



## Downside Up House



Application No.	0002641
Date Submitted	10/10/2019 12:31:08 PM
Project Category	8. Heritage
Project name	Downside Up House
Org name	WALA
Contact person	Weian Lim
Contact Telephone	0421687880
Contact Email	weian@wa-la.net
Date of Completion	May/2018
Project Street Address	31 Richardson Street
Project Suburb	Albert Park
Project Post Code	3206
Client name	
Project Cost	685000
Site Area (m2)	135
Org Street Address	102/26 Rokeby Street
Org Suburb	Collingwood
Org Post Code	3066
Org Website	www.wa-la.net



## Organization overview

WALA is a Melbourne-based design studio that provides architectural, interior and design services across a diverse range of projects. We believe that the simplest solutions can create the most elegant results. Our collective design ethos is testament to this belief as we attempt to harness beauty through thoughtful architectural solutions.

## Brief description

Downside Up House is a double-storey extension that rescues and complements a previously dilapidated period cottage. The design promotes a seamless integration between old and new, and creates a sheltered retreat for its occupants whilst also initiating a point of engagement with the public realm via an outdoor shared garden.

## Response to key selection criteria

Nestled in a diverse neighbourhood pocket in Albert Park, the original building was a dilapidated double-fronted Victorian cottage book-ended by a double-storey terrace house on its south side. The house is located on a corner allotment that is pinched in by the main street and a laneway which gives it its irregular, triangular "pizza" shape that tapers towards the rear. As a heritage listed building, it was imperative to rescue the front of house which was in a severe state of disrepair. The homeowner and his family of 4 presented us a brief that started off with the basic functional premise of maintaining a 3-bedroom house at the very minimum, and making use of the neighbour's double-height boundary wall to introduce a second storey volume to the rear of the property. In contrast to the convoluted and dimly-lit layout of the original house, the new extension had to be well-lit, feel larger than it is (despite its small footprint), and ultimately marry in seamlessly with the front heritage building. Our design response was governed by the strict heritage rulings of the area. The new addition is undoubtedly contemporary and is clearly distinguishable from the heritage building. It is this distinction that enhances the status and character of the heritage building. The multiple rear lean-to's were messy in their layout and clustered in an ad-hoc fashion, so our goal was to retain and restore the existing front of house whilst improving the flow and functionality of the old & new wings of the dwelling. Existing features, mouldings and roof detailing of the corner elevations and verandah structure were carefully preserved, as were the front bedrooms to the double-fronted face of the house. Where rooms were unsalvageable, or impractically positioned due to the circumstances of their time, conscious decisions were made to retain as much of the external weatherboard skin to not only preserve as much of the original building envelop as feasible, but to also allow a harmonious cross-stitch between the old and new building fabrics. This seamless integration between buildings is evident along the elevation facing the laneway. A typical "rear-ground-level-extension-facing-a-backyard" treatment was impractical for this house, so we subverted the status quo by promoting the living spaces upstairs and having all bedrooms organised at ground level. This allows us to borrow privacy and security inherent by a new boundary wall facing the laneway and have the bedrooms feel "sheltered". Upstairs, the living spaces now sit above the neighbouring roofline and are able to open towards uninterrupted views and daylight. The facade treatment and articulation of the new addition drew inspiration from



the previous forms of the old lean-to's. The new facade celebrates classic pitched roofs of old Victorians in the neighbourhood by referencing these triangular shapes in the upper floor's external batten screen. This batten screen not only presents a clear external graphic to the laneway, but also protects privacy by shielding views into the neighbours' gardens. A full-height clear polycarbonate wall on the internal face of the upstairs living spaces still allows for northerly light into the rooms. During the day, soft daylight illuminates the elevated living spaces and when the sun sets, these spaces become lanterns under the night sky. A strong colour palette of 'whites' were employed to elevate the visual impact the house and to give it a crisp and clean look the original building was in desperate need of. The polycarbonate wall plays a part in bringing more light into the belly of the home. Rather than succumbing to a traditional solid wall punctuated with windows, we designed this translucent wall to literally be a "wall of light" and emanate diffused daylight uniformly into the main living zones. In working with neutral tones, the selection of external and internal finishes became more vital in order to introduce texture via different building materials. New insertions such as windows and glazed sliders are framed in aluminium to contrast against the double-sash, timber-framed windows of the old house. In extending this choice of material, the batten privacy screen comprises aluminium extrusions to achieve a machine-grade uniformity that juxtaposes wonderfully against the hand-laid weatherboard cladding of old. The irregularly-shaped site also allowed us to introduce a "shared garden" at street level; a departure from the harsh treatment along the laneway as evident by many other corner allotments in the area. We wanted a feature that promotes engagement with the street and its pedestrians, and this was achieved by angling the proposed boundary fence towards the house to carve out a piece of garden at a human scale. Despite the house's small footprint, this effort was made to ensure that a part of the house could be shared with the community. Downside Up House is an exercise in designing "big home features" on a small footprint. The house subverts the typical "rear-ground-level-extension-facing-a-backyard" approach without compromising light, space and quality of living.







DESIGN  
& DEVELOPMENT  
**AWARDS**  
2020

# Residential dwelling: alteration or new build





DESIGN  
& DEVELOPMENT  
**AWARDS**  
2020

# Residential dwelling: alteration or new build

