

From the Line to the Cube—Terroir at Liverpool Crescent

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Liverpool Crescent is an awkwardly located street that runs high up along the steeply sloping northern slope of a wide valley to the west of the Hobart CBD. Here, in a somewhat incongruous setting (further along the road is a white-painted, crenellated, castle-style home, while next door is a traditional weatherboard house with verandah), Terroir has designed what is surely one of its more visually striking buildings—an enigmatic cube in charcoal and white that stares out from among the trees and across the valley to the Derwent River beyond. The front of the building is a single, flat vertical plane, of which the dark-tinted windows are themselves part, and into which even the large door of the double garage is neatly integrated. The main entry is from the front of the building at the base, and it leads one directly upward, along a more or less enclosed, but nevertheless well-lit, corridor and stairway, into the main part of the house on the floor above.

One emerges from the lower level facing in the direction of the full-length windows that look out onto the building's rear courtyard, and immediately there is a sense of the building itself opening out. To the left are the private spaces of the house, the bedrooms and bathroom, while to the right, and also to the front and back, are the public spaces, dining area, kitchen, living room, office space, and so forth. Each of these spaces has something of the same cubic feel that is evident in the house's exterior presentation, and the overall impression is of a series of cubic or rectilinear spaces set alongside, and sometimes almost intersecting with, one another, and all of which are held within the single rectilinear form of the building as well. As a result, the overall design brings with it a very strong sense of spatial integration (the image that comes to mind is of a single cabinet containing multiple and varied compartments)—an integration that extends to encompass the exterior as well as interior spaces of the building and its surroundings. This is achieved partly through the way in which the full-length windows (which enable magnificent land and water views to the

south and east) are constituted as simple transparencies in the building's skin, as well as through the use of light shafts that bring external light into the heart of the building in the stairway and the bathroom, and through the way in which the intersection of internal spaces, made evident through cut-out sections of wall that disturb the usual discrete arrangement of rooms, also extends to the space beyond the external walls. This means that in the bedrooms, windows appear as simply cut-out sections of wall, analogous to the cut-out sections that also appear internally (the external space of the building thus appears as another of the spaces with which the cubic forms of the rooms, and the house, appear to intersect and overlap).

Here, what also becomes evident is the appearance of the building as constituted entirely through, the intersection of a series of vertical and horizontal planes, and, consequently, the walls of the building draw attention to themselves purely in their function as demarcating sections of space—as the skin that gives materiality to the rectilinear structure of the building. The architect's statement, from Terroir, describes the project as a new direction for the firm, a project in which the line no longer plays the dominant role in spatial distribution. The line is not absent here, however, but rather is used and configured in a different way that is itself determined by the specific requirements of the site. As deployed in another Terroir project, Peppermint Bay, the line determines the primary axis of the site horizontally—the line moves from the front of the site to a specific point within the site, and, in so doing, establishes a curving pathway along which the main elements of the building are organised. There is no possibility of such a horizontally linear arrangement here—the steepness of the slope alone rules this out—but the line remains, firstly in the straight movement from the front of the building to the rear by means of the stairway (a line that begins in a small and enclosed space at the front and bottom of the house, and emerges into a cleared space at the centre that looks out to the open courtyard at the rear—the line thus 'performs' an opening-up of the house and of the spaces it contains, and also enables) and, secondly, in the form of the vertical axis that is given in the upright manner of the building's square situation on its site and around which all of its spaces are gathered.

Of course, the cubic form that is such a key element in this project is itself present in some of Terroir's previous designs (including some of the earliest, from 2000, at Tranmere and Longley), but nowhere else does it appear in quite the same consistent and self-evident

fashion as it does here. Rather than constituting an entirely new direction for Terroir, then, I would say that this house in Liverpool Crescent exemplifies Terroir's creative engagement with its own forms and techniques through creative engagement with the specificities of a project and a site.