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THE ART *of work*



The best elements of working (almost) from home are incorporated into the new offices of Alexander & Co in Sydney's Bondi Junction.

Photography **ANSON SMART** Styling **CLAIRE DELMAR**



WHO OR WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR ENDURING CREATIVE INFLUENCES? Jeremy Bull, principal: I have always been inspired by architectural modernists and classicism. But I am a lover of history in all its fullness, from the pop of the cultural 'now' to the patina of the age-old structures. IS THERE A COMMON ELEMENT, AESTHETIC OR APPROACH THAT RUNS THROUGH YOUR WORK? The "mistakes" that result from handmade and natural things are gorgeous. We combine my contemporary and modernist architectural training with an interest in the makers and their materials and technologies. HOW DID ALEXANDER HOUSE COME ABOUT? I saw a need to develop away from our old commercial, open-plan office. I thought a flexible, purpose-built co-working space could better showcase our design work "in the flesh", and our ecological mission would better suit our organisational context. It also provides a working environment which is more healthy for our team. It's been described as "a home for working in" rather than a traditional office – more like an artistic residential environment than a utilitarian commercial one. Tess Glasson, marketing director: Living next door, it was always an idea, a seed planted 10 years ago when we bought our home (the adjoining property to Alexander House). The idea of a space that showed our work within walking distance bubbled away for a while! WHAT APPEALED TO YOU ABOUT THE SITE? DID IT POSE CHALLENGES? Jeremy: Living next door is a great start! The commute is wonderfully short and my children are now a part of the action, which Tess and I love. The site is also central. It was important that our team could,



This page, from top "We use Alexander House like a residential case study, showing details we can build and the materials we can use," says Jeremy Bull, who worked with Fairweather Constructions on the build. On the terrace, 'Hima' furniture by Re.Studio Collective, Scala crazy paving from Eco Outdoor and outdoor shower from Slightly Garden Obsessed. In the living room, CDF Studio sofa, Italma Wood Art armchair by Jean Gillon and Roche Bobois coffee table from The Vault Sydney. Custom sideboard designed by Alexander & Co and made by Hugh McCarthy. Lutyens bricks from Natural Brick Co. Opposite page, clockwise from top left In the kitchen, joinery by Jonathan West with custom island finish by Concrete Bespoke and splashback in Calacatta Viola marble from Worldstone. Table lamp by Sarah Nedovic Gaunt. Custom pendant light by Alexander & Co from The Lighting Guild. Artwork on shelves by Maria Kostareva from Curatorial+Co. Exterior walls in Dulux 'White Century'. On the mezzanine, reclaimed Oregon timber for the ceiling from Swadlings.



"IT'S BEEN DESCRIBED AS 'A HOME FOR WORKING IN' RATHER THAN A TRADITIONAL OFFICE."



This page "I would describe our work as an exploration of 'storytelling through scale and detail,'" says Jeremy, with Alexander & Co marketing director Tess Glasson (left, also his wife) and senior designer Shelby Griffiths. "Creativity lies in the juiciness of storytelling and memories; it is a river of make-believe." Opposite page Alexander & Co's communal spaces are inviting and nurturing, such as this eating area. Custom table designed by Alexander & Co with marble top by Worldstone. Banquette by CDF Studio upholstered in 'Tundra' leather from Instyle. Krüger 'Arkade' dining chair from Fred International. Sconce by 27hundred. Artwork by Greg Wood from Otomys.



PORTRAIT RUSSELL HORTON

This page Alexander House is “unique to our portfolio of projects, perhaps a little more daring than we can be with some of our clients”, says Jeremy. In the living room, Pierre Jeanneret ‘Easy’ teak chairs from Tigmi Trading. Miniforms ‘Soda’ side table in Petrol from James Richardson Furniture. ‘Snoot in a Can Mini’ brass wall lights from The Lighting Guild. Artwork by Justin Williams. Opposite page Reclaimed Oregon timber for the ceiling is one of the library’s wooden features, along with oak floorboards from Havwoods, custom joinery by Alexander & Co and built by CDF Studio, and a custom kidney-shaped table by Alexander & Co and made by Hugh McCarthy. Knoll ‘Platner’ armchairs. Custom pendant light by 27hundred. Rug from Cadrys. Custom leather curtains made by Home Upholsterer in ‘Verona’ leather from Instyle. Sculpture on table by Tania Rollond. Artworks on bookshelves by (left) Denise Hojdysek and Jack Lanagan Dunbar.



by and large, commute to work with little fuss. From a site-specific perspective, there is a west-facing site cross-fall, hence managing climatic impacts but allowing filtered light could have been tricky. Tess: Taking clients from a traditional office environment and introducing a new framework for “work” and discussion has been something I’ve loved witnessing. So much of the space is used as an extension of our house as well, outside of working hours. ALEXANDER HOUSE IS A GREAT SHOWCASE FOR YOUR PRACTICE. HOW DID YOU BALANCE WORKING REQUIREMENTS AND CREATIVE AMBITIONS? Jeremy: The house is beautifully detailed but robust. Materials were selected to feel already aged, like they came from an old church. Stone and concrete, solid brass; it all ages gracefully.

WHAT OTHER IDEAS AND INFLUENCES INFORMED YOUR CHOICES? Jeremy: The floor plan is uncomplicated. Bathrooms stack on top of each other and a stair core runs from bottom to top. Structures are exposed; concrete slabs, beams, ceilings and walls. We used, where possible, harvested timber linings and reclaimed material. It feels a little like a relic, an old barn or church somewhere. HOW DID THE BUILDING’S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT SHAPE YOUR DESIGN DECISIONS? Jeremy: That was paramount. Alexander House is our testing ground for sustainability, both material and cultural. We wanted to provide our own power, reduce our carbon footprint and create no operational waste. We wanted the building to have an end-of-life plan, where materials could be re-used, composted





This page, from left The workspace is also used for entertaining clients. Bar trolley designed by Alexander & Co and made by Hugh McCarthy. Brass balustrade by Chunk! Design. Ceramic sculpture by Tania Rollond. Marble sculpture from Olsen Gallery. Landscaping by Dangar Barin Smith can take meetings outdoors. 'Hima' outdoor furniture by Re.Studio Collective. Door frames from Empire Steel. Opposite page and below In the basement dining space, custom American oak dining table by Alexander & Co. 'S32' chairs from Anibou. Tablecloth from In Bed. Custom ceiling light from The Lighting Guild. Reclaimed hardwood timber for the ceiling. Curtains in Mokum 'Kyoto' fabric from Homelife Furnishings. Sculpture on the table from Curatorial+Co. Artwork by McLean Edwards.

or repurposed without creating landfill. We have managed quite well within this brief and continue to add additional solar and another Tesla Powerwall to manage the constraints of our usage.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE COMPLETED BUILDING? Jeremy: It is the culmination of many of the technical and creative skills we have honed – a calming house that explores a new, important chapter focused upon ecological and social sustainability.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE DESIGN ELEMENTS? Jeremy: The kitchen is magical. The volume, the materials, the light. It is a lovely symphony. Each room within the building has a specific story to tell. It's all my favourite because of this. Rooms for moods.

Tess: I love the sanctuary, drama and theatre of the library. The bookshelf and custom leather curtains create a sense of privacy.

Shelby Griffiths, senior designer: The collection of windows and brick *brise soleils* were a large part of the design, while considering the location and proximity of neighbours. The placement of each window was located to frame a particular view.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT WORKING AT ALEXANDER HOUSE? Jeremy: I love seeing people occupy the rooms differently, coming and going as they need. It's delicious and proof of concept.

Shelby: I also enjoy how the team and clients interact with the space. The ebb and flow of each day is so different. Sometimes the House can be peaceful and quiet; other times it's a hive of energy.





This page, clockwise from top A staircase in Bianco Venato marble from SNB Stone leads to the attic housing a bedroom and the bathroom and steam room. Custom pendant light by 27hundred. Untreated pine for the ceiling from Swadlins and reclaimed hardwood for the bedroom floor from Ironwood. 'Distrikt' bed by District Eight. Floor lamp from The Vault Sydney. Wall light from Anchor Ceramics. Rug from Armadillo. Bed linen from Ondene. 'Rosso Crema' tumbled subway tiles from Teranova envelop the bathroom and steam room. 'Yokato' towel rail and tapware from Brodware. Marble side table from Manyara Home.



COULD YOU DESCRIBE A TYPICAL WORKDAY? Jeremy: I am very scheduled most of the day, while making sure I start and end with my children and family. The proximity allows me to be very flexible. On the whole, I'm more productive and no less busy!

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE SPACE EVOLVE? Tess: I love the idea of an artist in residence. I'm in discussions with art galleries and artists about testing the idea of a 'moving gallery', where art will be hung here and the space opened for the artistic community.

WHICH OTHER DESIGNERS, ARTISTS, MUSICIANS, WRITERS AND ARCHITECTS DO YOU ADMIRE? Jeremy: My reading list includes Carlo Rovelli, Jim Collins (classic business literature) and Nassim Taleb. I still listen to Tricky, Nina Simone, Elvis Costello and Public Enemy. Local architects like Chenchow Little, Vokes and Peters, Smart Design Studio; not-so-locals Peter Zumthor, Herzog & De Meuron; Le Corbusier, Aalto, Mies van der Rohe and Utzon.

WHAT OTHER PROJECTS ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO? Jeremy: I think the coming year will continue to see us specialise the practice fairly positioned in the luxury residential market.

Tess: I'm also passionate about educating and engaging around reconciliation. We've engaged Susan Moylan-Coombs from The Gaimaragal Group to host cultural conversations. I look forward to sharing those with our team and wider community. alexanderand.co