

Piccoli Residence, Griffith, NSW, Australia.

This residence was conceived as two distinct volumes with contrasting programmes (public versus private) connected by a central entry lobby / gallery. The building form and materiality were designed and chosen to reflect these separate functions, with the public wing being a dynamic lightweight form and the private wing being a more static masonry form.

The house has been nestled into a large grass berm, the driveway has been sunk and the main entry point lifted to create a more vertical landscape; a direct reaction to the flatness of the existing semi-rural site. Partially obscuring the building from the street behind the berm also reduces the impact of the dwelling on its traditional, conservative surrounds, allowing the building to slowly reveal itself on approach from the only entry to the cul-de-sac.

The scheme has been split along the northern edge of the gallery by a large stone clad blade wall that acts as thermal mass and anchors the lightweight form. The masonry wing folds away from this blade wall towards the rear, creating an intimate central courtyard on the otherwise quite exposed site. This courtyard and the other main external features (pool, pool cabana, garage berm, dining courtyard) have all been linked back to the building, either directly or via walls in the landscape. This blurs the boundary between the internal and external spaces and effectively extrudes the building programme out into the large site.

Functionally, the internal spaces flow seamlessly into one another through a series of framed openings in the stone clad blade wall. The library at the centre of house can act both as a central social hub or a private meeting area depending on the arrangement of the recessed door panels; a specific client requirement. The gallery entry area was conceived to exhibit their substantial personal art collection, including a Coburn, which takes pride of place on the end wall facing back towards the entry. The house also has a separate children's wing within the 'private' building form, centred around the games room. This room is visible from all the other major living areas, however it can also be easily screened off, again by recessed door panels. The blade wall is also punctuated by frosted openings to a central light well, which doubles as a landscaped secret courtyard for the master ensuite.

All three primary building elements run east-west along the site, with shaded high level glazing to the north, closed facades or substantial sun protection to the east and west, and larger openings to the south. All rooms have natural ventilation and light, and the primary living areas are directly cross ventilated. The building has on site retention, processing and re-use of all stormwater and wastewater, a 5kw solar system that feeds back into the local grid, low-e double glazing and thermally insulated walling and cladding throughout. The single level layout and chosen construction methodology also resulted in low per square meter construction rates and running costs for the high quality of the final product.