

THE LOCAL PROJECT



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Concealed Refuge OLI BOOTH ARCHITECTURE — AND MORE

EASTBOURNE EASTOP ARCHITECTS

Words by Hayley Curnow • Photography by Willem-Dirk du Toit • Styling by Jess Kneebone • Architecture and Interior Design by Eastop Architects • Built by Capabuild • Landscape by Acre





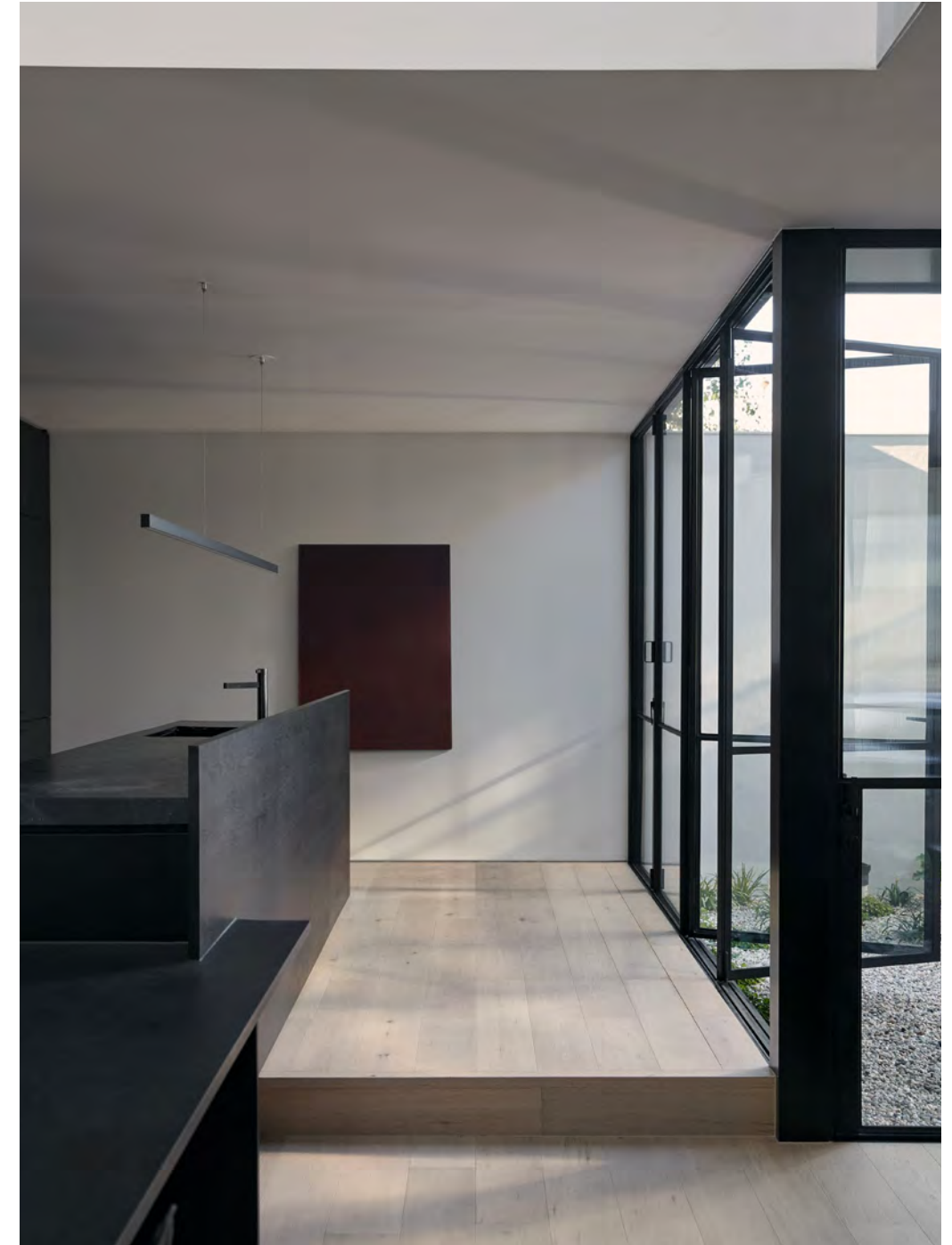
Sculpted by the constraints of its tight, inner-suburban site in Melbourne's Windsor, Eastbourne is an introspective home that skilfully balances privacy and connection. Eastop Architects eschews typical notions of domestic space in favour of hybridised atmospheres for living, offering a reposeful home of unexpected scale and amenity.

Presented with a compact site embedded in a tight, one-way street off busy Chapel Street, Eastop Architects was tasked with designing a new family home that felt secluded and generous. Walled on three sides, the site is constrained in footprint, light and privacy, yet the architects were determined to respond with a bold spatial solution that diminished limitations and elevated the lived experiences of the young family. "It was a complex set of conditions, but we tried to use each quality to our advantage and deliver something greater than you'd expect," reveals Liam Eastop, Director of Eastop Architects.

The home's frontage is conceived as an artistic stronghold that protects the occupants from the hum of Chapel Street, "holding back the buzz of outside," describes Liam. Robust concrete blade walls interspersed with frameless glazing compose a rhythmic podium at ground level, upon which the delicate upper level, comprised of charred timber battens, lightly sits. "The form is abrupt," he concedes, "but operable shutters and planting soften the exchange between public and private." The shutters also serve to animate Eastbourne's relationship with the street, enabling the occupants to adjust the building envelope in response to their specific light and privacy needs.

Given the limited on-street parking, Eastop Architects thoughtfully nestled a pebbled carport into the site – appreciated by one of the homeowners who commutes to Geelong daily. "There is nothing worse than circling the block for a car-park after a long day," observes Liam. In order to maximise the potential of this valuable floor area, Eastop Architects ensured the carport would serve multiple uses. Cleverly fitted with a broad, fluted-glass pivot door at the rear, the space can be opened as an area for gathering while gently filtering light into the interior. "It's a hybrid external room – a carport, an entertaining space and a light filter," he explains.

Maintaining a strong profile to the street, the home's entry is concealed by an angled wall that enables the clients to disappear into the façade. "It secures and buffers the interior, then you enter quickly into a void," Liam describes. Movement is propelled past the home's front bedroom and powder room into a dramatic double-height volume inspired by an artwork by Bruce Nauman, 'Room With My Soul Left Out, Room That Does Not Care' (1984). Eastop Architects has reworked Nauman's three-dimensional crucifix form as an interplay of mass and void elements, a gridded arrangement that frames the void's four-by-four metre skylight with symmetry and reverence. The effect is cinematic and sets a restrained, gallery-like tone that echoes throughout Eastbourne in scale, form and finish.







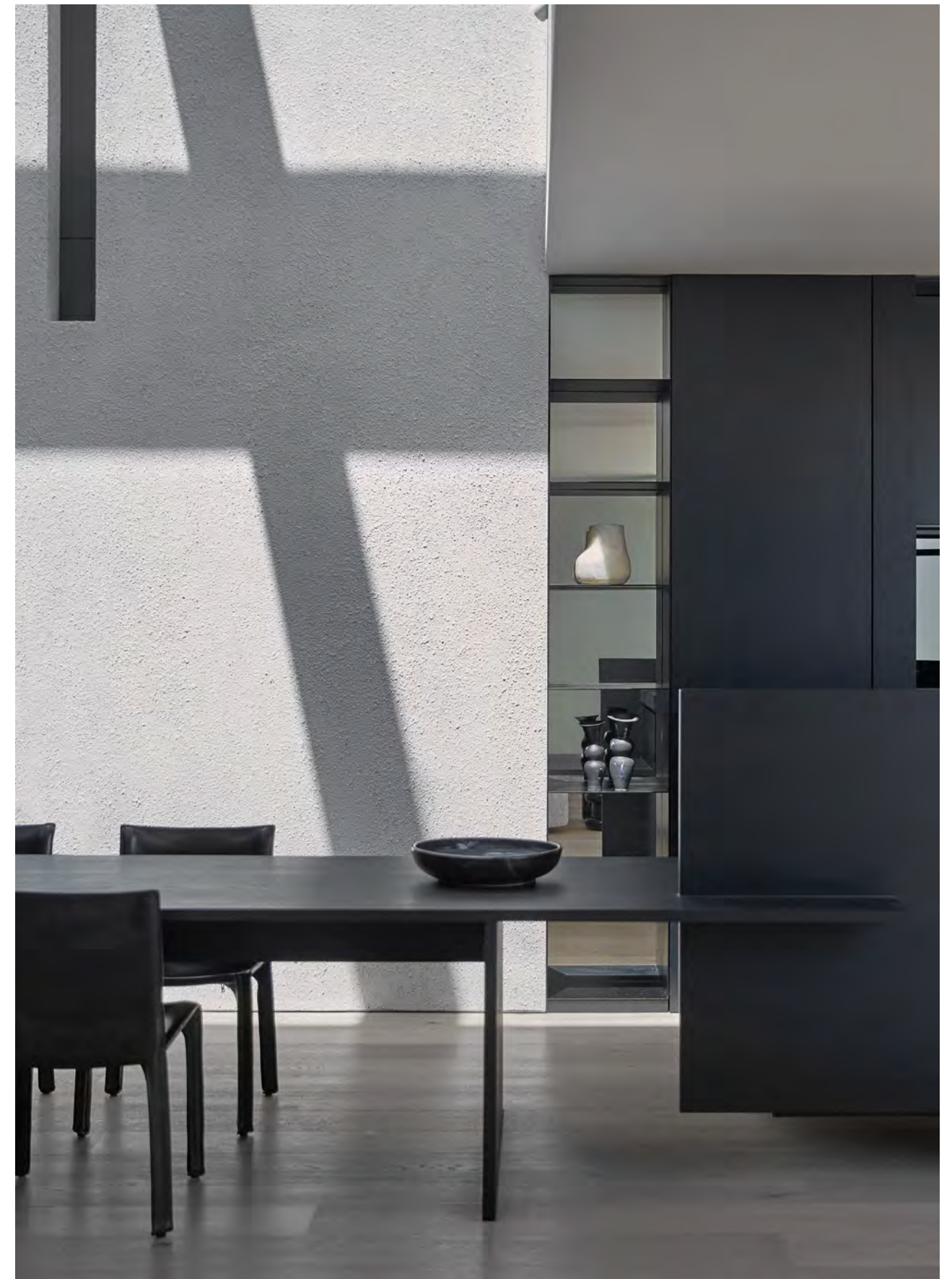
The enclosed courtyard feels like its own room, private yet connected to the outdoors.

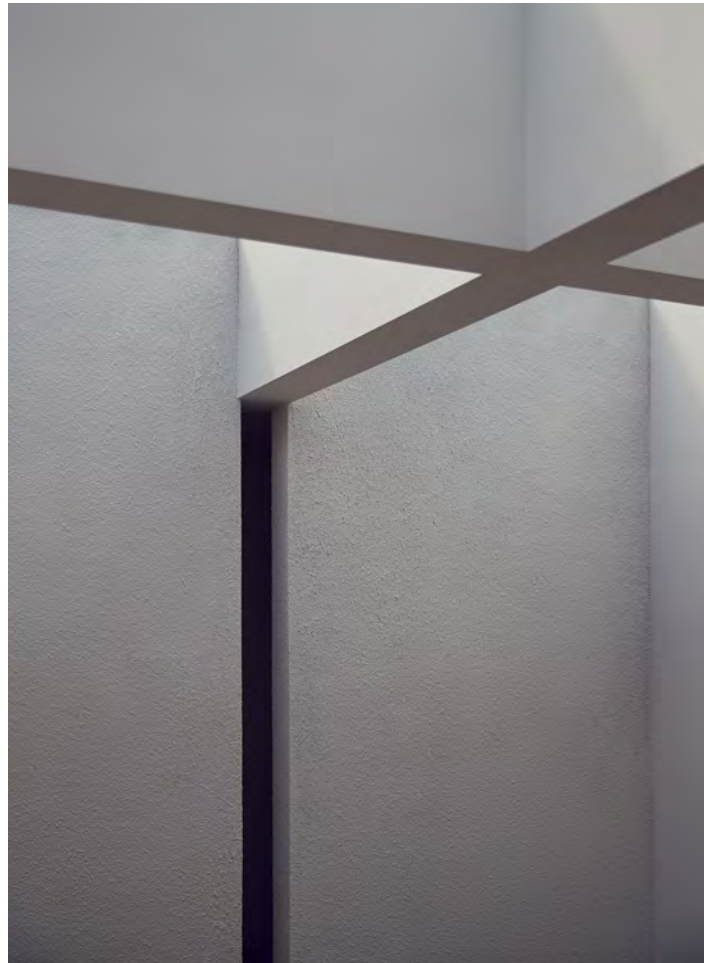
The lightwell informs an open, grid-like spatial layout where each quadrant represents a designated use – dining, kitchen, living and courtyard. The void formalises the dining setting, and a sleek timber dining table finished in black stain sleeves into the kitchen’s island bench. Suspended in a tonal setting, this distinctive, monolithic gesture holds presence as a gallery piece, elevating the clients’ everyday living practices. The kitchen’s rear joinery is interspersed with shelving and mirrored accents to express the material junctions with intent.

Beyond, the living area is anchored by a linear plinth that runs seamlessly into the adjacent pebbled courtyard. Walled on three sides by neighbouring properties, the courtyard is designed as a private garden that obscures the distinction between inside and out. “We used the walls to our benefit, working on the boundaries to create privacy,” reflects Liam. Custom steel-framed glass doors fold away to connect the interior with light and landscape while lush planting, designed in collaboration with Acre, softens the rigidity of the walled perimeter. When the carport’s fluted glass door is open, a cooling cross-breeze flows through the house and sightlines are generously cast from boundary to boundary. Liam believes these ancillary outdoor spaces “feel like additional rooms within the house.”

A textured blade wall cleverly conceals the stairwell to the upper level, articulating the transition to the home’s private spaces. Mirroring the geometry of the skylight void, a rectilinear slot is cut into the wall and invites a soft fall of light upon its rough, stucco finish. The containment of the stairwell creates a sense of spatial compression that emphasises the openness of the top floor. Here, the skylight void frames and illuminates the central circulation areas while private spaces are skilfully configured to maximise access to light and vistas.

Eastop Architects has arranged the generous main bedroom suite along the home’s northern edge to draw in warming natural light. Tempered by the façade’s operable screens and lined with sheer curtains, a series of windows ensure the room feels connected to the street yet well protected from it – a quiet, elevated reprise from the inner-suburban hubbub below. The bathroom creates separation between the main bedroom and the two minor rooms, which each claim views to the lush courtyard below.





Despite the constraints of the site, natural light is harnessed and controlled through a skylight void.



A fluted glass pivot door to the street creates a flexible space that can function as a garage or an entertaining area.

Throughout, the approach to materials is restrained yet layered with contrasts of dark and light, rough and smooth, matte and reflective. “The house is imposing from the street but has a foggy airiness inside,” says Liam. Light plays on the heavily textured walls and the soapy finish of oak floors while interior forms are harnessed as spatial devices as much as functional objects. “We try not to prescribe the use of spaces too heavily so they can serve clients beyond a domestic approach,” he says. “Rather than being dictated by typical notions of what a room needs to be, we aim to create scale-less environments for living.”

Expressing a cohesive language across architecture, interiors and landscape, Eastbourne represents the enduring values of Eastop Architects as a practice. “Our work is a consistent interplay between disciplines, how they manipulate and play off one another to enhance experience,” Liam reflects. Harnessing deft planning to mould qualities of solid and void, Eastbourne is a refuge from the bustling activity of Windsor and a vehicle for light transmission and activity across the site – an evocative and ceremonial place to dwell.