World class
Inspiration from San Francisco
New York, London and China

Young, Australian and Muslim
The controversial new face of West Australian art

WA art guide
Brendan Darby, Jeff Wall, David Bromley, Stuart Elliot

Milan 2012
Cutting edge trends from Salone del Mobile

Architecture awards
Home and commercial designs from this year’s AIA awards
The three-dimensional quality of the stone-clad wall at the centre of the house allows for natural light to create constantly changing shadows throughout the day. Seen basically, the stone wall in the house reveals its jewelry in the corners. The stone's visual and tactile details have become very involved in the material palette and finishes, including the white oak floorboards and a carved rug in the living room. A modern expressionist painting by Angel Pak, antique armchairs and a contemporary cream couch by Bensen finishes the look.
Pushing the envelope

One of the oldest houses in an historic San Francisco suburb is renovated by a creative couple wishing to modernise it, while respecting the original rustic facade.

WORDS Julia Berney  PHOTOGRAPHY Paul Dyer
The removal of a central part of the upper floor not only facilitates the dispersal of light down through the storeys but also allows easy interaction for owners Melodie and Jerome. The geometry of metal and glass at the rear of the extension contrasts crisply with the old timber house, and ceiling-to-floor glazing gives the newly created office a contemporary feel filled with natural light.
Built in the 1860s, this cottage has witnessed dramatic changes in the surrounding landscape. The smallish wooden house with a dark interior is typical of the neighbourhood. It fell into disrepair for many years until an imaginative couple with two children – who now have another sibling – saw its potential and commissioned Feldman Architecture to repair, extend and modernise it while retaining the rustic appeal.

Bernal Heights, the suburb in which the house is situated, was largely undeveloped until the earthquake of 1906 and the resultant firestorm that devastated San Francisco. After the disaster, many shacks were constructed rapidly to shelter thousands of refugees from the city, and some of the little ‘temporary’ homes remain to this day. While adding to the eclectic nature of Bernal Heights – an area that also contains 1950s workers’ homes and a few modern residences – the mix of historic housing brought limitations on what the architects could do.

At the front of the Old Bernal house, as the project was named, both the new addition and any improvements to the facade had to be designed to respect and blend with the streetscape.

“With older structures, San Francisco is very sensitive to not altering facades,” says architect Jonathan Feldman. “Other towns do not always care about this, but here we need to do an elaborate historical evaluation of the structure and then design in such a way that important aspects of the facade are preserved. Additions are clearly differentiated from the original structure.”

This meant that no alterations were made to the old facade apart from
repainting in a different colour and replacing existing windows with ones that offer better thermal performance.

The narrow portion of the extension - roughly 4.5m wide - which faces the street is materially compatible with the old timber house, but it is more pared down and modern in form, with a large pivot window. Hidden behind this understated wooden facade, the extra wing houses the garage as well as a bedroom suite, studio and office, which all enjoy the benefits of being wrapped in floor-to-ceiling glazing. The roof and upper floor in the middle of the old house were cut away so that daylight floods the kitchen and living room.

At the back of the home, it was possible to add much larger amounts of glass to the renovated kitchen, so it now connects beautifully with the backyard. A two-storey side extension with a metal and glass curtain wall also looks directly on to the back garden.

"The back of the existing structure has kept its traditional massing and shape," explains Jonathan, "but we added modern windows in a playful way. The back of the addition is very modern and it sharply contrasts the old structure."

While the family were mindful of keeping the envelope of the historic building intact - the newly up-to-date interior absolutely suits its new owners' needs. By adding an unobtrusive extension, the family has the luxury of enjoying historical aspects while living within the space and the sense of openness, which everyone desires.

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