



PROJECT N°

01

Stewart
HOUSE
by Chenchow
Little Architects

• SYDNEY, NSW •

01 This house frames the brilliant blue sky and smoky green angophora forest to the west. The brick plinth of the pool "underlines the view."



This new white-brick house hunkers down into its bushy surrounds, while opening up and framing views to the dramatic landscape.

Words by [David Welsh](#)
Photography by [John Gollings](#)



02 The neutral tones of the internal material palette create a calming environment.

In the mid-morning sun the Stewart House gleams, sitting low and muscular on the west side of the ridge above Whale Beach, Sydney. The house is unreservedly orthogonal, save for a splayed wall and stair that invites the visitor down the entry hall and into the house. Moving from the harsh sun into the cool light of the hallway provides welcome relief from the building heat of the day. The world at large is for a moment left behind; on entry you feel the purpose of the house is to positively influence how you feel – a noble, yet fundamental motive for any holiday house.

The clearly defined symmetricalness of the house, designed by Chenchow Little Architects, reveals itself past the line of the front door. It helps to give the building strength from the ground up – masonry walls define the building along the north and south boundaries, supporting big broad steel beams that span across the entire width of the house. This layered structure sets up the composition of the house in section, acting as a frame for both the house beneath and the view beyond.

On each side of the hall sits a pair of self-contained guest suites,

each with its own private courtyard and bathroom. The central hall manages the visitor gently down the slope of the land to the main living space at the end of the building, the rear terrace framing the brilliant blue sky and smoky green angophora forest that is the backdrop to the house. It's a dramatic landscape: as you walk down the stairs you can see it coming into view, and even though you know what's in store, it still has the power to make you go "wow" when you get to the bottom.

The big 610-millimetre-deep steel beams and their overlay of purlins and ceiling boards are very much a language that can be seen in mid-twentieth-century modern American houses. Some of the Los Angeles Case Study Houses come to mind, and indeed the client did show the architects images of houses by Richard Neutra and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe as part of the briefing process. The client was also enthusiastic about particular aspects of Chenchow Little Architects' previous work, with one image of its Mason House from 2000 having particular resonance. Jørn Utzon's houses in Mallorca were also part of early design discussions, the influence of which can be seen in the formation of the terrace.



03 The deep structural elements of the roof discreetly house retractable fire shutters.


The deep structural elements of the roof also serve to discreetly house retractable fire shutters that would protect the house in the event of a bushfire. The house is situated within a flame zone; often, the onerous (yet necessary) protection requirements that a house needs in such a situation can dominate buildings constructed under these rules. But here, shutters go unnoticed, ready to be deployed if required.

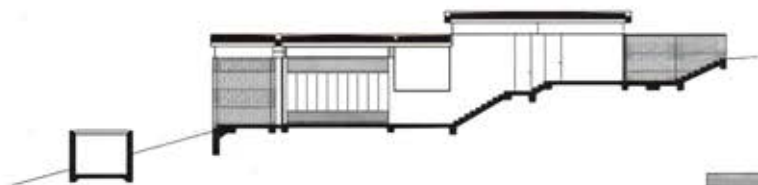
The use of brick in the house was a response to a key requirement of the client's brief: he wanted a white house. Not just a white-painted house, but a white house. A white dry-pressed brick was sourced as the preferred base material for the walls. White bricks can often seem quite monotone and banal when used en masse; here, however, the architects saw the inherent potential in a material that had the capacity to deliver colour as an implicit material characteristic, as opposed to an applied surface.

Rather than the walls simply being laid in a traditional stretcher bond, they have been composed in layered bands ten bricks high, punctuated with strips of butter-coloured fifty-millimetre bricks. Walls around the courtyards and terrace are articulated further

using a "hit and miss" pattern that allows indirect light to filter through, and in the longer term it will provide a masonry lattice for plants to grow around. The effect of the varied textures, colours and patterns give the walls a depth that could not be achieved through any applied surface. Working between the brick walls, travertine floors complement the articulated brickwork and bring a calming resonance to the spaces throughout the house.

A white brick plinth containing a pool and sun deck sits just beyond the western edge of the terrace. Squint bricks are used to give the plinth a sharp edge along its top, making it appear more as a carved masonry container than a simple brick block. It's an interesting way to bring the vista into the house – the brick plinth underlines the view, grounding the building in its setting and reinforcing the intention that the house is set very much as part of the landscape, responding to, not just hovering above, the natural fall of the land.

White houses can be tricky, often obtrusive animals; the Stewart House, however, is the complete opposite: sophisticated, inviting and articulate. 



Section A 1:400



Section B 1:400



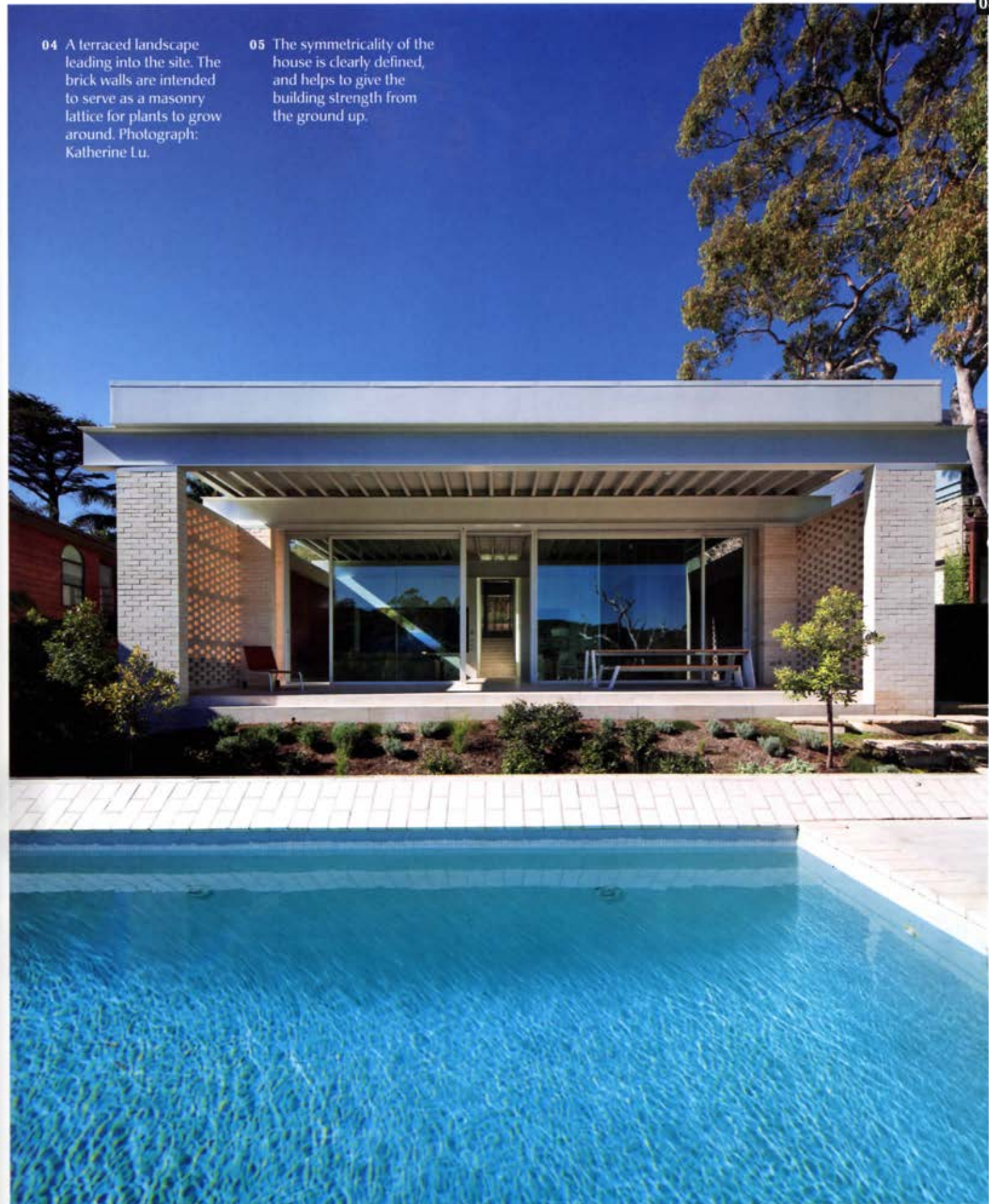
Plan 1:400

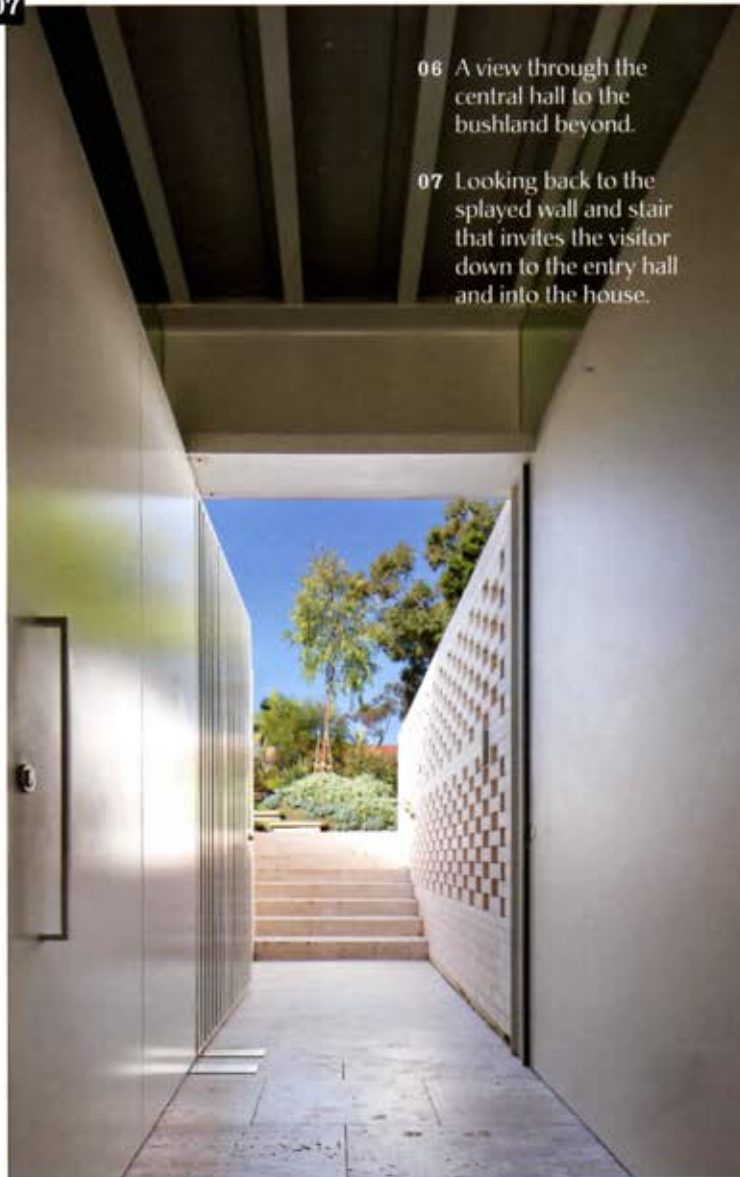


- 1 Carport
- 2 Entry
- 3 Courtyard
- 4 Bedroom
- 5 Living
- 6 Dining
- 7 Kitchen
- 8 Terrace
- 9 Pool
- 10 Pool terrace

04 A terraced landscape leading into the site. The brick walls are intended to serve as a masonry lattice for plants to grow around. Photograph: Katherine Lu.

05 The symmetry of the house is clearly defined, and helps to give the building strength from the ground up.





06 A view through the central hall to the bushland beyond.

07 Looking back to the splayed wall and stair that invites the visitor down to the entry hall and into the house.

Architect

Chenchow Little Architects
Studio 3, 151 Foveaux Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
+61 2 9357 4333
mail@chenchowlittle.com
chenchowlittle.com

Practice profile

A practice that has provided architecture and interior architecture services since 1994, and which has a focus on quality design and detailing.

Project team

Tony Chenchow, Stephanie Little, Laura Meyer

Builder

Pacific Plus Constructions

Consultants

Structural engineer: Partridge Partners
Hydraulic engineer: Taylor Consulting
Landscape architect: Spirit Level

Products

Roofing: Lysaght Klip-Lok 700 in 'Bushland'
External walls: Austral Bricks Bowral architectural dry-pressed bricks in 'Charolais Creme'
Internal walls: CSR Gyprock plasterboard, painted
Windows and doors: Svendour Macquarie Suite aluminium sliding doors in "Surfmist"
Flooring: Artedomus 'Travertine Lait' saw-cut internal and external floor tiles

Lighting: Oty Light Pop 07 from ECC Lighting; Sunny Light and Splash downlights from Euroluce; Coco Flip Coco Pendant light; Lumascape garden lights
Kitchen: Caesarstone quartz benchtop in 'Snow'; Miele cooktop, oven and fully integrated dishwasher; Qasair twin-motor rangehood; Fisher and Paykel fully integrated fridge/freezer; Franke undermount sink; Gessi Oxygene tapware from Abey
Bathroom: Caroma Cube wall basin and Cube wall-hung Invisi 2 toilet from Reece; Rogerseller Cafe wall mixer, Waterose Spin Round shower rose, Tonic shower mixer and Architect paper holder; Kaldewei Saniform Plus bath; Madinoz towel rail

Furniture: Zuster April lounge; Knoll Studio Splay-Leg table and tray from Dedece; Herman Miller Eames walnut stool from Living Edge; Concorde dining table from Poliiform; Porro Neve dining chairs from Space Furniture; Extremis 'Hopper' outdoor table from Corporate Culture

Floor area

715 m² site
239 m² floor

Time schedule

Design, documentation: 12 months
Construction: 12 months