

# new work

## architect Ed Lippmann writes about his design of the **Ouzas House**, Balmain

'Current project home designs locally available are incapable of suitable adaptation to specific site conditions. Project housing lags well behind contemporary design yet its low cost ensures that it is prevalent. This house explores alternative medium-cost housing possibilities, developing generous interior spaces and volumes that respond to external landscaping. It utilises standardised, readily available, mass-produced structural components, glazing, cladding and internal fitout systems. The house is intended as a prototype for series housing, being adaptable and interchangeable to a wide variety of contexts.

The streetscape adjacent to this site is characterised by its diversity. While this house stands out from others in the street, it conforms to the local council's criteria of bulk, height and setback and contributes to the 'grain' of the precinct. The levels and volumes sculpted inside the house are generated by the topography of the site. The setback from the street is defined by council code, however it is utilised to provide a privacy buffer to the house via an elevated deck. The landscaping at the rear provides a lush setting for the house.

The client budget dictated the need to do more with less. This house cost around \$900/sq. m to build (excluding external landscaping) and this cost was made possible largely due to the inherent economies of utilising prefabricated, repetitive building elements which rely upon off-site factory production rather than site-based wet trades.

The brief of the house required a fundamental response to social ideals and this was reflected in the architectural/aesthetic concerns. I sought to make the house investigate notions of freedom of space. Although the structural system is tightly controlled, the space and volume accommodated within is not. The interior space is fluid and deceptive. Volumes interconnect creating a rich spatial composition. The pavilion form is glazed at the two frame ends, suggesting further extension of space, while the two side walls are punctuated with smaller openings to maintain privacy with closer neighbours.

The house is extremely lightweight and employs essentially dry trades, the only exception being the garage slab. The utilisation of regularly spaced steel portal frames supporting a lightweight skin (roof/wall

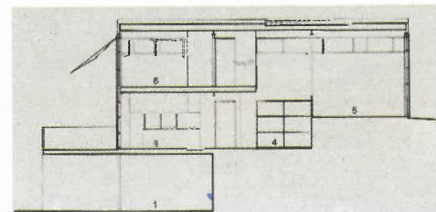


warehouse construction but is here explored as an appropriate and advantageous system for domestic construction.

High light glazing is provided throughout the house to admit northern light and also facilitate natural 'stack' cooling. The bedrooms above have separate convection extraction outlets. Ducted heating and cooling is provided but is not necessary during most times of the year. Densely packed insulation in the walls provides a high thermal mass.

The entire house is based upon a 600x600 planning grid. The portal frames, internal walls and drop-in ceiling all conform to this grid. Additionally, a 700 mm vertical module (evident in the glazing design) sets out the internal floor and mid levels. The (wet) service core is contained along a 2.4 metre spine at the northern side of the house and accommodates kitchen, laundry and bathrooms. This spine is also reflected in the exposed braced bays at the two portal ends.

The precinct around this site is not characterised by any particular or distinguished architectural style. It was therefore (successfully) argued in the Land and Environment Court that purposeful contemporary architecture which accepts and complies with council's planning guidelines and protects the amenity of neighbours should be supported and permitted irrespective of any perceived aesthetic radicalism.'



**New work** will be a regular editorial feature in *Architecture Bulletin*. If you have work that you would like to see featured in the magazine, contact the Managing Editor, Virginia Maxwell, on (02) 356-2955.