

PROJECT N°

# 06

## Bent GABLE by Bent Architecture

• MELBOURNE, VIC •

A modest renovation and extension transform this semidetached Victorian terrace into a light-filled and spacious home.

Words by [Maitiú Ward](#)  
Photography by [Brendan Finn](#)

It's the middle of winter in Melbourne and Paul Porjazoski and I are perched inside what he describes as an elevated garden bed. We're at a house in Fitzroy North that his practice, Bent Architecture, has just finished renovating. Paul is sitting on a wide strip of reddish brown timber that forms the sill to the window of the first-floor main bedroom, his legs stretching out into the tile-lined volume of this so-called garden bed. Meanwhile, I'm standing right in it, theoretically up to my knees in a garden that looks and feels an awful lot like a balcony. We're both awash in rare mid-winter sunlight, which is streaming in from the north through the timber battening that forms a privacy screen.

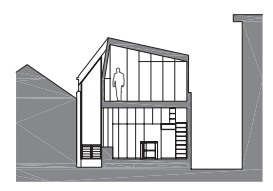
The elevated garden, it turns out, was originally supposed to hold soil, but the cost of the engineering and sealing involved turned out to be too much for the budget. Rather than seal it off entirely, though, the architects extemporised, turning windowsill to seat and lush garden bed to green tile. Instead of just soil, the garden bed now holds both pot plants and people.

"With jobs like this, the demands of the site, the budget and the brief really dictate the response," says Paul. "Your architectural opportunities are constrained to the envelope."

The brief for this project called for a renovation and extension of an existing Victorian semi-detached terrace that, while benefitting from a north-facing rear garden, suffered from the limited light and space that tends to afflict the terrace type. Bent Architecture has replaced an earlier extension with an open-plan kitchen and living area that connects to a deck and garden at the rear with floor-to-ceiling glazing and a large sliding door.

So far, so standard, then. But this is not just another off-the-shelf example of Australia's popular indoor/outdoor residential architecture, with a skin job. As the garden bed demonstrates, there is more to the project than that, despite Paul's modesty to the contrary.

From the street, there is little to suggest Bent Architecture has done much of anything to the existing terrace. Peeking out from



Section A 1:400



Section B 1:400



01 The addition, to the rear of the more conservative original facade, reveals the house's "left-of-centre personality."





behind the symmetrical profile of the original building's gabled roof, though, just barely visible on its eastern side, is the roofline of the addition at the rear, a hint that something else might be going on behind this conservative facade.

When viewed from the back fence of the property, the house's new, left-of-centre personality reveals itself. Rather than follow the symmetrical roofline of the existing building, the gable of the addition is weighted towards the eastern boundary of the property, the roof falling away steeply to preserve the neighbour's sun, while the incline down to the west is much gentler. There is more than just formal novelty at play in the wonky new volume that has resulted, though. This lopsided approach has allowed Bent Architecture to turn what would have been residual attic space, had it strictly followed the precedent of the original gabling, into a first-floor main bedroom and study – and, of course, the garden bed-cum-balcony that Paul and I are sitting on.

To get to the balcony, we passed from the front door of the house, through the corridor that runs along the eastern party wall of the existing building, which largely retains its cellular planning, and stepped up a slight shift in grade to the new addition. Here, the ceiling leaps away, creating a double-height void graced at the northern end by a slice of floor-to-ceiling glazing, which reads as an asymmetrical, domestic take on a cathedral window – a lovely

moment, but one which is in part the product of a pragmatic response to the brief, allowing light to penetrate deep into the interior.

Sitting over the open-plan living area to the left of the void are the first-storey main bedroom, ensuite and study, which are accessible via a set of stairs found just to the left as you cross into the new addition. Following the stairs up, you find a landing that includes the study and a balustrade to the east, overlooking the void. As Paul explains, the clients' only request in addition to more space and light was a place to store their books. Rather than simply create a rack of shelves, or a conventional library, Bent Architecture has turned the balustrade here into a shelf for this collection, with cabinetry below. This bookish datum extends from the landing and study area right through into the main bedroom, leading out to the balcony-cum-garden and the partially occluded northern light – which is where, of course, Paul and I find ourselves, after following the pull of this tempting, sun-dappled spot.

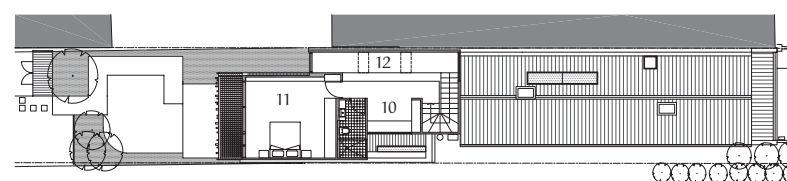
The balcony, like the “cathedral” window and thread of books, is a small detail born of pragmatic requirements. In the considerate handling of these demands, though, Bent Architecture has found opportunity aplenty to demonstrate that architecture, even in the most conventional of contexts, is more than a skin-deep proposition. ☐



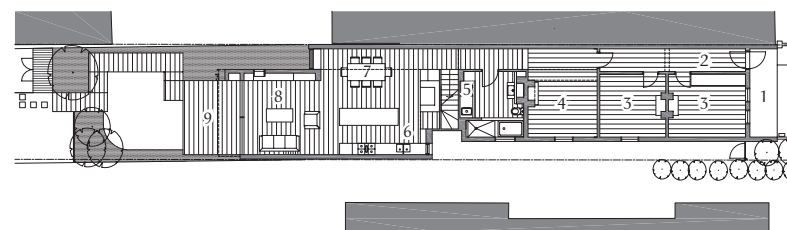
02 The new living space connects to a timber deck and garden through full-height glazing and a large sliding door.

03 An asymmetrical, domestic take on a cathedral window marks where the roof “leaps away” at a double-height void in the addition.





First floor 1:400



Ground floor 1:400

0 5 m

- 1 Porch
- 2 Entry
- 3 Bedroom
- 4 Sitting room
- 5 Laundry
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Dining
- 8 Living
- 9 Deck
- 10 Study
- 11 Main bedroom
- 12 Void



**04** A landing at the top of the stairs overlooks the void and includes a study and a balustrade that doubles as a bookshelf.

**05** Sunlight streams into the main bedroom through timber battening behind the "elevated garden."

#### Architect

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#### Practice profile

A design-based practice working across various disciplines, including architecture, interiors and landscape, and at varying scales, types and budgets.

#### Project team

Paul Porjazoski, Fiona Poon,  
Merran Porjazoski,  
Fiona Lew

#### Builder

Poles-a-Part Design  
and Construction

#### Consultants

**Engineer:** Adams  
Consulting Engineers

#### Products

**Roofing:** Lysaght Spandek in Colorbond 'Ironstone'; Ampelite Webglas GC sheets  
**External walls:** James Hardie's Scyon Matrix in Colorbond 'Ironstone'; Woodform Architectural blackbutt shiplapped timber  
**Internal walls:** Gunnersens hardwood ply in Whittle Wax finish  
**Windows:** Double-glazed timber-framed windows; Viridian DécorPattern Squarelite glass; Velux fixed skylight; Intalok fixed roof window  
**Doors:** Centor sliding door track; Designer Doorware and Hafele door hardware  
**Flooring:** Supertuft Escape Twist carpet in 'Tease'  
**Lighting:** Mondo Luce Barro spot track light; Limelite Lil Ledge light; Artemide Rastaf downlighting

**Kitchen:** Caesarstone benchtops in 'Oyster' and 'Free Spirit'; Abey Quadrato undermount sink; Gessi Oxygene mixer; Miele cooktop and ovens; Qasair rangehood  
**Bathroom:** Classic Ceramics mosaic tiles; Zucchetti Isystick tapware; Brodware accessories; Japanese Bath Company acrylic bath  
**External elements:** Wet Earth bladder tank

#### Floor area

278 m<sup>2</sup> floor  
178 m<sup>2</sup> site

#### Project cost

\$550,000

#### Time schedule

**Design, documentation:**  
12 months

**Construction:**  
8 months