

custom-built homes | green sheep collective

## Down to earth

Open yet private, connected yet defined ... this Melbourne residence ticks all of the boxes for style and sustainability



**T**he Goldilocks effect underpins the success of Boulevard House in Melbourne’s Ivanhoe East in that the scale, materiality and design details sit just right on the sloping site and provide just enough for the family of four.

“It was important the home achieve a fine balance between the very large houses in the area, and the idea of more humble, liveable and engaging spaces,” says Shae Parker McCashen, Director of Green Sheep Collective. “This building could not be big for big’s sake. Every space had to work hard within its purpose, and within its context.”

Thick, rammed earth walls ground the house and reveal the framework’s numerous lines and plugs. Boasting unique natural beauty and texture, the appearance of the 400mm walls changes as the sun makes its daily pilgrimage from east to west across the sky. As well as its robust nature and ability to create privacy, the rammed earth also warms the house with its significant thermal mass.

Practical and picturesque, the walls create and define the two east-west pavilions, which are connected by a central core and employ passive solar design principles to allow all rooms in the house to take best advantage of the north sun and cross ventilation.

Steel window surrounds intersect the walls to create deep window reveals that form window seats and benches, which cantilever outside the building and frame views towards the city. “Deep window reveals create playful spaces in which to sit and unwind, to engage with the architecture and its materiality, prepare a meal or sit and enjoy the garden,” adds Shae.

The substantial three-level home is highly responsive to its climate, orientation, slope, view and neighbourhood context. Three bedrooms, a mezzanine play area and shared bathroom are perched on the upper level, while the middle (ground) floor houses the guest bedrooms, study and third bathroom along with the primary living spaces and external deck, leading to a 25m lap pool and considered landscaping. A storage area and laundry join the



Shae Parker McCashen,  
Director,  
Green Sheep Collective

Photography: Emma Cross Photographer Words: Louise Smithers







**EXPERT TIP:** Offering natural beauty and significant thermal mass, rammed earth walls are a great option for those eager to achieve optimum sustainability.

showroom-style garage and workshop at basement level.

Timber makes a prominent impression inside, where the material was used to cover the walls, floors and ceilings to subdue the atmosphere and offer a sense of cosiness. “Externally, timber features strongly to humanise the building while contributing to its reduced carbon footprint,” says Shae. “The timber fins on the front facade define the two levels of the building, temper light and heat, and provide privacy while helping to ground the building and separate it from the street.”

The home connects communal and intimate spaces using double and triple-height voids, split levels, private courtyards and linking bridges. For example, a double height ceiling in the kitchen and dining area connects the

open-plan area to the mezzanine play area. This enables a seamless flow between zones yet ensures their separation.

Capturing the northern aspect of the site made it easier to implement natural lighting, heating and cooling. “The steep site presented exciting opportunities to take advantage of a northern aspect and southern views to trees along the Yarra River, and the city beyond,” says Shae. “It’s designed to be light, open to the garden and give an expansive sense of space, but at the same time resolves a number of potentially conflicting ‘moods’ — bold yet nurturing, open yet private, connected yet defined.”

Protective and approachable, Boulevard House is an exemplar of passive solar design that was built to last by collaborating architect and builder, Elyte Focus.

#### The facts

Location of home: Ivanhoe East Vic  
Time taken to build: 21 months  
Year completed: 2019

#### The figures

Size of home: 543sqm  
Size of land: 736sqm  
Bedrooms: 4  
Bathrooms: 3  
Floors: 3

#### The details

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