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DESIGN IN FOCUS

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## PILLOW TALK... BETWEEN THE (HOTEL) SHEETS WITH GARY CHANG

French Media... A video library adapts to its surroundings

Missionary Man... Joey Ho designs an oasis





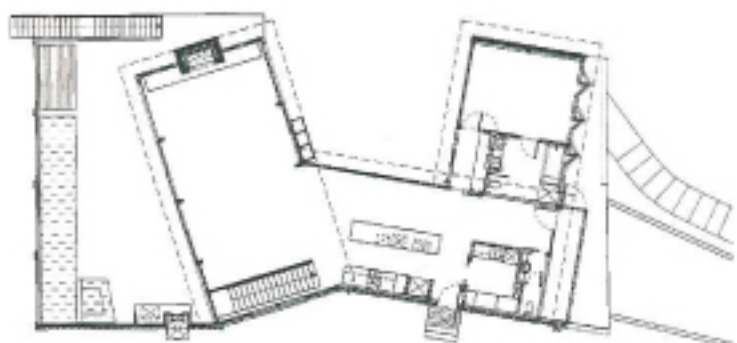
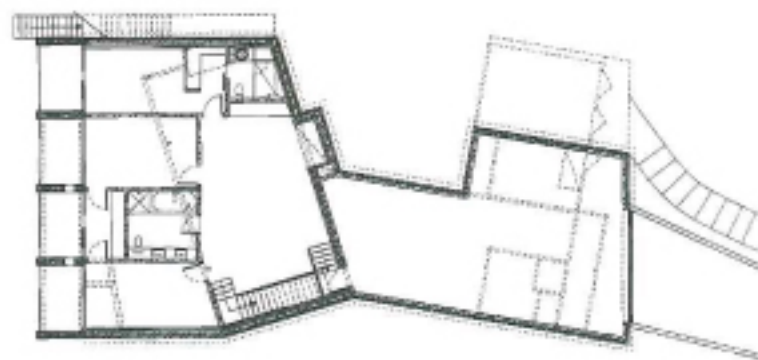
# DIGS DOWN UNDER

## ANTHONY GIONFRIDDO ARCHITECT

For a seaside house in Victoria, Australia, architect Anthony Gionfriddo has generously situated an ensemble of three rectangular forms across a fairly restricted and mundane box-shaped site. The project's interest derives in part from the juxtaposition of his simple yet intricately positioned pieces and the landscape, and in part from his use of materials, including textured stone, wood and concrete. The latter elicits a powerful response vis-a-vis the setting – the sloping site and the strong sunlight – and helps convey a general character of leisure and tranquility. Undoubtedly, the simplicity of the finishes and details and indeed the rooms themselves (underfurnished to advantage) all underscore this, so that while the house doesn't seem overly 'vacational' or resort-like, it does manage to cast a kind of calming spell, like good minimalist architecture always does.

Gionfriddo separates the principal living areas from the private sleeping ones vertically; the ground level for the former and the latter below. The site section permits this, without any 'basement' feeling creeping in. On the main floor, a large open kitchen holds the middle bar of the plan, distinguished by a huge white marble slab island. Beyond is the ample living room, which inhales the grand views through a huge glazed wall, situated on a long terrace edged by a dramatic lap pool. Finishing this level is the master suite, located in the front portion of the building and angled off in its own wing. Underneath the pool are the porches opening off of each bedroom. The lower plinth of bedrooms creates the upper terrace, and also furnishes the contrast between a more introverted base and transparent top. Materials run through however, so it's not just a one-liner. The architect doesn't ram home the sectional divide, so that the house reads more holistically than as two parts.

The building's location on a sand ridge within dramatic view of the Mornington Peninsula National Park clearly influenced the selection of building and finish materials. Interestingly, it has lent an aspect of 'toughness' to the building,







In contrast to some of the more common seaside vacation house conventions, walls seem thick, apertures deep enough to accent shadows and corners, and the stocky overall proportions of the building's mass give it a pleasing solidity not overwhelmed by a rugged, dramatic landscape. The client and architect were right to go this route, and avoid the wispy softness that sometimes plagues occasional-use retreats. Gionfriddo utilised practical materials carefully matched, including zinc silicate primer on exposed steel, unsealed cedar cladding and screening, aluminium windows and doors, polished concrete floors and terraces, and rubble stone wall cladding. Indeed, the construction methods were kept similarly straightforward, allowing construction expedience and cost control.

The Hill House at Victoria could be described as an effort to eschew grand gestures or melodramatic attempts at visual flourish in favour of a quieter, more long-term language and small delights. It is the kind of building that will quickly seem to have been there forever, or at least not be easily dated to a specific era or style. This is a good thing. It expresses a sort of humility regarding its site and the robust effects of oceanic climates. This house will be here for a while.



Photography: Dan Magree