

VISION



New Kid On The Block

The Block 2014

Albert Park, Melbourne

Viridian
New World Glass

APRIL 28 TO AUGUST 28 2014

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2014

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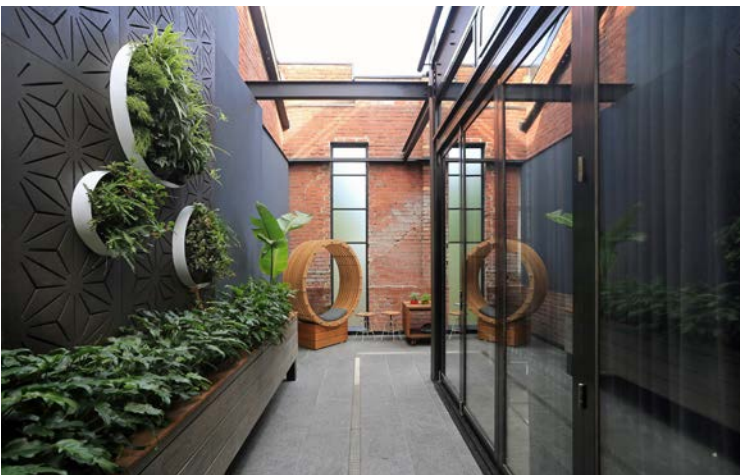
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New Kid On The Block

Viridian's contribution to the reality television hit show, The Block, highlights a capacity to deliver state-of-the-art glass and frames.

04





NEWKID THE



CORE PRODUCTS



ENERGY



NOISE



CLEAR VISION



DECORATIVE



BUSHFIRE



STRUCTURAL



STORM



SECURITY



TESTING DEADLINES AND CONDITIONS COULD HAVE QUICKLY BROUGHT THE 2014 SEASON OF THE BLOCK UNSTUCK, BUT INTENSIVE, BEHIND-THE-SCENES PLANNING, PREMIUM MATERIALS AND BOLD, CALCULATED RISK-TAKING PRODUCED RECORD-BREAKING RESULTS.

The Block 2014
47 O'Grady St. Albert Park, Melbourne

Principal glazing resource:
Viridian ThermoTech™ E IGUs

Architecture:
Julian Brenchley, Brenchley Architects

Photography:
Peter and Jennifer Hyatt

Text:
Peter Hyatt

Television's reality hit series The Block has stormed ratings since its launch in 2003. Critics who predicted a short stay for the renovation series have had to look for a better crystal ball. Eleven years and almost 300 programs later, the program is broadcast from Iceland to Ireland and syndicated to the UK, Israel and the Netherlands amongst others.

Deadline and budget drove contestants – often to breaking point and ultimately triumph, under reality television's magnifying glass. The 2014 series featured a crumbling brick warehouse in Melbourne's bayside Albert Park, purchased for \$5.85 million by Watercress Productions.

While the former silent movie theatre and Mushroom Records headquarter's had badly deteriorated and posed its own set of problems, the bayside location proved irresistible. The Block's Executive Producers Julian Cress and David Barbour, led by series architect Julian Brenchley recognised virtue rather than vice and decided on the investment.

As a new program sponsor, Viridian offered in-depth technical and product support to ensure the property could achieve energy performance standards and deliver the all-important amenity required for its \$9.59 million sales result.

The result is four distinctly different apartments that cleverly absorb daylight and breeze into their core, courtesy of open planning and flexible window/wall openings. Within a stroll to the sea and close to the CBD, the apartments speak of an insouciant lifestyle.

Right

Restored fanlight windows in-filled with steel frames and Viridian's EnergyTech™ to front elevation.

THE 2014 SERIES FEATURED A CRUMBLING BRICK WAREHOUSE IN MELBOURNE'S BAYSIDE ALBERT PARK, PURCHASED FOR \$5.85 MILLION BY WATERCRESS PRODUCTIONS.



BRAD & DAL





South-east corner apartment expands to terrace.

The alignment of Viridian's technical support assisted the quite dazzling conversion to blue-chip apartments. Ensuring an alignment of some problematic stars, Julian Brenchley has a huge coordination role on each series from site selection to quality control. He spoke with Vision about his experiences on The Block.

What size is your practice?

There are just four of us. We're not big. Big can just mean more sleepless nights.

When did your involvement with The Block begin?

We consulted for the very first program in 2003. It's been incredibly successful for everyone involved and it's all credit to program management.

How did you react to the invitation to join the program?

It was a brilliant opportunity. After a week or so laughing and wondering about all of the potential mishaps and disasters we got stuck into it and it has been a great ride ever since.

Does your involvement since the program's beginning mean that it has become a way of life?

That's how it feels. It has been 10 years and I remember my son's first birthday. I was meant to be at his party but I found myself standing out the front of the very first Block in Bondi. My son now has a collection of hats from every series since, so he's grown to become a big fan too.

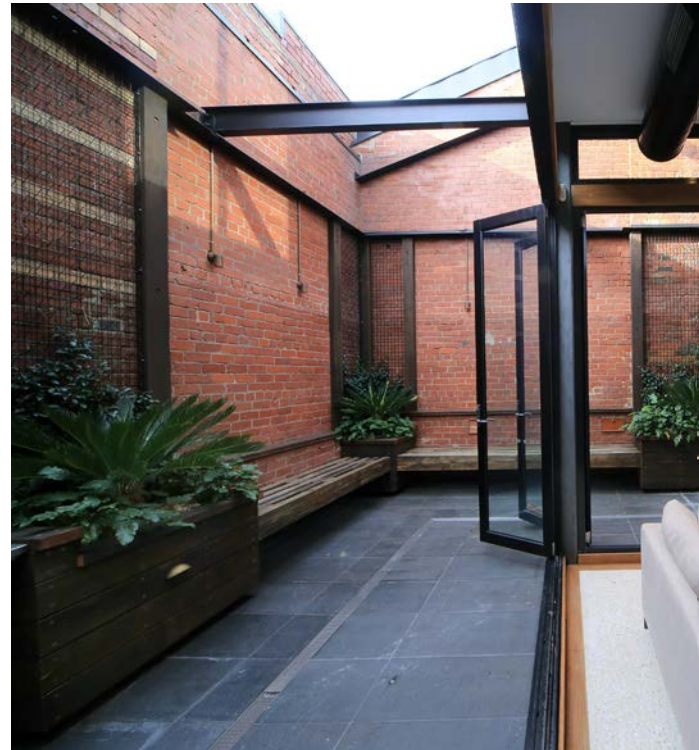
What keeps the show fresh for you?

While we don't have to reinvent the wheel with each property, we try to develop a distinctive look, feel and flavour for each series. The program format really considers what motivates people to raise their sights and aspire to better themselves.

When you began your involvement did you have any inkling as to where the program would go?

Not at all, but I had faith in the program's creators Julian Cress and David Barbour. It quickly captured the viewing public's imagination and I can't really give enough credit to Julian and David for the freshness of their idea that just swept everyone away.

Kitchen and entertaining areas flow seamlessly within confines of the old brick shell.





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AND WONDERING ABOUT ALL
OF THE POTENTIAL MISHAPS
AND DISASTERS WE GOT STUCK
INTO IT AND IT HAS BEEN A
GREAT RIDE EVER SINCE.

Julian Brenchley





Three levels of each apartment are accessed by spiral staircases large roof-top, individually tailored decks.

What was your first impression of 47 O'Grady St?

I thought it was a mess — a promising mess — beautiful outside and scrambled inside. It had always been a beautiful building and stood the test of time as the Dux Theatre for silent films. It became offices for Mushroom Records in the '80s and '90s and the result was quite shocking. It had become a rabbit warren of walls, out-of-level slabs and a higgledy-piggeldy mess.

What persuaded you to think otherwise?

I remember looking around upstairs and thinking that if we could remove ceilings and open it up, then it might be salvageable. It was about identifying a potential for size and scale. It turned out to be quite an exceptional opportunity.

How difficult is it to imagine the possibilities when you're confronted with what is barely more than a wreck?

That vision to see the potential in real estate is certainly a real part of what the team does. I had to stump up and demonstrate how we could make a building hang together, but the credit really belongs to the series creators Julian Cress and David Barbour who had that foresight to imagine such a program.

What is your role as architect on The Block?

I take a brief from the producers and research a range of suitable properties that will work best for the series. That will often involve short-listing properties for the network that aren't necessarily in the brief. Then there's the unseen work that involves acquiring planning permits and background legal approvals. I have to come up with the creative for the building's appearance as 'value insurance'. The completed project has to appear fantastic outside and absolutely immaculate on the inside.

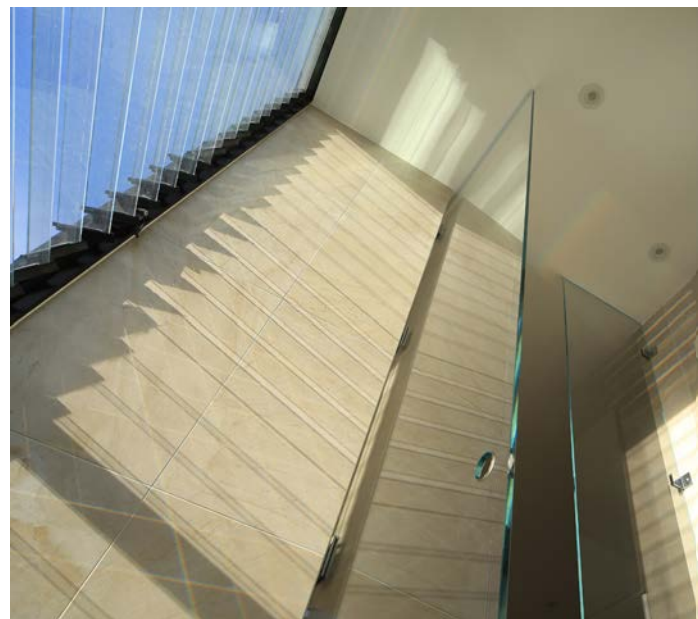


**Left and below**

Bedroom leads to external shower and en-suite.

Top floor, east-facing bedroom.

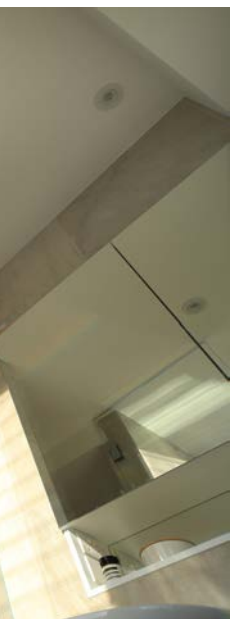




The New Kid On The Block

Left and below

A simple palette of glass, steel and stone structured as filleted, operable layers creates a sun-filled connection with outdoors.





Terrace view towards city. BBQ benchtop splash-back utilizes mirror glass to expand the experience of vista.



A modern rooftop terrace with a wooden table, chairs, and a large potted plant, overlooking a city skyline. The terrace features a dark metal pergola structure with horizontal slats. The railing is made of dark metal with horizontal bars. The floor is made of light-colored tiles. The sky is clear and blue. The city skyline in the background includes several tall buildings and a large classical-style building.

YAL & KARA





Left and above

Stackable doors create easy flow-through to courtyard and restored fanlight windows.

Can you describe your specific design role beyond project selection, permits and regulations on O'Grady St?

Essentially there are two major parts to this project that required my specific design work. There's the original brick shell we could re-use and that required among other things, new window frames and glazing. We utilized Viridian's services to ensure historic accuracy with the replacement framing that was largely rusted out. The new frames and windows feature performance glass. Behind this is a new secondary structure, or envelope, that includes stackable and sliding doors and windows that open into the various courtyards and rooftop terraces. That integrity and flexibility of the building envelope is really a large part of the architect's role, but after that it's pretty much up to the contestants.

Many viewers would be unaware of your guiding architectural hand. Your role is a relatively quiet one.

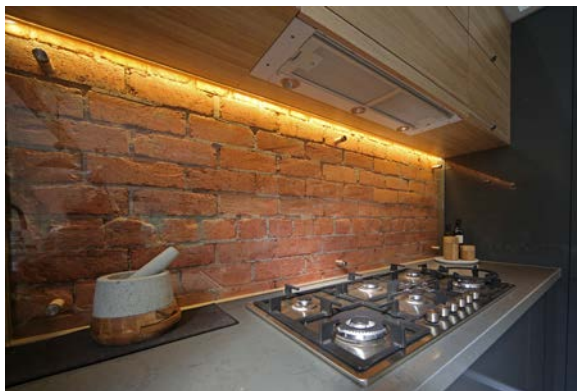
It isn't highlighted because it's not meant to be about me, or the architecture. The show's success grows out of the competition between contestants. It's their job to create the best spaces and finishes and my job is to ensure a property that is robust and flexible. Architecture's role is the value insurance once the properties are put up for sale. The series has to work at such lightning speed that planning permits have to be sorted months in advance before anything begins on site. We work six months out on each show.

It's an interesting reminder that beneath the surface there is some very hard paddling to bring such a series to our screens.

That's true and if there's a problem you just have to get there without falling over, or going over the cliff edge.

Is there a biggest single lesson from the whole experience?

Yes, that the notion of architecture as a solo pursuit is a myth. It's much more about teamwork. There isn't one stand-out person who makes these projects succeed, but teams of good and talented people who share similar goals and a drive to get projects off the ground.



Above

Flexible openings permits easy flow of breezes and sunlight.

Left

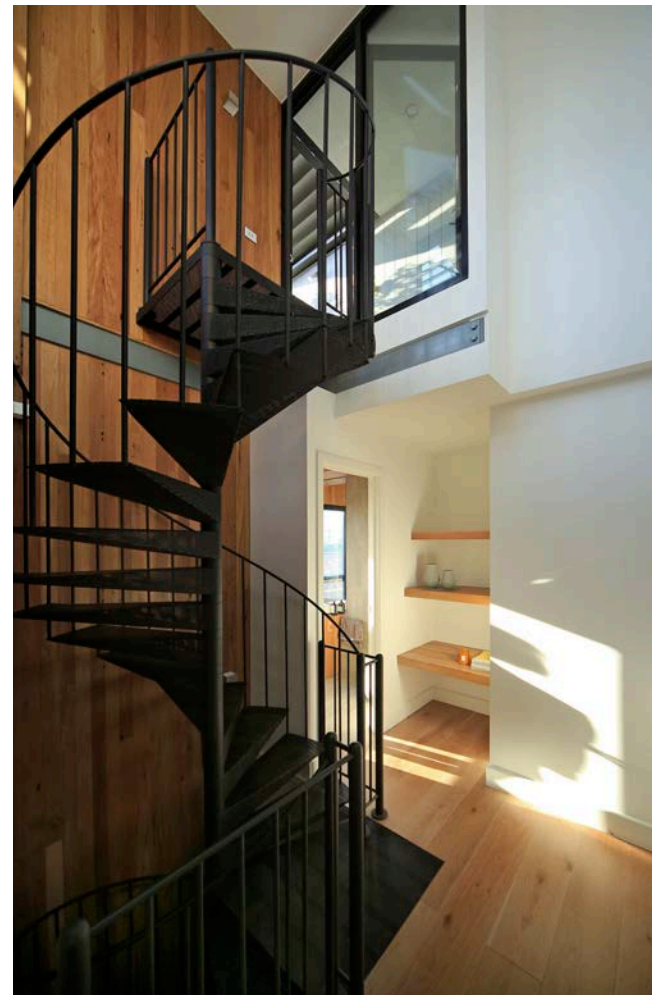
Clear glass kitchen splash-back for unobtrusive connection to old brickwork.

Right

Thin, silhouetted contour of spiral staircase connects three generous levels where daylight enters on the horizontal and vertical courtesy of assured glazing.

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, THE
INVOLVEMENT OF SPONSORS OPENS
UP A RANGE OF UNEXPECTED DESIGN
OPPORTUNITIES BASED AROUND
INNOVATIVE AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Julian Brenchley



How interactive/collaborative is the design process?

Once the overall elements are in place it's pretty well hands off by me. I'm not involved in the choice of taps or wallpaper but keeping contestants on the straight and narrow with building code compliance issues. That might seem a bit hum-drum but it's quite technical and needed to ensure that the units eventually sell.

What is the best, and the most testing, part of your role?

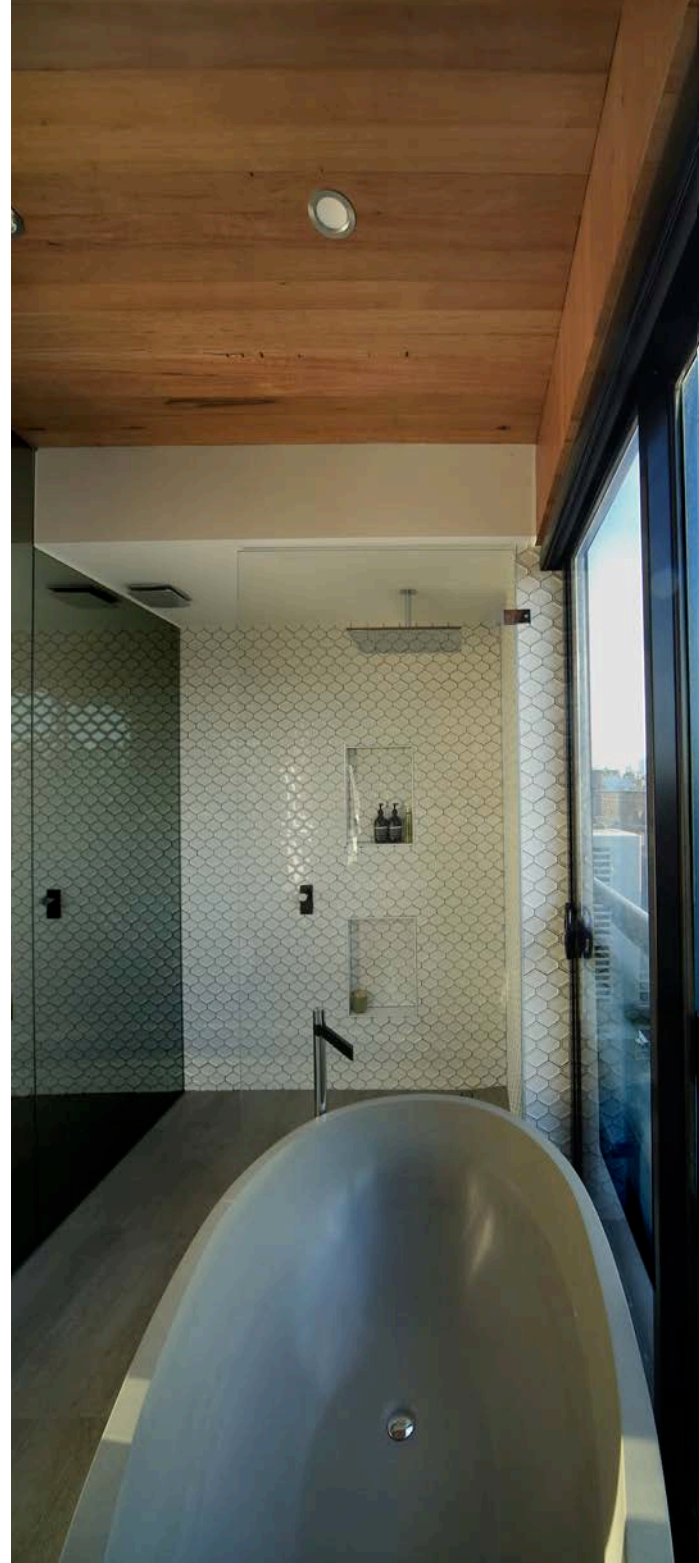
Because we work six months out, we tend to work with authorities who tend to have a different concept of time. The most stressful part for us is to get the ducks all in a row prior to the start of shooting. The show doesn't stop. It just rolls on and if we don't have planning permits in place then it can become unstuck very quickly, so it's about coping with some pretty testing time frames.

How important is the role of program sponsors?

Important in that it is about fit. We don't design by sponsor, we invite them to suit whatever we're trying to achieve. More often than not, the involvement of sponsors opens up a range of unexpected design opportunities based around innovative and new technologies. We were lucky enough to attract good sponsorship partners and they helped right across the range from glazing, to roof louvres and photo-electric cells for energy generation. One of our sponsors provided solar thermal air-conditioning. I've been morally opposed to air-conditioning for most of my life and that will continue, but this system essentially works as an off-set heat exchange using solar power and is exceptionally efficient.

Tell me about your experience of working with Viridian on the series?

There was a lot of analysis to arrive at the best looking performance package. We're definitely not talking any bog standard glass. We wanted double-glazing without thermally broken seals and where appropriate, laminated or toughened glass and maintain thermal properties.





Left
Glazing expands otherwise tight spaces.

Below
Mirrored wardrobes of east facing bedroom.





The New Kid On The Block

**Left and above**

The key elements of sunlight and views are lifted by openable windows and expression of textural grain.

Vertical garden and sculptural elements are mirrored in stackable doors.



ALISA



& LYSANDRA

Weren't you always going to have to deal with the issues that come with such a creaky, structurally compromised building?

The greatest problem was the building's age. Yes it came fraught with issues, yet it had a high level of sustainability simply because it didn't need to be torn down. The first principle of sustainable architecture is adaptive re-use, so it earned a big tick there. Then we looked at the building services to see how they could be most efficiently run.

For such a high-performance building, the sustainability values are quite unobtrusive. It's not shouting 'look how Green I am' is it?

That was the plan and it's most evident in Viridian's double-glazing that is such an intrinsic part of the whole envelope. It's fully double-glazed in high-performance frames so those combine to overcome the problem of draughty, thermal leaks that often test such old buildings. Then there was the insulation CSR provided and its new products are all a part of that ongoing learning curve for the architect.

Bringing a 19th Century building into the 21st century can be a complex, expensive process. To what extent does glass help make possible that transition?

The whole concept of future-proofing this building demanded clever technologies and solid design principles. We didn't simply add large slabs of ordinary sliding glass windows and doors that could be a sustainability disaster in 10 years time. We utilized the most current technology Viridian could deliver and that meant giving this century-plus old building a really decent future. We essentially conceived of a shell within the shell that achieves very high performance standards and provides a fantastic living environment.

Right

DigiGlass™ print in foreground right through central mezzanine void to lounge-room/courtyard.

What were some of those products and their benefit to that 'value insurance' you describe?

Apart from the general envelope glass of stackable doors and sliding windows for example – all ThermoTech™ E double glazed units – there's engineered glass feature flooring through to DecorMirror™ glass in clear and black finish. The result is pretty evident because it really provides a lift in the way the spaces respond to the natural and artificial light. The apartments all have a capacity to open to their courtyards, providing fresh air and daylight. They open to either vertical gardens or private spaces and extend the interiors or provide separation thanks to the stackable doors.

At a more general practice level have you observed a lack of diligence in following through specified materials?

I've seen projects where a 'cheap' imported curtain wall was installed despite what was specified. As the architect you can jump up and down all you like with no effect. I have seen projects that have substituted glass that fails the certification of U-values and shade co-efficients. Lo and behold along comes a cherry-picker on site to dismantle that facade. It's a fact of life and I'm glad that a tougher regulatory environment now exists. It's really about ensuring that a building works correctly so when building owners try to cut corners with their glass they often learn the hard way.

There has been a tendency to treat glazing as a peripheral rather than key construction material hasn't there?

I think that's right. In the early Modernist days, glass facades were just a means to enclose the box and nobody gave a damn about how environmentally friendly those facades were. Essentially they compensated for that solar inefficiency and indoor amenity by turning up the air-conditioning. The evolution of glass and framing technology is very connected and a major component in achieving overall efficiency.

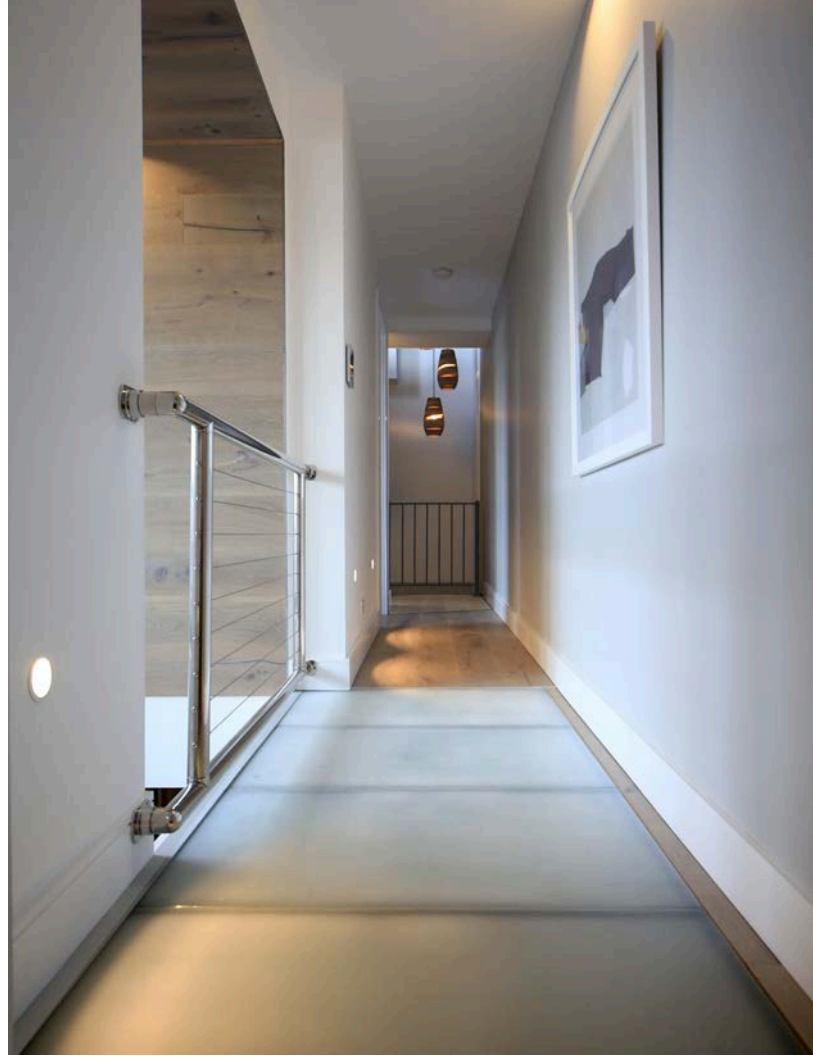




Above and right

Mezzanine draws ample daylight to top level footbridge and lower living level.





Left and above
Opaque glass footbridge heightens the experience of circulation and fall of light throughout.

Is there a heightened awareness and demand for the role of natural light compared to even a decade ago?

As time marches on technical advances in materials allow designers more freedom. Windows of a restricted size, only four years ago for example, can now be full width and height and probably exceed the thermal performance of that much smaller window. There are many opportunities with new developments and technology available with glass. We're seeing radical new designs thanks to the modulation of facades and performance glazing that has a huge impact on amenity.

What level interaction did you have with Viridian on the O'Grady St. apartments?

There are quite stringent standards for new builds to meet the 6-Star energy rating. To achieve that we worked with Viridian and an independent energy rating company Energy Lab. We performed a round of testing of various glazing systems that would deliver the best results and to better the required 6-star rating.

When do you begin this level of consultation with a supplier such as Viridian?

Almost from the very start, it's not an afterthought at all. Once we began sketching out the possibilities we were on the telephone to ensure what we were evolving was a possibility. This happens from the outset and when we're matching frame types to glass size for example.

Do you learn from the contestants as well?

I'd be the first to admit that I don't know everything. I love seeing new things and that's part of the excitement of the program. I have the luxury of overseeing all of them and I say this about every series and none more so than this latest at O'Grady Street. If I could cherry-pick a few items or features from each apartment I would have the best apartment ever made. You could look at any number of the elements in O'Grady St, such as the glass floors the girls included, or the timber paneling, the polished concrete, or Steve and Chantelle's quirky design. If you could bring all of those together, wow, the result would be phenomenal, but individually they remain fantastic apartments in their own right.

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OF FACADES AND
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AMENITY.

Julian Brenchley



The New Kid On The Block

**Left**

The original structure is celebrated by the separation of the new envelope within.

Below

A light, frameless glass bathroom and use of mirrored glass further expand spatial qualities.





The original silent movie theatre's adaptive re-use is a model of sustainable development without compromise.



CHANTELLE
& STEVE



Above

Courtyards provide the prospect for privacy and flexible use while the old shell is braced in a vernacular consistent with the original's era.

How successful are you at anticipating the judges decision and auction results?

I'm hilariously bad at predicting what they're going to say. I probably predict about one out of three correctly. When it comes to judging it's pretty much down to personal taste and it's about that vase or chair, so architects can be pretty hard to please.

The program's adrenalin of the whole team from support crew through to contestants appears to inform the completed projects.

Of course we hope that is the case. There's a deadline driving all of us. Overall it's been quite a ride, working with making sustainable architecture a reality and accessible to the viewing public. Now it's right up there and a huge ratings success and people are really looking for evidence and examples of innovative, sustainable design.

It's not merely about the glamour of renovation but the pain and disappointment that so often seems to be the experience for many people.

That's the nub and crux of reality television. It really touches upon what the renovators go through morally, mentally and ethically throughout the pretty rigorous process. There would be nothing more boring than 12 weeks of television watching paint dry, so it does focus on the human element. The result is that it has viewers and participants wondering how on earth work will be done on time, to budget and a high standard. That pressure is pretty universal and resonates with a lot of people.







Above

Despite large windows/doors, bedroom provides a high level of privacy without the cost of daylight loss.

Left

Frameless shower and highlighted splash-back.



Has the viewing public been as well served with a level of information that matches the level of entertainment?

Absolutely. There's a level of knowledge out there that is quite incredible. I might suggest a particular building product to clients and they come back with 18 pages on the best one from their Google search. Whether they understand it or not is another thing, but the level of design awareness is quite remarkable. You can almost see the day when people will 'build' their own house on Pinterest before the real thing is constructed.

Presumably better-informed clients and heightened expectations lead to better results?

It keeps designers on their toes and from being complacent. And it keeps the Viridians of the world coming up with new and better products to remain competitive. It means we're heading in a good direction.

What are the lessons you take from your involvement in the series?

I remember apologizing to a brick-layer once for making him work into this tight, awkward corner. He said: 'Don't apologize, I'm laying bricks. What am I going to do tomorrow?' He replied: "Laying bricks." You need that philosophy of taking every problem in your stride. The Block is an awkward project from an architectural perspective because of the deadline but, like the brickie, I will be doing architecture tomorrow and that is the important thing for me. The Block just happens to make my work even more interesting.

For the record:

Steve and Chantelle, 1/47 O'Grady
\$2.47 million (\$636,000 above adjusted reserve)

Alisa and Lysandra, 3/47 O'Grady
\$2.375 million (\$616,000 above adjusted reserve)

Kyal and Kara, 2/47 O'Grady
\$2.44 million (\$567,250 above adjusted reserve)

Brad and Dale, 4/47 O'Grady
\$2.31 million (\$507,250 above adjusted reserve)

**Above and left**

Louvered roof of deck modulates sun and rain while window strategically directs daylight down onto the staircase.



**Left and above**

Mirrors enliven key spaces of master bedroom and bathroom.

Below

Solar paneled roof boosts energy for all apartments.



**Project**

The Block 2014
47 O'Grady St.
Albert Park, Melbourne

Architect

Julian Brenchley, Brenchley
Architects

Structural Engineering

TD & C P/L

Windows

Viridian
Clayton Glazing Team

Principal Glass Provider

Viridian

Principal Glazing Resource

Viridian ThermoTech™ E IGUs

Glazing Estimator

Lachlan Mckenzie, Viridian

Principal GlazingBathrooms

SuperClear™ TC
VTough™
DecorMirror™ Clear

Windows and Doors

ThermoTech™ E High
Performance Double Glazing
DecorSatin Grey
EnergyTech Clear

Interiors

Digiglass™
DecorFloor™
DecorMirror™ Grey
Viridian ThermoTech™ IGUs
Argon-filled, clear

Above

Ground floor communal pool.



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