

Bercy Chen Studio
Riverview Gardens, Austin, Texas, USA



Riverview Gardens is a series of three identical houses inspired by a dramatic waterfall near Austin. Rainwater is directed to the end of each house and falls three storeys in a sheet to form a dramatic water feature which is then collected in a shared pond. The plan of each house is stretched on an axis towards the river to frame the primary view, while creating semi-private outdoor spaces between the houses. A series of glass and vegetative screens divide the main spaces on each floor, creating a filter between public spaces facing the lake and private spaces. The houses are monolithic on the east and west, contrasted with fully glazed facades to the north and south allowing uninterrupted views of the lake. The minimized footprint ensures large shared gardens with dramatic Brazilian hardwood walls. A shared central courtyard serves as part of the circulation, and is framed entirely by clear glass walls to allow views through the interior rooms and out to the lake. The roofs of the houses have been designed as occupiable outdoor rooms with translucent panels to ensure privacy.

Walls 1.064 1.119
Windows 3.006 3.007
Doors 4.019 4.072
Stairs 6.065

Rowan Opat Architects
Courtyard House, Somers, Victoria, Australia



The client's brief was for a low maintenance home to accommodate an expanding family with regular guests. Located in a semi-rural context, the house is designed to function independently of mains water, gas, sewerage and electricity. The depth of the plan, height of ceilings, circulation of air, catchment of heat and controlling of direct natural light are refined to optimize the passive solar effectiveness. While the external walls are lightweight, the fireplace and floor create an effective thermal mass. The need to avoid internal overshadowing resolved itself by arranging the buildings in a square. The spaces in-between then grew into outdoor living areas. The result is a house comprised of outdoor spaces that are an extension of living areas, the interplay of which form verandahs, porticos, catwalks and breezeways. The roofscape directly responds to the interior functions, monumental over the living spaces and low slung over sleeping areas. Darker external colours integrate the house into the shadows of the surrounding bushland.

Walls 1.074
Floors 2.057
Doors 4.022 4.023
Roofs 5.104
Stairs 6.059

Terry Pawson Architects
The Tall House, London, England, UK



Built adjacent to a mature oak tree, the house is made predominantly of timber and brick. The main organizing element of the house is the principal stair that sits centrally in the plan, becoming both conduit and separator between the living spaces that face the garden and the more private bedrooms that are contained in the oak clad tower. This tower element derives its scale from the heights of the buildings along Arthur Road and the proximity of the mature oak tree that marks the corner of the site. This timber tower also takes its material cues from the oak tree and other properties in the vicinity, some of which have expressed timber framed elements on their facades. The simplicity of the plan combined with an interlocking three-dimensional geometry, has produced a rich internal spatial sequence where sunlight penetrates into every corner of the building. The house has been carefully designed for sculpture and paintings to be displayed, without feeling like an art gallery – the house resolutely remains a private domestic space.

Walls 1.043
Windows 3.073
Roofs 5.071 5.088
Stairs 6.054