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MEZZANINE

PROFILE - JAMES RUSSELL Getting to the heart of this wonderful Brisbane architect's practice, with a selection of recent projects. **VISIT - MEAGHAN WHITE** An architect's home and studio, designed and built over seven years, delivers work-life balance. **SMALL SPACES SURVEY** Exploring two small homes that use smart joinery to maximise utility for their occupants.



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Twist and turn

This wedge-shaped extension by Object Subject shows how an architect can answer a relatively simple brief for a residential add-on with a design that is delightful for its occupants and intriguing for visitors.

WORDS SUSAN MULDOWNNEY PHOTOGRAPHY SHANNON MCGRATH STYLING SWEE LIM

Contemporary single-storey renovations tend to follow a similar formula. Knock down the back of the house and add a seamless extension with a new box for an open-plan kitchen, dining and living space. This is a functional means of increasing the footprint. What it often lacks, however, is a sense of drama.

In its extension of a single-storey double-brick dwelling in Melbourne's beachside suburb of Brighton, Object Subject has created a dynamic relationship between old and new. Rather than a homogeneous box abutting the existing pitched-roof dwelling, the light-filled extension emerges at the end of a dark narrow corridor. It's characterised by a dramatic ceiling clad in cedar battens that appear to twist and sweep in a masterful optical illusion. The curved appearance is a clever trick of geometry, for the ceiling is made entirely of straight lines sculpted to match a digital model.

The front four rooms of the existing house have remained intact while one room has been altered to include an en suite and walk-in robe. A small lean-to at the back of the house was demolished to accommodate the new addition, which extends to within a metre of the southern boundary.

Object Subject director Michael Barraclough explains that, despite the distinctive result, the brief was quite conventional. "The client wanted to get more light into a south-facing block and create a living/dining/kitchen area, but they didn't want it to appear like a uniform box," he says.

The architects' response required negotiation with the geometry of the gabled roof. The extension begins with a

skillion roof profile at one end and seemingly twists into a flat roof profile at the other. "We were quite keen on a form that was not only visually dynamic, but also had some relationship to the program underneath," he says. While many rear extensions result in a generic 2.7-metre flat ceiling, Object Subject has maximised ceiling height to create a soaring space above the kitchen where much of the activity occurs, and a lower ceiling in the living area.

North-east light is captured through the reorientation of the rear plan into a wedge shape – the main glass façade of the extension opens to a timber-clad courtyard to the north-east, instead of the south.

"Unlike projects that are complex for the sake of complexity, this project is the result of a series of quite pragmatic considerations, such as the north-east glazing, indoor-outdoor living and responding to the existing gable roof geometry. The complexity is simply a by-product of trying to synthesise these considerations into one coherent form." **M**

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Clockwise from right The ceiling over the kitchen creates a light and airy effect, but sweeps down low over the lounge zone. Drawings showing how the new roof and ceiling planes interact with each other, and with the roof over the existing house. The ceiling creates the illusion of a curved form, despite being constructed from straight timber battens. **Previous page** To overcome the lack of natural light inherent in an extension with a southern orientation, the new structure was designed with a wedge-shaped footprint that opens up the the north-east.

