

RESIDENTIAL

TWO PLATFORMS

A 'vessel' beneath the rose gums

Elements of cave, platform and canopy, plus exquisite timber detailing and craftsmanship, set this beautiful North Sydney home apart.





Built over an escarpment in the densely urbanised heritage conservation area about 35 km north of central Sydney, the design anticipates a sequential experience: entering from the street to a tranquil courtyard with a linear pond and stone wall, through concrete and masonry cave-like northern rooms, to light-filled open space beneath a sculptural canopy roof, a room with the ‘security’ of encompassing solid walls and the prospect of views over the valley. Two platforms launch from the anchoring escarpment.

Unexpectedly, a raw rock face is revealed below.

‘Angophora House’ refers to *Angophora costata*, a beautiful forest tree of eastern Australia, closely related to the eucalyptus and known variously as smooth-barked apple, Sydney red gum and rose gum.

Several magnificent specimens cling to the escarpment running through the site. The design slips beneath the canopies of these beautiful trees, with their smooth, pink bark and twisted limbs. ‘Angophora’ derives from

the Greek words ‘angos’, meaning ‘vessel’ or ‘vase’, and ‘phero’ meaning ‘to bear or carry’, in reference to the fruit.

“A house is also a vessel, containing the lives of its inhabitants,” says architect Richard Cole. “The nature of the vessel contributes to how the inhabitants experience their day-to-day existence, and how they are placed in the world.” In this case the inhabitants are the architect’s parents and the vessel is crafted to accommodate their particular way of being.





“The design called for minimal tolerances, requiring a high level of skill and cooperation between trades.”

Everything is designed for ‘ageing in place’.

The brief called for a compact but spacious-feeling, light-filled house to accommodate the needs of a couple as they aged. Practical elements like oversized push handle doors that open both ways, a dramatic lift to the garage below and separable accommodation for future carers are incorporated. But beauty, character and creation of experiential opportunities were paramount. A sheltering timber-lined roof invites northern sun, falls with the

slope and captures framed views of the adjacent angophora trees. The escarpment is retained, raw and open to the rooms of the lower ground floor. Insulated moveable timber walls are transformative.

Cole says the house is a testament to the dedicated craftsmen who built it. From the concrete, steelwork and sliding timber windows and screens, to the timber ceiling and cladding, joinery and frameless and curved glazing – all elements are custom-made and hand-crafted.





[TAP FOR SLIDE SHOW](#)

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“The design called for minimal tolerances, requiring a high level of skill and cooperation between trades. The dining room table – a design project in itself – used CNC router prototypes combined with hand-shaping to refine the design.”

Material selection focused on quality and durability. Timber is limited externally to reduce maintenance and an overall richness is achieved through the simple detailing and beauty of natural materials.

Tallowood is the predominant timber, used for vertical weatherboards, sculptured roof lining, double-glazed sliding doors, flush panel, veneered internal doors, solid front door, decking, and tongue and groove flooring. ■

PROJECT Angophora House, Avalon Beach, NSW

ARCHITECT Richard Cole Architecture

BUILDER Prime Form Construction

ENGINEER Barrenjoey Consulting

LANDSCAPES Trish Dobson/Jane Britt

WOOD PRODUCTS Tallowood (various interior elements and exterior cladding)

PHOTOGRAPHY Simon Wood