

Sanctuary

MODERN GREEN HOMES

ISSUE
58

SMALL CHANGE
SPECIAL

Tiny Tassie treasure; latest eco-concrete options;
making space work harder; urban microforests

When less is more

Homes going small on
size, site and budget,
but big on heart



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**TALINA EDWARDS**

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 Certified Passive House Designer
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What kind of house did you grow up in?

A typical early-20th-century wooden ‘tent’ – poor orientation, no insulation, single glazing – in the leafy outer suburbs of Melbourne. When I was about five, my dad designed a passive solar extension: split-level to suit the site, the living area faced north, it was built with handmade local clay bricks internally for thermal mass, and it had a timber ceiling with exposed rafters.

What was the first design project you were really proud of?

I’d love to say my very first custom-designed home, built from Lego when I was a child! More seriously though, one of my own practice’s first projects certainly set the bar very high for our sustainable design philosophy. The Owl Woods Passive House (see *Sanctuary 50*) was one of the first certified Passive Houses in Australia. It’s all-electric, timber-framed to keep embodied carbon low, and we embraced biophilic design to connect to nature. It’s healthy, resilient, low-energy and lovely to be in.

What is your favourite sustainable building, and why?

I love the incredible organic sculptural form of the Green School in Bali. It’s perfect for its climate (completely open-air classrooms in a tropical region), made with locally-sourced and low embodied-carbon bamboo, has a holistic approach to sustainability and it’s beautiful. If only this type of design was appropriate for our climate here in regional Victoria!

What is it about the way architecture is done that you’d love to see change?

I’d love to see the entire industry evolve beyond sustainability (doing ‘less bad’) towards a regenerative design ethos (doing ‘more good’). This means having a deep connection with and respect for nature. We can learn a lot from our Indigenous community about what it means to ‘care for country’ and we can pursue the Living Building Challenge, which aims for a future that is socially just, culturally rich and ecologically restorative.

What’s your dream house?

It’s a home that is ‘just enough’ in size and it behaves like a tree. It’s beautiful, grounded, part of the local ecosystem and connected to country. It is energised by the sun’s rays, collects its own rainwater, and is cooled by its canopy and by embracing the winds. It provides shade, shelter and safety for its inhabitants. It’s a home that is shared generously with the community as an example of how we can co-exist in better ways. It’s a place of wellness and ease, that will continue to co-evolve over time.

**ANDY MARLOW**

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 Works in NSW and around Australia

What kind of house did you grow up in?

A 1970s volume-built 100-square-metre, three-bedroom home in the UK that made me appreciate the value of every square metre. It was a firsthand lesson in poorly performing homes and led to my passion for better quality homes for everyone, although it took me a long time to work that out!

What was the first design project you were really proud of?

After Lego projects, the Sustainable Buildings Research Centre at the University of Wollongong was the first project I worked on from start to finish. It was Australia’s first certified Living Building and was a great exemplar of what is possible when a team is focused on the big picture from day one.

What is your favourite sustainable building, and why?

The one not built, the one fixed, the one built from found objects, the one that can be dismantled and reassembled elsewhere ... No favourite, just the right one for the right place and time. Although a lot of the North American highrise retrofit projects are inspirational in a world where ‘knock down’ is in vogue.

What’s on your drawing board right now?

Lots of Passive House projects! Current favourites include work with a prefab company on bringing Passive House performance to a wider audience (i.e. more cost effectively), a genuine retrofit to a brick veneer house in Orange where the brief is to “do what is needed for the world” while not getting any bigger, and lots of homes for caring, passionate families who just want to do right by their kids and the planet.

What is it about the way architecture is done that you’d love to see change?

I’d love to see more focus on how buildings work as well as how they look: how they work for comfort, for health and for the planet. *Sanctuary* is an outlier in this space, which is great, but we need more focus on what sustains us (and yes, beauty is incredibly important but not at any cost).

What are you grateful for (professionally)?

That our team is able to make the world a slightly better place every day through what we do, and that our clients seek us out because they want to contribute to that world and set an example that positive change is possible and within the means of the many, not just the few.