

VISION

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THE GARDEN INSIDE OUT

Walker House, Northcote, Melbourne

In an era of congestion and higher urban densities, greenery and daylight are critically short resources. Melbourne architect Andrew Maynard's answer to this dilemma on a luxuriant inner-city site, produces a silky fit between the invented and natural; historic and contemporary.

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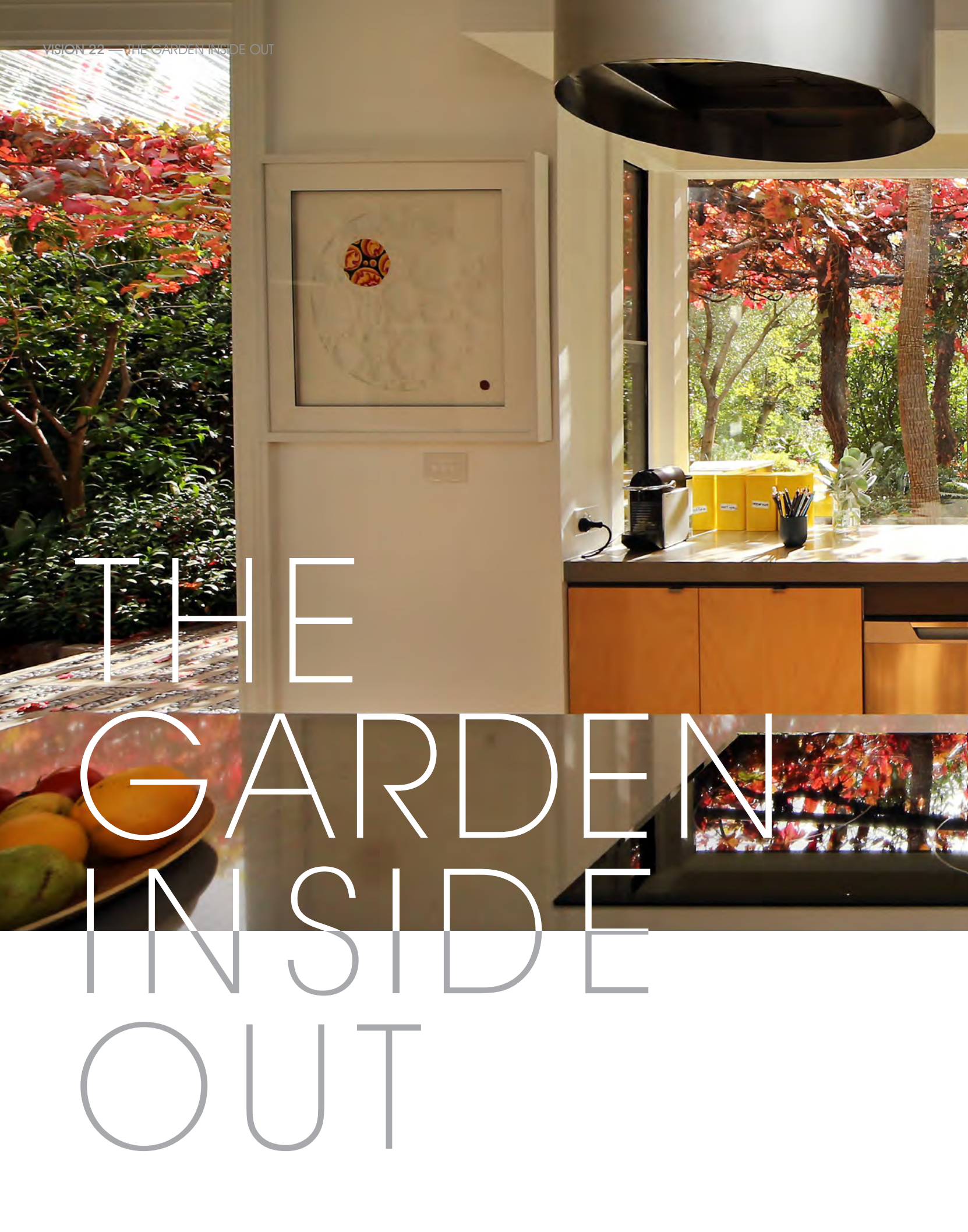


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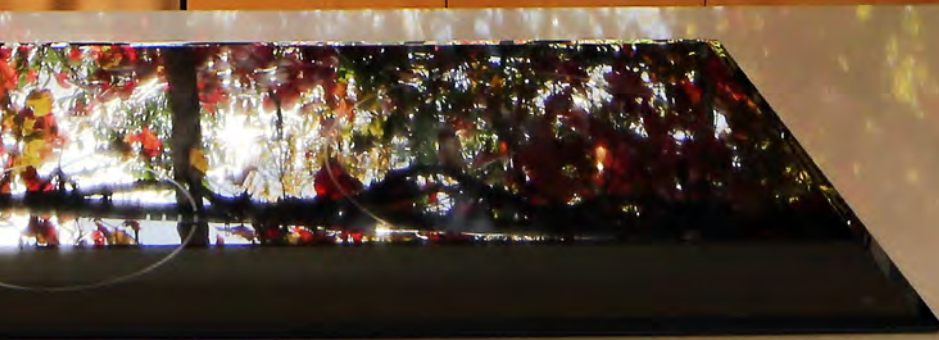
SHAPING LIGHT

La Salle College Trade Skills Centre,
Middle Swan, Perth

A broad palette of Viridian glazing is summoned to enliven a Perth-based Trade Skills Centre. In the process, glass is central to an enlightened stage for education.



THE GARDEN INSIDE OUT



Walker House
Northcote, Melbourne

ARCHITECTS
Andrew Maynard Architects

PRINCIPAL GLAZING RESOURCE
Viridian Thermotech™
Double-Glazed Units

TEXT, IMAGES & FILM
Peter & Jenny Hyatt



CORE PRODUCTS



ENERGY



NOISE



CLEAR VISION



DECORATIVE



BUSHFIRE



STRUCTURAL



STORM



SECURITY

Viridian double-glazed Thermotech units help shape a world of remarkable possibilities. This historic inner-suburban site transports occupants to a space of ambiguous ebb and flow.

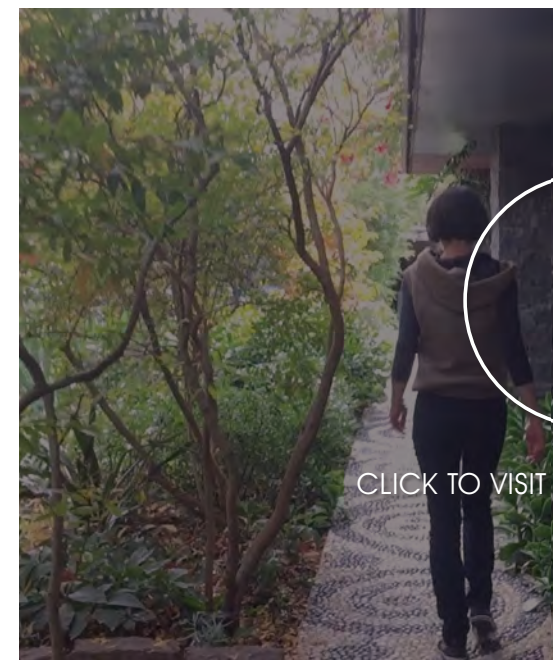
Sliding walls and flowing space are all part of a lively, poetic interplay. The fusion of the man-made with nature provides intimate companion rather than ponderous adversary. Behind a grand Gothic residence is a sublime micro-environment accentuated with glass.

The often cinematically-framed result, is a world true to Victorian-era origins of exotic botanical adventure born of 19th century glasshouses.

Great architecture never exists in isolation. It converses effortlessly with place. This might sound logical enough, but not all architects, building designers and clients agree, preferring the trophy statement, fierce contrast and insularity. Or all of the above.

Andrew Maynard is unorthodox. His quirkiness and difference challenge the status quo. Not for him the brutal, air-conditioned box or flash hipster whimsy. His design for the Walker Residence in Melbourne's Northcote, is a case-study of environmental invitation. Talk of site subordination agitates Maynard about lost opportunities.

His practice is a laboratory of contested ideas and invention. Invariably he utilizes glass as a key in his design vocabulary. Sliding, pivoting walls of Viridian Thermotech provide an astonishing link to a garden of wonders, artfully created by the current owners.



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Above: An autumn courtyard frames a kitchen dining room outlook through stackable Viridian glazing.

Left: Visit the Walker House with this film clip.



THE WALKER HOUSE

The island bench provides a perfect, light-reflecting, foil for the play of garden colour and dappled shade.

THE MOMENT WE REMOVE LABELS
FROM SPACES, IS THE MOMENT YOU
EMPOWER HUMANS TO DO WHATEVER
IS COMFORTABLE IN A SPACE,
RATHER THAN WHAT'S EXPECTED.

Andrew Maynard, Architect

Garden and courtyard vistas exquisitely become the interior. Vision editor Peter Hyatt spoke with Andrew Maynard about a design of such grand subtraction that it creates the great addition:

Many of your projects such as the Mash House, Cut Paw-Paw and Tattoo have evocative titles.

The Walker House sounds almost tame by comparison. The Jungle House, the Garden of Eden House perhaps?

No. We just settled on the street name. I don't know why, but I always think of that terrible Chuck Norris show in the 80s or 90s, 'Walker Texas Ranger' when I see that name.

What was the real opportunity and challenge here?

The original house is an 1873 Gothic Revival style, renovated in 2003 by Pleyzier Perkins with a modest studio/garage. We rebuilt the interior of the kitchen/dining area, converted the garage into a living space and created a master bedroom suite within the upper studio space. The complex and daunting part of the brief was how we would connect the original home with the garage (now living space). We created a low transparent space that blurred the boundaries between what was old, what was new, what was external, what is internal.

And the over-arching design aim?

Trying not to get in the way of the garden and hopefully making it even better. It's really about facilitating an improved residential life and being able to have a new, big living space opening into the garden without a continuation of internal built form.

You really defer and submit to the garden, rather than impose ...

Hopefully it defers to the original house and the Pleyzier Perkins work too. I'd never pretend you can be invisible in architecture, but we were tertiary and trying desperately to stick to that new ceiling under the line of the Pleyzier Perkins pattern. I think it's right, when you said, "submit to it." Let the garden and those two buildings dictate the course of this sort of tertiary structure. There are times when you wonder whether you're inside or not.

You use a wide corridor to create a grand space between old and new.

The original house and the garden were great but there was a functional need to turn the garage into a living space and then, by necessity, needing a corridor between the two. That was really the crux. It's like the most elaborate corridor.



The bureaucratic convention of box ticking never produces great design. What is the secret?

No, no. I think if we had used, as some would say, tried and tested methods, we would have really been crashing into one or both of the existing structures. And if we had used many of our past strategies we'd probably end up with old results. We try and be inventive on each project. This one really demanded us to think quite differently even about our approach.

One of the other ironies of good design - and true of all art, music, architecture - is the business of trying to make design appear as effortless as possible. In the process of achieving this beautiful, buttery result everyone feasts upon, nobody should know how you've been slogging your guts out in the kitchen.

That's so true. It takes the greatest effort to make things look simple. I think Apple was the first example of that. They even talk about the inevitable, to make it seem like it is inevitable. But it's not. It requires such direction. We definitely strive to make something seem inevitable or simple. We just break our brains doing that.

Glass is regularly one of the material heroes in your architecture whereas in general building, it is often subordinate to ceiling, flooring and plaster walls thereby losing its opportunity to connect people with each other and their environment. No material guarantees greatness, but when it's handled beautifully, glass acquires this jewel-like quality. I think, from what I've seen of a number of building sites, once the glass goes in, it can resemble a beautiful piece of jewelry.

I'm aware that architects like lightness and to create the illusion of floating and weightlessness. Quite often you see where they are uncertain and just say, "Well, let's just put glass in there," as though somehow it's invisible. It's not at all. I think the analogy of "jewelry" is a good point, because it distorts light and has its own surface and does its own thing. I've always found it really important to fully consider a material rather than saying, "We want nothing here, though pragmatically we need a wall, so just use glass." The simplistic line for the Walker Residence would have been, "let's do something invisible, so we don't need to see these two buildings." But, of course, glass isn't going to allow something invisible, so let's actually work with it as a material. See what it will do and what it will give us and understand that at certain times of day, it will reflect light and appear quite solid. You need to treat it as a material, not as something that barely exists or is as good as invisible. I think that architecture gets it wrong.



Maynard's attention to detail reveals glazed sleeve bridging Gothic and Modern.

Reflecting metal ceiling panels add a lustrous, glass-like quality to the transition space between kitchen servery, doorway to garden and access to converted garage now lounge room study and laundry/storage below. Master bedroom and en-suite above.



A space-saving spiral staircase adds a distinctive material touch to the serenity created by large glazing panels and immediate views to lush garden.









IT'S THE LEONARD COHEN METHOD OF SONGWRITING, WHICH IS NOT ABOUT MOMENTS OF INSPIRATION. IT'S LABOR. YOU NEED TO KEEP WORKING IT, WORKING IT, AND THROW AWAY 30 SONGS TO FIND THAT ONE GOOD SONG.

Andrew Maynard, Architect

Every material has its consequences.

Yes, and its own logic.

Why the choice of Viridian ThermoTech units?

We had a lot of glass and needed a performance product. We have used Viridian double-glazed units before and been impressed by their ability to stabilize the desired temperature. Getting double-glazing right without making it feel like it is everywhere was a high-wire trick really. The other challenge was the number of micro-climates – much of it to do with so much garden. It can be quite cool and damp – especially in winter. On the old garage face where most of the glass is, the ground was almost slimy. We needed to be really careful about this transition.

Any input from Viridian this time around?

They have a truckload of very useful data online. And they're only ever a telephone call away. We worked directly with the glazier to make sure our glass would perform in the way we wanted. A good glazier is a great help in these situations.

There is a real slenderness to the result all round really.

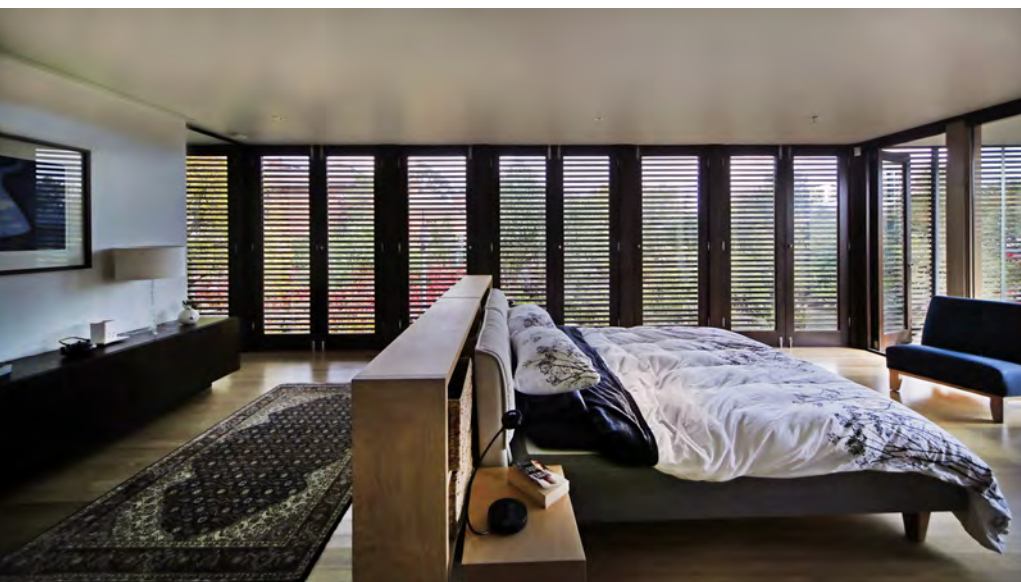
The other thing about our glazing is the way we stripped back the mullions and framing to achieve that appearance of effortlessness and simplicity. That garden was so important, that we actually spent money and effort to ensure the structure and materials really gave way to the garden.

And the difference working now compared to when you began?

Television and the internet have communicated the design delivery process much better. In the past you'd finish a job, get it beautifully photographed for a magazine, and then people would come to you to do a project for them. They'd engage in the process and inevitably there are traumas along the way and they start to panic, and ask, "why isn't it like that shiny one you did last time?" Now we think Grand Designs and it allows people to see that there are issues, but it's okay in the end. Just have patience. This makes that whole point of making great effort to arrive at something so simple, that clients can actually see and understand this.

Charles Eames talked about his desire for 'taking your pleasure seriously'. Do you agree that those qualities of pleasure and play can be compatible in the workplace?

Absolutely. I think the biggest crime is pretending that play in the workplace is something childish ...or for children. Play is a fundamental part of how we learn and discover regardless of our age. I completely agree.



New master bedroom and en-suite with perimeter glazing of stackable doors with Viridian double-glazing as flexible environmental mediator.



A deep rear garden drives the design response that guides an interactive lifestyle.

Opp: Andrew Maynard right with fellow director Mark Austin. An inspired and original combination.

Are you often surprised by what you didn't know when you started out in architecture?

Absolutely. I can't recall who said... "the more I know, the more questions I have." Or "The older I get the more questions I have." The more specific you try to make something, the more vague it gets. You realize dogma isn't the answer. If anything the difficulties, traumas and questions are becoming broader.

You've described the design process as 'grinding'. Is this why the end, or point of arrival can be so broad?

It's much easier to see how you can stuff it up, and what that simple, elegant answer will be. I think that's where the labor and the grinding comes from, is going, "Well, I can see ..." You work your way along a certain path and you realize, "Hang on, that's going to end up somewhere

that's now as good as it should be." So you've got to keep on working at it and sculpting it because you see so many places where it could go wrong and you need to run away from. Out of that comes a sense of grinding labor and discipline. It's the Leonard Cohen method of songwriting, which is not about moments of inspiration. It's labor. You need to keep working it, working it, and throw away 30 songs to find that one good song.

I'm interested in the streamlined, flowing space that contrasts the more compartmentalized Victorian spaces.

We absorbed the old garage and kept its scale. With the cars out, we were amazed just how big it was. At the same time, we didn't want to knock holes in the original building, so we've been strategic about openings. Divisions of space remain and we haven't just made one big open-plan. We had to solve how you connect them without just smashing the back off the original house? That's always a trick with every project. We want to be polite rather than aggressive.

It really highlights the informality of contemporary living with less defined living/sleeping/meals preparation areas. It's also unpredictable and uplifting on the back of something so historic.

The moment we remove labels from spaces is the moment you empower humans to do whatever is comfortable in a space rather than what's expected. In many ways putting the screens in one space seemed to be the social thing to do. We also like that idea of ambiguous space where there isn't quite an explicit function, so it allows for the unexpected. That's what the central corridor space provides. We put the breakfast bar there, but people inhabit that space in so many unexpected and fantastic ways. While you mightn't have an epic view of say, the ocean or snow-covered mountains, you can still experience something very special. Hopefully that's uplifting to the human spirit that people have combined in nature to create something wonderful.



PROJECT
The Walker House, Northcote,
Melbourne

ARCHITECT
Andrew Maynard Architects

BUILDER
Sargent Constructions

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING
Coulthard Shim

LANDSCAPING
Owners

GLAZIER
ADS Design

PRINCIPAL GLAZING RESOURCE
Viridian

GLAZING
Viridian Thermotech™
Double Glazed Units

BUDGET
\$4,300/m²

SHAP



CORE PRODUCTS



ENERGY



NOISE



CLEAR VISION



DECORATIVE



BUSHFIRE



STRUCTURAL



STORM



SECURITY

ING LIGHT

DE SKILLS CENTRE





Translucence and transparency perform a layered and complementary role ushering daylight and managing potential distraction. Brick operates as a relevant and powerful design motif leavened with glass.

All buildings have a history – even those recently minted. All have origins in a strand, or family of construction. Brick has been a stalwart in western education for the entire 20th century - much of this too dull for its own good. The exemplars by luminaries Louis Kahn, Frank Lloyd-Wright and Frank Gehry have rejuvenated and elevated brick's reputation. The svelte use of Viridian glass provides the counterpunch to brick, creating surprise interiors of bright, light clarity.

PROJECT
La Salle College, Trade Skills Centre,
Middle Swan, Perth

ARCHITECTS
Parry and Rosenthal Architects

TEXT
Peter Hyatt

IMAGES
Robert Frith (Acorn)

PRINCIPAL GLAZING RESOURCES
Viridian ThermoTech-E double-glazed units
incorporating ComfortPlus Green and
Viridian Seraphic™ Standard

Suggestions of brick's demise are premature and recent examples of the more considered design such as at La Salle College, 10 kms north-west of Perth, demonstrates a capacity for richness and detail. La Salle's proximity to the Midlands brickworks helps explain its robust vocabulary. Rather than bunker down, Parry and Rosenthal Architects have added major glazing elements to oxygenate and leaven brick's weightiness and introduce openness and delight.

The result is a new school building of function and relevance for some 1,400 students across a range of trades. The college has a tradition of brick construction that continues a distinctive and distinguished body of work informed by a consistent shared ideal, rather than a jittery collection of styles. More recently the use of Viridian glass helped to lift the quality of projects to a much more habitable level and the school clearly benefits from this calm consistency of form, materiality and natural light.

Michael Savage, the project director and a director of Parry Rosenthal Architects spoke to Vision's Peter Hyatt about design as a stage and bridge to education:

Australia's skills shortage is slowly but surely being addressed. La Salle College's Trade Skills Centre is part of that acknowledgement to address an educational imbalance.

Yes, it does. There's been a growing need in the school for more design & technology facilities. Existing spaces and services were inadequate and it naturally followed that we had to replace the existing building. The Federal government provided additional funds and we teamed up with another school to share the facility. The College is adjacent to the Midland brickworks and close to the Midland Railway Workshops, so this area has a rich history and tradition of industry.

What were the specific challenges?

To find a spot to locate the building. Apart from a little car-park for staff, we couldn't demolish any of the existing buildings, because they're all fully occupied and there just wasn't anywhere for the students to be relocated. We relocated the car-park to a spot adjacent to the oval, then squeezed into this constrained site which is up against the site boundary and in between the existing buildings.



Parry and Rosenthal's design accentuates highly legible and safe interiors. All trade learning spaces are clearly identified.

Is there a Western Australian, or local style happening?

Schools are always looking for the best materials. That's one aspect. Brick is obviously very tough in that environment, as is glass. When you start looking at plaster and similar materials, they're all subject to quite a lot of damage. We tried to use robust, durable materials: aluminium, glass, brick and even the main carpet in the circulation region is indoor/outdoor carpet, so it's all relatively tough. As far as the style of the building goes, we're really trying to tie in with the rest of the school. The whole school is in red brick, from the local brickworks.

Is there a tradition in trade skills development to parallel WA's mining history?

Yes there is. Being a trade skills centre, these technical skills are taught here. We tried to incorporate a lot of the art of the trades in the building fabric. We've used decorative brickwork in the walls, we've used timber doors which is a little unusual for the rest of the school, and brought the timber slat panelling into the main entry and workshops. We've got lots of glass with sliding doors in the workshop. There is definitely no fear of glass.





What trades are taught in the new facility?

There are two woodwork workshops and another two for composite materials and metalwork. They've got all the welding gear, grinding gear and machine rooms required. The machine rooms have wide glass windows which means students can be easily seen, supervised and kept safe. Teaching staff can pretty much see through all four workshops and machine rooms from any vantage point.

Le Corbusier of course designed architecture as a machine for living in, but how do you ensure that these buildings are occupied as really pleasant and human spaces? Isn't it tougher once you aspire for these spaces to be more than hose-outs?

The earlier designed technology building was poorly insulated with low ceilings & little light. Here we wanted to lift the roofs and drag in as much natural light as possible at high level. The result is that the workshops can run without lights in the day. The clerestory lighting also allows the spaces to be naturally ventilated through louvres on both sides. The result is a space that is light and uplifting rather than dark and oppressive.



Parry and Rosenthal's work in 2010 at La Salle reveals a consistent material vocabulary that sees glass inject a luminosity within a substantial brick envelope.



While there is something of a fortress quality with the brickwork and masonry, there's a much more open and transparent interior with an unfolding series of spaces. What you avoid is the old-fashioned silo type interiors.

Even though the exterior ends appear durable and tough, we tried to soften the design labs, entries and interiors with timber and glass. Inside the school generally, there is a preference for high transparency to assist with passive surveillance and we have carried this principle into the interior of this building. People can see what's going on. It's not over policing, as it were. It's just passive surveillance. Students are less likely to get up to mischief and be safer if they're more visible. Since we have a natural progression in the building from design to physical product, it followed that there would also be good transparency between Design Lab, walkways and workshops.

Glass is obviously the great light transmitter. What else does it contribute?

In this building, it allows the natural light to be transmitted through multiple spaces. You enter the design lab walkway and that's fully glazed, and then into the walkway and then the workshop and they are also fully glazed. There's a lot of inter-connection between rooms. Spaces also appear bigger because of the glazing and there are views out.

It must be a balancing act to ensure visibility without unwelcome classroom distraction?

We used some translucent glass on the lower sections of the glazing to temper some of the potential for distraction but our client wanted daylight and visibility more than privacy.

Does a trade school need more robust design and finishes than a typical secondary school or university?

Probably not in this context. Most school facilities have to be robust. People are building woodwork projects, cabinets and smallish metal projects, as well. In the workshops we have fibre cement walls with paint, but the idea is that you can repaint reasonably easily if you want to freshen them up. Once permanent materials are damaged they are difficult to repair. Glazing is a fantastic, cleanable material. If it is damaged, it's easily replaceable.

Building upon this earlier example – a gymnasium and theatre complex – the architects reveal a deceptively elegant lightness of touch with glass as counterpoint to the muscular brick elevations.





INSIDE THE SCHOOL GENERALLY
THERE IS A PREFERENCE FOR HIGH
TRANSPARENCY TO ASSIST WITH PASSIVE
SURVEILLANCE AND WE HAVE CARRIED
THIS PRINCIPLE INTO THE INTERIOR
OF THIS BUILDING.

Michael Savage, Architect

A LOT OF THE OLDER BUILDINGS WERE DARKER AND MORE COMPARTMENTALIZED. THIS BUILDING FITS IN, BUT IS FREE FLOWING AND LIGHT INSIDE. THE RESULT IS A MORE UPLIFTING EXPERIENCE.

Michael Savage, Architect



The modernist vision, not quite on the grassy knoll, but constrained on a tight site.

Did the school resist your proposal for such an extensive coverage of glass because it might pose some sort of risk to the students, or damage?

No, the school was very keen on glazing. We designed a new gymnasium and senior learning centre at La Salle College a few years ago and based on how these stood up to ball sports and senior students, they were very comfortable with the idea. In the gymnasium, we went away from having the usual closed tilt up concrete box to having a very open, light glazed building. We haven't had any issues with that glazing at all – which happens to be Viridian's too.

There's a nice design DNA here. You obviously rate the materiality of high-end brickwork and glass.

That's true and I think that's evident from the results that we haven't jumped around with arbitrary shapes and materials but have tried to harmonise with the existing palette of forms and materials so that the buildings are part of the campus family and add something special to it. Something familiar, warm and friendly but also new, delightful and inspiring.

Did you receive any assistance or any input from Viridian with the choice of glass, or any technical aspects of the project glazing?

They provided a lot of useful input – especially with the earlier projects at La Salle. By the time it came to this project we had less need for advice. We know their products well and what to expect from them.

Do you have a particular favourite part of this project?

The way the building integrates into the campus. It's quite a modern building, but it fits in with the traditional red brick, sloped roof buildings very well. We enjoyed incorporating trade elements into the building fabric. There is a good balance of solid and lightweight elements. A lot of the older buildings were darker and more compartmentalized. This building fits in, but is free flowing and light inside. The result is a more uplifting experience.

Ugly, poorly functioning buildings are often subject to the unwelcome attention of graffiti or damage. This can be a reflection of bad building and while beautiful buildings are not impervious, they appear less likely to the same level of abuse. Were you mindful of this?

I agree with what you are saying. People do take care of things that are important to them. If you put a lot of care and love into the design & construction of a building, people pick up on that spirit, they feel welcome, cared for and inspired and as a consequence tend to protect and care for it.

PROJECT

La Salle College, Trade Skills Centre, Middle Swan, Perth

ARCHITECTS

Parry and Rosenthal Architects

BUILDER

EMCO

ENGINEERS

Caliber Consulting, ETC, Maclean & Lawrence, DSA, RBB

GLAZIER

Kent Aluminium Windows

GLASS SUPPLIER

Viridian

PRINCIPAL GLAZING RESOURCES

Viridian ThermoTech-E double-glazed units incorporating ComfortPlus Green and Viridian Seraphic™ Standard

INTERIOR GLAZING

Viridian™ Seraphic Standard



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