

# BACK TO

RATHER THAN DESTROYING ALL TRACES OF THE ORIGINAL HOME, THE 1960S PLANS OF THIS SYDNEY HOUSE WERE ADAPTED AND LITERALLY FLIPPED. THE RESULT IS A STRIKING BLEND OF RETRO FLAIR AND CONTEMPORARY COMFORT

# THE FUTURE

ARCHITECT *Marsh Cashman Koolloos Architects* WRITER *Nicole Thomas* PHOTOGRAPHER *Willem Rethmeier*





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alking up the winding garden path that weaves to Flipped House, that famous line from *The Wizard of Oz* automatically comes to mind: “Toto, I have a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore”. Statuesque echia leer over the epic Sydney view, shrubs swirl like mini vortexes – the garden’s eccentricity and lack of self-consciousness is decidedly un-Sydney. This contrast between the abstract garden and view of the ever-conservative Sydney CBD hint at the complementary tensions within Marsh Cashman Koolloos’ Flipped House, as it sits comfortably between 1960s chic and contemporary ease.

A respect for the original 1960s house held by both architect and client alike placed this retro element into the mix. Breeze blocks line the southern perimeter of the house, solid wood joinery hints at an era of bespoke craftsmanship, while sandstone walls are positioned in their unshamed retro glory. While this may seem at odds with MCK’s definitively seamless aesthetic, the two sit harmoniously side by side. “That’s the interesting result of this house; there’s this ambiguity that begs the question, ‘is this the

original or is it not?” says project architect, Steve Koolloos. Looking at a glass mosaic light that has been embedded in the dark timber dividing wall between the informal living room and kitchen, Koolloos says, “There are a lot of little quirky elements you find in these houses and that [the mosaic] was one worth keeping. It just reminds us of an era where things were done very differently and architects had both the ability and the luxury to do things like this.” This connectedness is also clear in the children’s upstairs bathroom where small, round tiles cover the floor and travel up the wall (in MCK’s seamless way). They are then accented by a sudden pop of colour in the form of a tiled feature wall made up of myriad greens. Koolloos confesses, “I’m not into feature walls for the sake of feature walls, but for this house it works.”

The 1960s loosen their grip ever so slightly as you head to the rear of the house and upstairs, but there are still heady modernist motifs like the strong linearity of the spaces and integration of inside and outside that are especially sympathetic to the Sydney climate.

#### PROJECT DETAILS

**ARCHITECTS:** Marsh Cashman Koolloos Architects  
**ARCHITECTURAL TEAM:** Steve Koolloos, Mark Cashman, Judith Dechert, Rowena Marsh  
**BUILDER:** JBC Constructions  
**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Paradisus  
**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Northrop  
**QUANTITY SURVEYOR:** QS Plus  
**JOINERY:** Pullicino + Son  
**PLANNING CONSULTANT:** Mersonn  
**CERTIFIER:** Anthony Protas Consulting  
**POOL CONSULTANT:** Pride Pools  
**SURVEYOR:** Eric Scerri + Associates  
**DESIGN AND DOCUMENTATION:** 12 months  
**CONSTRUCTION:** 18 months  
**FLOOR AREA:** 416m<sup>2</sup>  
**BATHROOM:** Vaio Duo bathtub, Hansgrohe Raindance Air shower and fittings from Reece  
**EXTERIOR:** Split-faced sandstone and fibre cement walls, Western Red Cedar cladding boards  
**FLOORING:** Blackbutt Timber, NZ wool carpet from Carpet Forum  
**KITCHEN:** Off-form concrete bench from Stoneart, solid Tallwood and American Walnut timber veneer cabinet doors from Pullicino + Son, glazed ceramic splashback tiles from Onsite Tiles

#### Architect’s statement

*A 1960s house has been replaced and carefully reflected with a contemporary interpretation of itself. The original plan was adapted and literally ‘flipped’ to create a more expansive connection from the core of the home (the kitchen) to both the exterior gardens and to the upstairs level. Conceptually, and despite the house being fully re-built, the existing masonry blocks were shifted around the site to better accommodate the client’s brief for generous internal views to a luscious rear garden. Despite its urban setting, the rear garden affords the house to feel as remote as a house in the middle of nowhere.*

*The kitchen space faces and opens completely to an adjacent outdoor living space that is both covered and open to the elements. A series of oversized timber sliding doors separate the space from the entry and house a stair that appears to have been carved from a one solid chunk of timber. A generous internal concrete island bench creates a visual dialogue with the textured concrete retaining wall to the exterior. Both concrete elements incorporate curved design based on pure geometry and aid in softening the rectilinear nature of the surrounding floating timber objects.*

*The space benefits primarily from the morning light yet receives generous natural light throughout the day through a series of highlight windows positioned above the double height void of the kitchen. This void also allows the views through the double height glazing to be shared from both the ground floor and the first floor circulation gallery space above.*

*References back to the 1960s house are subtle but enough to remind the user of what once was, including some genuine 60s light shades, handmade patterned splashback tiles, general use of timber and concrete and the furnishings.*

STEVE KOOLLOOS

**ABOVE:** White sandstone walls are a nod to the 1960s house and solid wood joinery hints at an era of bespoke joinery. **LEFT:** Respect for the original house is shown through subtle references such as the general use of timber and pops of colour seen in mosaic tiling.



**ABOVE:** The kitchen opens to a luscious tropical garden which is a welcome surprise in the urban setting. **RIGHT:** The discreet curve of the concrete kitchen island bench faces the concrete barriers that form the curving pathway through the garden.

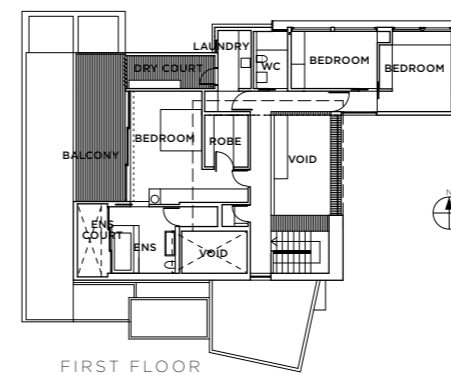
The concrete kitchen island situated in the centre of this rear space has a discreet curve which serves to offset the linearity of the space, and also provides a visual link to the serpentine concrete barriers that guide you through the back garden. Bar this curve in the island, a plethora of horizontal lines invade the space and act as the perfect foil for the sinuous and wild back garden. This play of lines and sharp shadow creates meta-zones in the kitchen/dining area, lessening the sense of sprawl and making it feel more homely and enclosed while keeping it drenched in natural light. The large open sliding doors that work with the void to create the main source of light interconnect the garden with the interior space, while a speckle of retro tiles on the splashback and chunky timber joinery capitalise on the omnipresent 60s vibe.

The timber that is used throughout, on both facade and interior is especially interesting as it appears to be used inversely. On the exterior the timber is light, melding into the house sympathetically. On the interior it is far more imposing. The entrance and kitchen joinery in particular appear as if they were constructed from one large timber

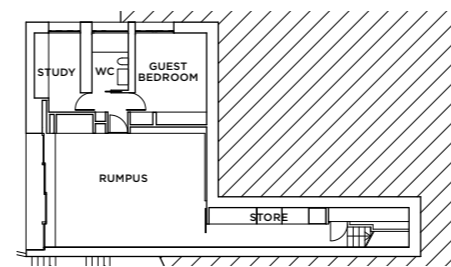
block which was whittled away at to create these nooks and crannies. "This [powder room, stairwell] was all designed as one big block of timber that we wanted to start carving spaces and functions out of," says Koolloos. The combination of this thoughtful use of timber which sits parallel to the breeze blocks is a chic and cheeky welcome to the home.

One of the more charming aspects of Flipped House is this lack of self-consciousness. There are thoughtful and striking design ambitions and philosophies prevalent throughout, but it lacks the showiness of most eastern Sydney residences. Yes, it does have the stunning view, but as Koolloos points out, this has been used with modesty. "There was a constant dialogue between us and the clients as a reminder that not every room had to be about the view," Koolloos says.

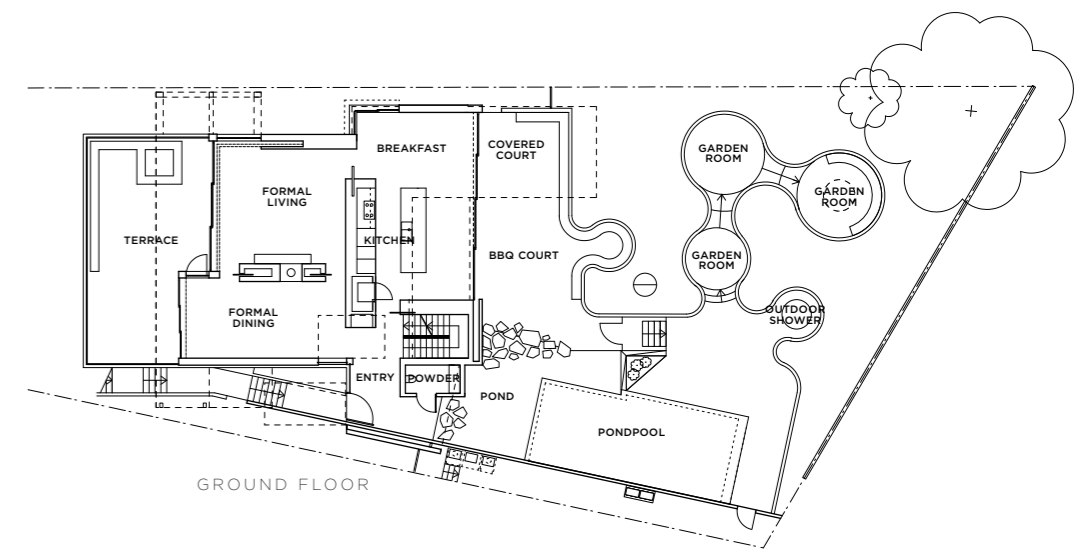
It is a striking home that cannot be boxed into a single design category – it is a bespoke home that speaks the language of both firm and client. So while it lacks the utter seamlessness of many MCK projects, Flipped House showcases the firm's delicate treatment of space – how to anchor and elevate it accordingly – and their versatility in their craft. **M**



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