

dwell

AT HOME IN THE MODERN WORLD

asia

WHAT
DREAMS
MAY COME:
7 Experts
Describe Our
Future Homes,
Cities & Spaces

Future Thinking

Design That Will Last the Distance

LABORATORIES OF
TOMORROW
PLAYGROUNDS
THAT WORK

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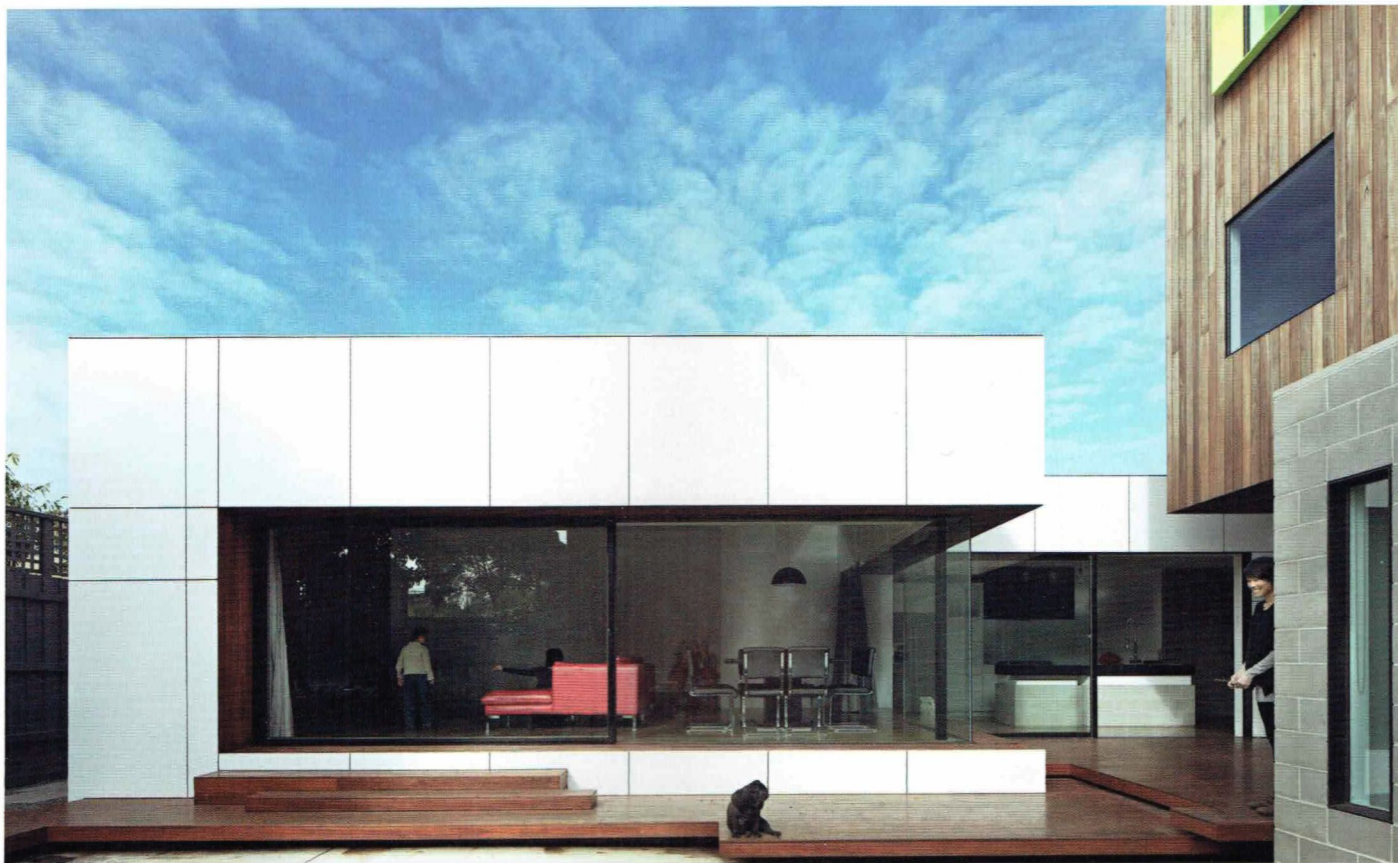
Futureproofing
Your Home
Made Easy

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A former member of the innovative Andrew Maynard Architects team, Michael Ong launched his own practice in 2011, blending contextual rigour with the influence of his Chinese artist father.

What will have the greatest impact on the way Asia-Pacific homes are designed in the future?

Over the past couple of decades, many inner suburbs (once home to working class families) have been significantly gentrified. A lot of the building stock around these areas was modestly built, poorly maintained and requires renewal. Demographically, much of the population living in these gentrified suburbs are young, growing families. Naturally, the needs of a family change over time, prompting families to move, or consider renovation and extensions. Soaring property prices and money lost to government taxes has made reworking the existing more viable.

When homeowners opt to stay and work with the existing building, it opens a great opportunity for architects to ask, 'How do we make an 'average' house in a great area into a great house in a great area?' This is a simple concept, yet it can influence much broader housing issues. Most of

these houses are located on relatively tight blocks of land, so let's work with this, and encourage building quality over quantity.

And what challenges will have the greatest effect?

Sustainability, in our homes and in our lives. It's a common thought that we are shaped by our environments, and for a lot of us our most comfortable environment is our home. If we build considered and well-used spaces, then we not only create homes that promote better living conditions, but also environments that encourage the inhabitants to extend these principles out into their daily lives. Running parallel with this, houses should also employ sensible design tactics to allow for passive solar gain and natural ventilation. A well designed, appropriately sized home to meet the clients' needs is more effective and sustainable than an oversized McMansion with 20 solar panels.

Architect Michael Ong believes the future of architecture will be houses that compel people to live in their homes for years to

come. In Hans House (top), outdoor spaces and courtyards were integrated with the internal spaces.

When you design a new home, what sort of longevity do you expect it to have?

Forever! In 2008, the Australian Government commissioned the first National Waste Report, which discovered construction and demolition is the highest contributor to waste generated in Australia, at 38 percent of the total 43m tonnes. It is an indication of how wasteful it is every time we build.

Can you name a residential project that you think will be a future classic?

Skylight House by Chenchow Little Architects. It's a renovation to an existing double storey Victorian house, and the new addition is not only beautifully moulded into the existing, but there is also clever use of courtyard spaces and openable walls to create flexible and adaptable spaces. The design also tackles a common problem of dark, internal spaces of these spatially deep Victorian houses by filtering natural light from carefully positioned skylights.

What is something our readers can do to help ensure the future success of their homes?

I could rant about this for hours (to the pain of most of my non-architect

friends). A successful design should respond to the brief, site constraints and opportunities. At the same time a home is a very personal and special place. One of the first questions I ask my clients is: "How do you see yourself using this house in 10 years?" The reason for this is because your bond between you and your house grows over time. If we can design a house which you can imagine yourself living in 10 or 30 or 50 years down the track, we are able to construct a home with a healthy life expectancy, allowing the bond between you and your home to naturally grow and mature.

The clients of Hans House love sitting in a shaded outdoor space in summer; he says it reminds him of his home city (Saigon). So we created a shaded courtyard, where one side of the wall is constructed in concrete block, providing shelter and the thermal mass to keep the space cool. Also, being an Asian household where shoes are not allowed internally, a small seat was built next to the door to allow one to remove their shoes upon entry into the house. When you start to dig into the smaller details, you can shape a home with personality that complements its inhabitants, inspiring a bond and love for the house. ▮



Attention to detail, like in the entry (above left) of Hans House, ensures the family has a personal connection to this space. The concrete block

wall edging the courtyard (top) was designed to remind the owner of life in Saigon. Hans House from the exterior (above).