01

SLOTTED BETWEEN TWO GIANT BLOOD WOOD TREES, IT IS A LIGHTWEIGHT CONSTRUCTION WITH THE FILIGREE FRAMEWORK SPRINGING FROM ITS FOUR STEEL FOOTINGS. THE STEEL CHASSIS IN-FILLED WITH GLAZING AND PLYWOOD FLOOR AND WALLS, FORMS AN ENTIRELY CONVINCING COMPOSITION. VIEWED FROM THE ROADWAY, THE WEST ELEVATION PRESENTS AS AN INTRIGUING TIMBER-PANELLED AND GLASS FAÇADE THAT INVITES FURTHER INSPECTION.

02

HIGH MODERNITY

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY PETER HYATT

WE ARE ALMOST USED TO ARCHITECTURAL GEMS TUCKED AWAY IN THE SUNNY SUB-TROPICAL NORTHERN COASTAL AREAS OF AUSTRALIA. BUT THEY ARE INVARIABLY DOMESTIC BUILDINGS. PETER HYATT DISCOVERS ONE WHICH ISN'T. IT IS THE STUDIO OF BARK DESIGN, A YOUNG PRACTICE WHICH IS GOING PLACES IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

Noosa Head's verdant hinterland frames pockets of magic. Lindy Atkin and Stephen Guthrie's new studio is simply dazzling. Here is the big idea vigorously distilled and displayed, if not for the world to easily see, at least to seduce passers-by. The setting might appear (at least to beach lovers) as the booby prize. But it turns out to be a winner. The scramble to build near the ocean has left the door open in the hinterland. Atkin and Guthrie not only have a sublime studio/loft for their dress circle setting, but also live in the nearby rainforest.

The project has all of the qualities associated with a sub-tropical existence. It embraces climate, breezes and music in the sort of invisible interplay which adds to the majesty of aspect. It almost contradicts our understanding of workplace. C'mon, who can actually work in a setting this good? Atkin and Guthrie created Bark Design. The name alludes to the skin of trees rather than canine aggro and the building they have designed resonates to this name in the *frisson* they show in their response to the climate and setting. It is an elegant tree-house which signals something made with modest means, but extravagance of ideas.

Occupying a dramatic spur worthy of a medieval castle, the studio is an exemplar of lightweight modernity. Trying neither to over-stimulate the senses, nor so 'eco' as to be daggy, it is a prodigious response extracted with an economy of line and space.

Slotted between two giant Blood Wood trees, it is a lightweight construction with the filigree framework springing from its four steel footings. The steel chassis in-filled with glazing and plywood floor and walls, forms an entirely convincing composition. Viewed from the roadway, the west elevation presents as an intriguing timber-panelled and glass façade that invites further inspection. The building displays a linear form across its two levels. The ground floor has provision for up to five employees, while services plugged into the west wall include library, storage, kitchen, laundry and toilet. The mezzanine provides a library/reading room, sleeping quarters and ensuite.

Access is by a series of floating ramps to the northerly projecting deck. This in turn provides an additional vantage point to connect the lightly dressed structure with its surrounds. A large, fully retractable glass door opens to the open-plan office space that incorporates a small 'boardroom'. Drawing tables and work stations are logically arranged with monitors facing away from the direct light of the easterly aspect. Internally, there is a rigorous order to drawing boards and work stations which juxtaposes the otherwise informal air. This instinctive ordering of space and function endorses the wisdom of Lloyd Rees' observation: "The soul of architecture is organisation".

The inclined glazing helps minimise reflections, while the overhang to the east, canopy of foliage and remote-controlled blinds provide additional control over light and heat levels. >>

01 THE WEST ELEVATION OF THE LIGHTWEIGHT CONSTRUCTION WHICH STANDS ON A STEEL CHASSIS BETWEEN TWO GIANT BLOODWOOD TREES **02** SECTION VIEWED FROM THE NORTH