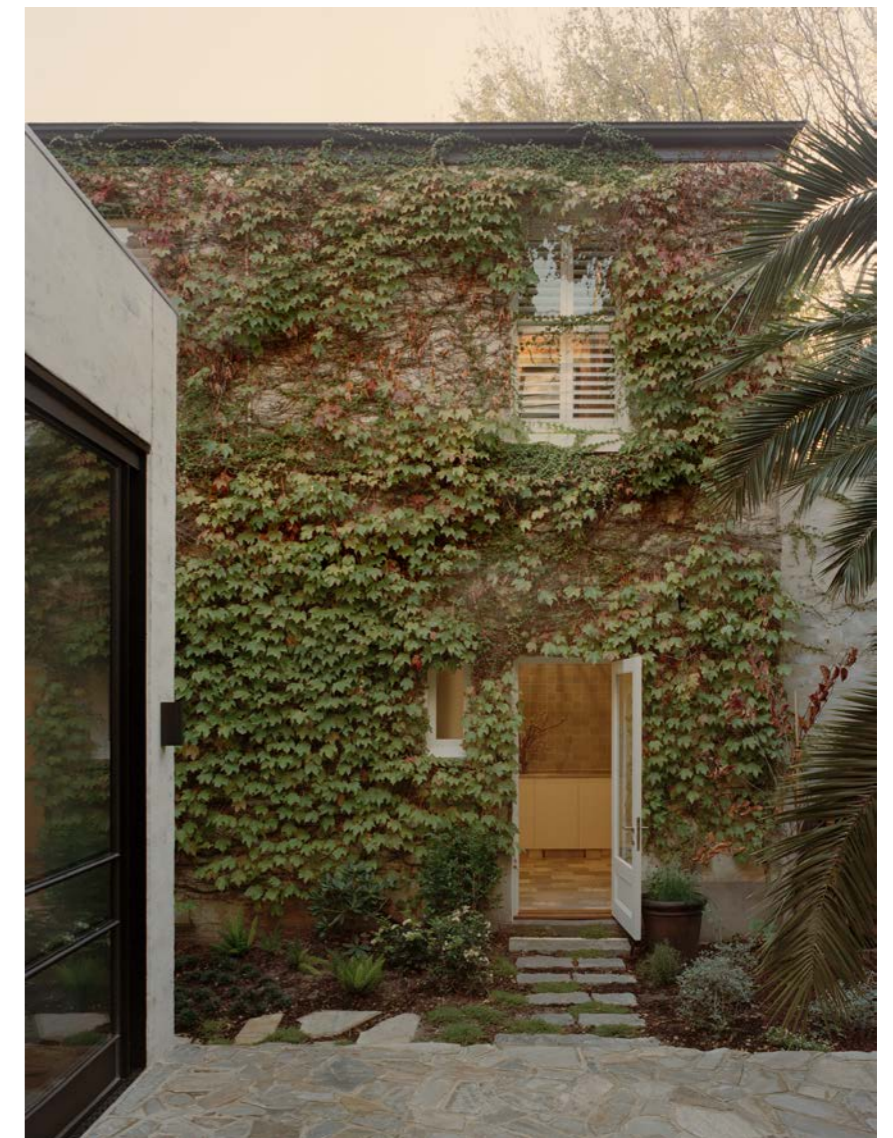




During construction, the existing roof revealed its problematic leaks and the scope of the building works grew to include an entirely new slate roof, the refurbishment of both chimneys and a re-rendering of the façade. All restoration works were done in accordance with Heritage Victoria guidelines and ensured the preservation of the significant building. The street frontage is particularly unique with Powell's 'Crigan House' to the left and the Valma, an art deco block of flats to the right. During construction, we became aware of the St Kilda Heritage walking tour, which occurs every Wednesday. The tour highlights these three properties and was another reminder of our project's historical significance.

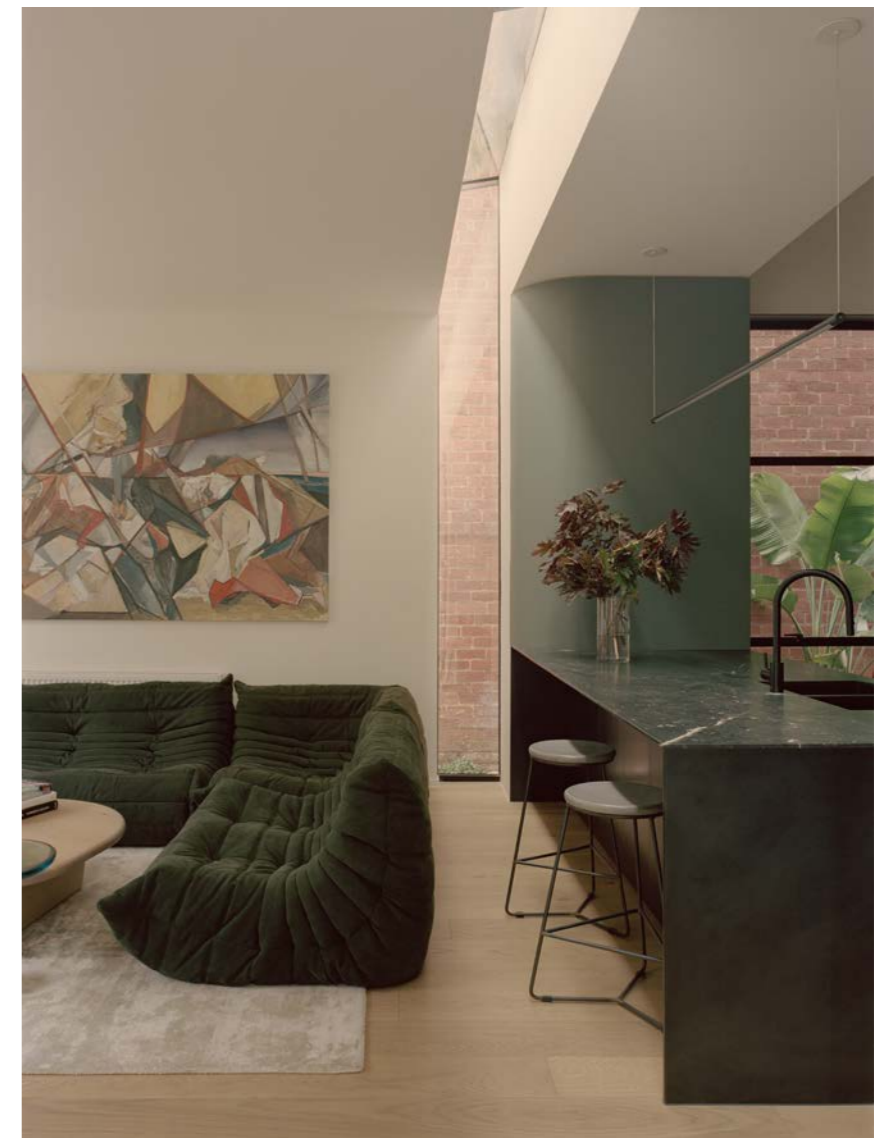


We reused the bricks and predominately maintained the existing footprint whilst reinterpreting the non-original 'lean-to'. The living is arranged around a central garden which is experienced upon entry and throughout spaces within the house. As the old accepts the new, the new will become less prominent, and we envision the newly built walls will soon be covered in ivy. We hope that the house will be 'better' with age, 'better with the ivy'.





(1) ANGUS WHITE - BOAT PARTY (AFTER MEDUSA)
(2) ANGUS WHITE - BUST
(3) JOHN WALLER - 19 ACRES





The link between the old and new is perhaps the most important element of the alterations. A combination of our client's appreciation of the ivy and the design challenge of a south-facing backyard brewed the glass link. We envisioned our clients, perched at the island reading the paper with the light from above. On reflection it's difficult to imagine the project without this link and without the light - the feeling would be completely different.



(1) ANGUS WHITE - BOAT PARTY (AFTER MEDUSA)
(2) ADAM STONE - FLOWER NO.3 2020
(3) CASEY JEFFERY - YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE (KILSYTH) 2019



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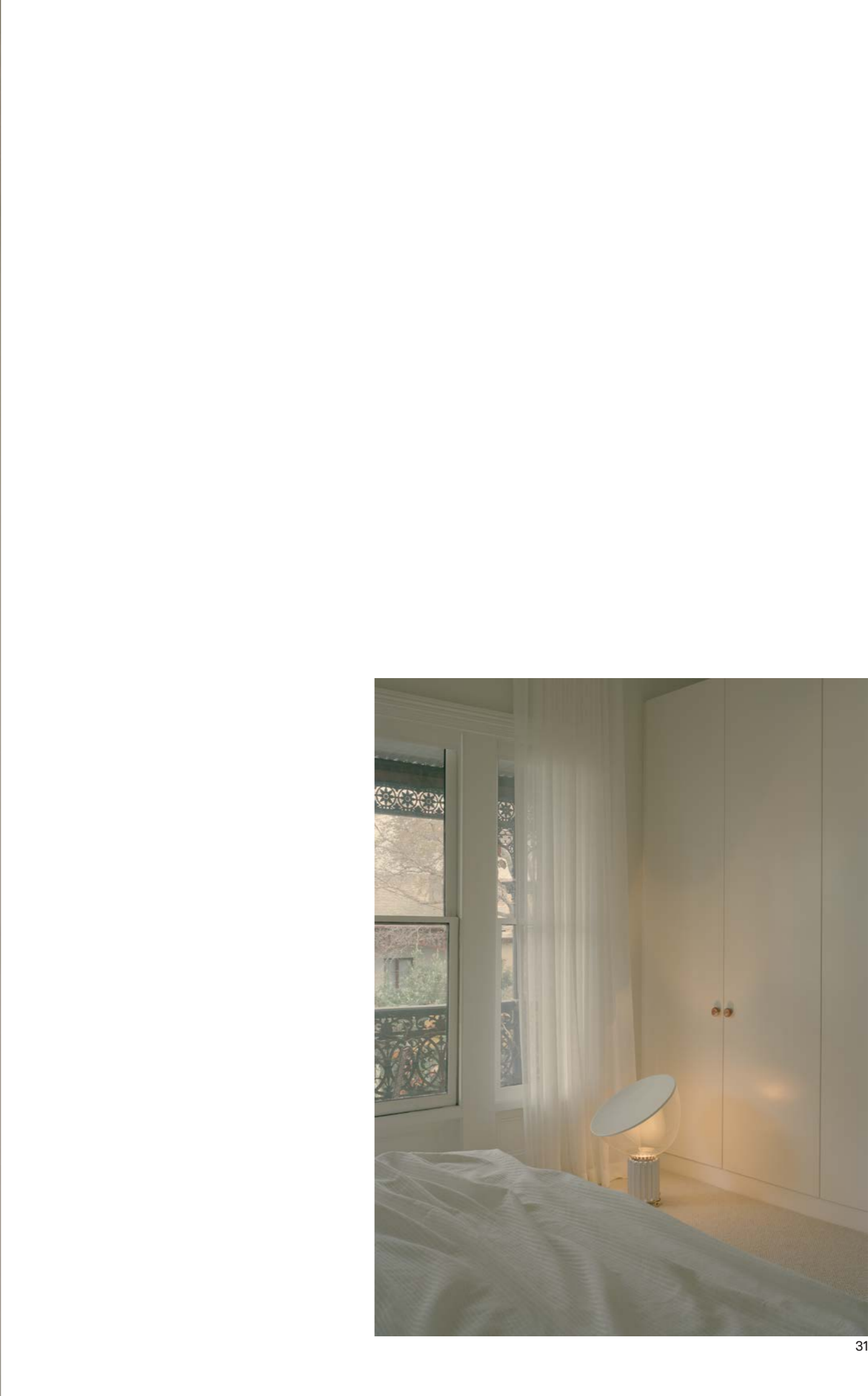


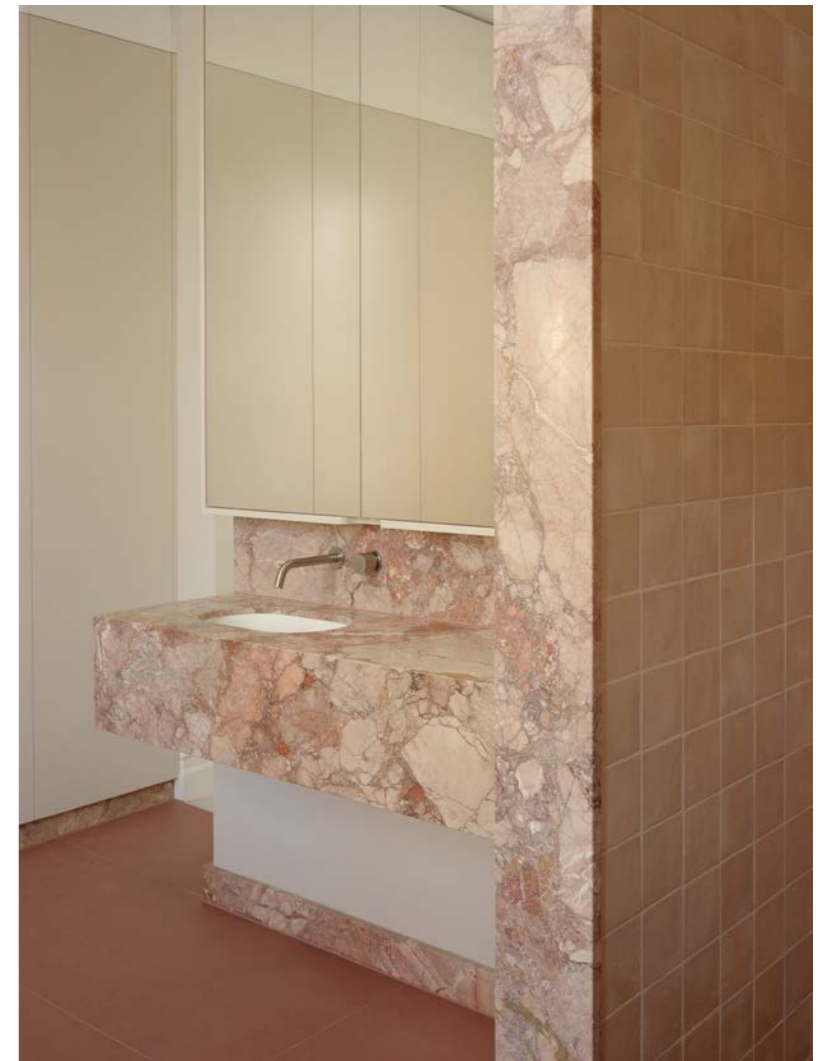


Throughout the house are elements of surprise. The kitchen internals are lined in an unexpected orange and with the same brush a ladder offers access to overhead storage. The 'Harry Potter' cloak room consists of design elements never to be seen together. Scottish tartan represents our clients CLAN, the mirror is also sourced from our client's hometown. Our clients' selections are what makes this project unique, it's the quirks in the house and it's the personality in the architecture.









BUNSTON