



## Energy

### PROJECT

Hood House

### ARCHITECT

T(A)2 Architects

### DESIGN TEAM

Timothy Yee, Alex Su, Antony Tsjin,  
Kevin Chiu and Kevin Choi

### ENGINEER

JKML Group

### WINDOW FRAMING

European Window

### GLAZIER

European Window

### BUILDER

Hoodcon Pty Ltd

### PRINCIPAL GLASS PROVIDER

Viridian

### PRINCIPAL GLAZING ELEMENTS

#### GROUND

Viridian double glazed units clear:

Sliding doors from 2800mm (H) x 6200mm (W)  
(divided into three equally) facing rear garden,  
10mm thick

Sliding doors from 2800mm (H) x 5500mm (W)  
(divided into four equally) facing pool deck,  
10mm thick

Windows from 2800mm (H) x 1700mm (W)  
10mm thick

Windows from 3400mm (H) x 4500mm (W),  
10mm thick

#### FIRST FLOOR

Viridian double glazed units clear:

Fixed window for front bedroom from  
2800mm (H) x 2300mm (W) + sashless window  
from 2800mm (H) x 970mm (W), 10mm thick

Fixed digital printed onyx patterned window  
from 2800mm (H) x 1750mm (W), 10mm thick

Fixed window for rear bedroom from 2800m (H)  
x 415mm(W) + sashless window from 2800m (H)  
x 1300mm(W), 10mm thick

Sliders from 2500mm (H) x 3200mm (W),  
10mm thick

### GROSS FLOOR AREA

509 m<sup>2</sup>

### BUDGET

In excess of \$1million



## MAGIC BOX

Text - Peter Hyatt  
Photography - Andrew Ashton

**Melbourne architect Timothy Yee's practice T(A)2 was a finalist in Viridian's 2011 Vision Award for Residential Energy Efficiency.**

The firm's very first house design – the Hood residence – in Melbourne's blue-chip Brighton exhibits a level of assurance that belies its rookie status.

"It has been a remarkable springboard," says Yee. "Our first project has already led to a number of other residential designs." And these have allowed T(A)2 to advance the cause of design transparency and slenderness.

Daylight and natural spaces are given preference to enclosed, synthetic surrounds. Viridian double glazed units come in mega-scale to shatter the notion of brick and mortar as a measure of optimum value.



It's exceptionally comfortable all year round in the way it responds to the light and weather.



This is a house very certain about the function of walls and windows. It never blurs or compromises the two. Such a planar quality is amplified by the way glass dissolves and connects to a green perimeter so often lost in spec building.

Timothy Yee spoke with Vision editor Peter Hyatt about his firm's first foray into the highly competitive world of residential design.

**These are interesting times for architecture. The landscape is rapidly changing with rapidly evolving regulations and fierce competition from within and competing design/construct disciplines.**

Most definitely. Architecture is as hard as it has ever been. We have to constantly upgrade our skills to ensure we are ahead of the competition.

Ultimately we need to be the best listeners to our clients' problems, interpret and respond accordingly.

**What is the key achievement of the Hood residence?**

We worked the house into quite a small site. It's only around 615sqm, so effective space planning was really a key to a compact design that feels much larger. The architectural challenge was to maximise effective space and, to an extent, surprise our clients with what is possible. We were also very fortunate to have a client who is a very skilled builder, in realising the build intention without making many changes to our original ideas.



**This modestly sized quality means you have resisted swallowing the entire allotment – which provides plenty of space left over.**

I think that would have been quite a mistake. You need a certain space around a building and of course we have been able to absorb daylight into the house through space that would have otherwise been lost had we built closer to the site boundary.

**What has been the response?**

It has been a catalyst and created a lot of interest. Naturally our clients have visitors and inevitably they want to know who designed this and so it has led to a lot of interest and, fortunately, more housing of similar style in neighbouring suburbs. We were fortunate and grateful that we had this opportunity because it becomes a showcase for what we can do. The other upside is the number of enquiries from people wanting something similar.

**You've used glass in a structural way rather than treating windows as a subordinate, secondary wall element.**

We enjoy lightweight and transparent building wherever possible. At the same time it should be simple and modern. We like to play with lightweight structures and contrast that with solid materials. You can see that

interplay of solid walls and expanses of glass throughout the house. There is a play of shadows and light from this that really shapes the quality of interiors.

**You used double glazing throughout?**

Yes – except for the pool fence of course. The front feature window of the house is the 'onyx stone' wall above the main entrance. We considered real onyx, but it was prohibitively expensive. We were able to achieve that same glowing translucent quality with a transfer print to the glass and the effect is very convincing at a fraction of the cost.

**Were the main challenges technical or creative?**

Planning the site was difficult. The neighbours wanted us to scale back the design but we managed to convince council that the design works and it is based on design merit and in the end there was no problem negotiating council. The biggest technical challenge was making the sliding doors. They are so big and heavy that they could have been almost unworkable. Fortunately the builder and European Window team devised a system that allowed the doors to slide easily without rows of mullions in between without the wheels impeded by any structure.

The glazing and openings are very consistent and reflect our clients' interest in building a strong connection to the outside.



**How has 3D modelling influenced the way you conceive and present your ideas?**

It's a brilliant tool because most clients don't read plans. Being able to model up the building is fantastic to demonstrate how the spaces work. Clients can be walked through and see the glass openings and observe the sun movements for example. It really provides a whole new level of reassurance. It also helps the builder understand how a project should be constructed. That provides quite a strong advantage in the marketplace.

**Do you feel that in some ways you're something of an endangered species up against the home-builder designer?**

In some ways we do. With so many programs such as Grand Designs, and homemaker magazines people will demand a version of what they've just seen. What they sometimes fail to understand is that there are many variations and details that contribute to a high quality design. It's much more than cut and paste.

**So the upsurge of interest in DIY design has been good and bad?**

The good is that there is a raised general awareness of the possibilities to work outside the square. The downside is that some people believe that they can do most or all of it themselves. You don't watch a program on dentistry and then proceed to extract your own teeth or do your own fillings. Architecture is no different. A good job will pay for itself time after time. A bad job can become the endless toothache.

**You mentioned about getting the spaces, planning and details right.**

One of the appealing qualities of the house is the decisive design that is very clear about the walls and windows. It doesn't blur or dilute the two - where you have a wall it's a wall, and a window is emphatically an expansive piece of glass.

We tried to model up the building and respond to the opportunities so that it would provide views to the sky or shelter from excessive sunlight. The glazing and openings are very consistent and reflect our clients' interest in building a strong connection to the outside.

**What do you consider to be the design highlight?**

Well it might sound too obvious but I do think the use of glass here is fantastic. It contributes a really remarkable quality of openness and airiness. Especially because privacy is not an issue. It's exceptionally comfortable all year round in the way it responds to the light and weather.

It was a pleasure to work with clients that shared the same goal and philosophy.

**Any particular tricks or techniques you've learned?**

Working on a very tight site requires a specific discipline. That is probably the real learning curve and it proved we could insert a quite sizable structure without just lazily filling the site. Visually there are many ways into and out of the house and that accessibility is central to the lifestyle qualities of this house. We also feel quite fortunate to have new technology available Viridian is giving us more freedom to express our design and to allow us to open up structures with greater confidence.



**How do you solve the desire for minimalism yet imbue enough human qualities to avoid the laboratory?**

Materials are very important to warm space. Our client preferred white so it was important to use complementary materials such as timber, marble and glass to contrast that cool appearance.

**Do you feel liberated or constrained by the range of glazing available?**

Right now we have so many choices and varieties in glass and we are really spoilt. I don't have clients that are quite ready to pay for Viridian's self-cleaning glass but I guess over time it will become more affordable. That will be a dream for us to use. Obviously we are able to be much more experimental than was previously possible. If you want to allow light in for example, you must be able to keep the water and heat out. We've noticed that the range of glass is improving all the time.

**Water and glass seem to strike a harmonious relationship.**

We wanted the pool to connect and reflect into the interiors to make the house appear to be floating by the water's edge. These are the type of houses that are saying 'size isn't everything'. Money invested in timeless, quality materials is far better than simply filling the available allotment. We definitely try to understand our clients' needs and lifestyle. There is a very sharp custom design response here that is really tuned to their needs rather than our idea of what might impose.