

# THE LOCAL PROJECT



HABITATS

**CITY**



**Eastbourne**  
Eastop Architects

07

**Words** by Hayley Curnow  
**Photography** by Willem-Dirk du Toit  
**Styling** by Jess Kneebone

Sculpted by the constraints of its tight 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.



Presented with a compact site embedded in a one-way street off busy Chapel Street, Eastop Architects was tasked with designing a new family home that felt secluded and generous. The architects were determined to respond with a bold spatial solution that diminished limitations and elevated the lived experience. “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, “holding back the buzz of outside,” describes Eastop. 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.”

Given the limited on-street parking, Eastop Architects nestled a pebbled carport into the site and ensured it 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,” explains Eastop.

Eastbourne’s entry is concealed by an angled wall that enables the clients to disappear into the facade. “It secures and buffers the interior, then you enter quickly into a void,” says Eastop. Movement is propelled past the home’s front bedroom and powder room into a dramatic double-height volume inspired by *Room with My Soul Left Out*, *Room That Does Not Care* (1984), a mesmerising art installation by Bruce Nauman. 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 clients are both creatives who shared an interest in capturing light into the house. It was our second project as a studio with ambitious objectives to deliver a lot in a small space.”





Walled on three sides by neighbouring properties, the courtyard is designed as a private garden that obscures the distinction between inside and out.





The light well informs an open grid-like layout where each quadrant represents a designated use – dining, kitchen, living and courtyard. The void formalises the dining setting, and a sleek, black-stained timber dining table melds into the kitchen’s island bench. Suspended in a tonal setting, this 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.

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 obscures the distinction between inside and out. “We used the walls to our benefit, working on the boundaries to create privacy,” reflects Eastop. 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.



“We try not to prescribe the use of spaces too heavily so they can serve clients beyond a domestic approach. Rather than being dictated by typical notions of what a room needs to be, we aim to create scale-less environments for living.”

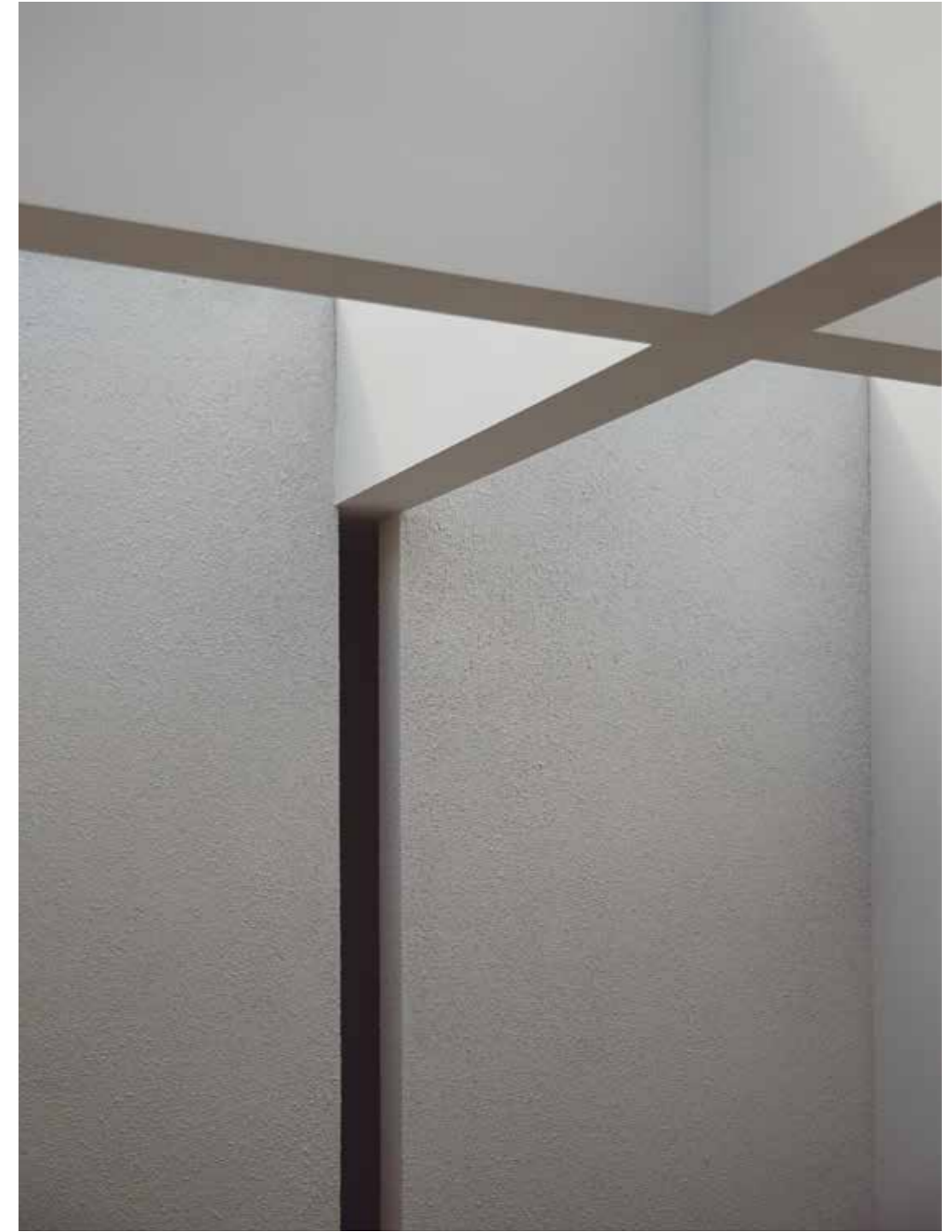


A textured blade wall cleverly conceals the stairwell to the upper level, articulating the transition to the home’s private spaces. Mirroring the geometry of the skylight void, a rectilinear slot is cut into the wall and invites a soft fall of light upon its rough, stucco finish. The containment of the 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 facade’s operable screens, a series of windows ensures the room feels connected to yet well protected from the street – a quiet, elevated reprise from the inner-suburban hubbub below.



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.







Throughout, the approach to materials is restrained yet layered with contrasts of dark and light, rough and smooth, matte and reflective. 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,” says Eastop. “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,” reflects Eastop. Eastbourne is a refuge from the bustling activity, an evocative and ceremonial place to dwell.





