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MELBOURNE-BASED ARCHITECT ANDREW MAYNARD VIEWS HIS VADER HOUSE, WHICH WAS COMPLETED OVER A YEAR AGO, WITH THE ADVANTAGE OF HINDSIGHT.



While the external form of the house sits modestly within its context, the internal forms and spaces adopt a different personality. PHOTOGRAPHY PETER BENNETTS



The view through the new structure to the original terrace house beyond.



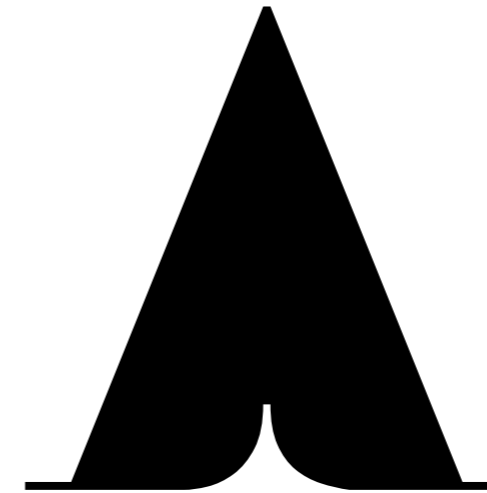
A folded steel plate stair wraps over cabinetry to make the study accessible.



The original boundary wall is exposed to create a sense of memory throughout the new parts of the house. PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE) PETER BENNETTS

**CONTRIBUTOR:  
ROWENA HOCKIN**

is a Melbourne-based architect. She studied art history and architecture at the University of Western Australia and established her own practice in Melbourne in 2003 focusing on residential and retail projects.



Andrew Maynard's Vader House makes a compelling argument for juxtaposing the old and the new. The 'old' is a two-storey terrace house standing slightly apart from its Fitzroy neighbours, a two up, two down with neatly proportioned but hardly generous spaces housing three bedrooms and a living room. Maynard's involvement was limited in this original house to the insertion of a new en suite in the master bedroom in order to provide a functioning living unit for the client while the rest of the project was under construction.

The 'new' is an addition that comprises a combined kitchen and dining space, bathroom, mezzanine office and rear-access car space.

The nature of the project is such that the old and the new are constantly in dialogue, set opposite each other across a newly created internal courtyard, connected by the narrowest of links, and creating a firm visual, if not physical, relationship between the parts.

The old resonates throughout the new addition in the form of the original brick wall that encloses the extension to the rear and side boundaries. Pocked with the irregularities and cavities of its previous lives, this wall forms a backdrop to the sleek insertions of the kitchen, dining and linking spaces, while the Darth Vader-esque aspect of the new extension peers above it.

Programmatically, this project is packed, in a Bond-villain-meets-bijou-residence kind of way. There's the sliding deck that converts the central courtyard from AstroTurfed barbeque area to a sunken spa, the extensive climate controlled wine cellar below the new kitchen and the switchable liquid crystal glass window to the new bathroom that creates privacy at the flick of a switch.

But, however rarefied the program, the execution of the constituent parts is invested with a profound consideration. Both program and project appear to have been thoroughly interrogated, and nearly every aspect has offered up new possibilities of use. The en suite in the original house prefigures this dualist attitude; the bathroom's sliding door either physically closes the space but exposes the shower area behind a clear glass screen or opens the bathroom while acting as an opaque wall to the

shower. You choose. This double-functionality prevails throughout the new extension. For a start there's that schizoid courtyard, but everywhere there is evidence of the measured thought that Maynard has invested in the new work. The glazed link between the front and rear parts appears slight until you realise that the bounding wall is composed entirely of floor to ceiling cupboards, housing a laundry and storage spaces. There's the subtle inventiveness of a raised timber floor that both delineates the dining space from the kitchen and allows the built-in dining table to form the base of the kitchen work area. The step-specific stair to the mezzanine is underlaid with storage, and the stainless steel seat-height bench on the opposite wall also serves as the hob for a gas fireplace. There seems to be no part that hasn't been mined for a maximum of functionality.

And then there is the lung at the centre of the project. Typically, an Australian terrace house obtains light and air from the front elevation and through the setbacks that create a backyard and a corridor of space between the secondary rooms at the back of the site (often kitchens and bathrooms) and the rear and side boundaries. The evolution of the Vader House evinces a shift away from this model. Here the kitchen/bathroom element has been pushed hard against the rear boundary, so that no backyard remains and the entire quota of external space is captured within the heart of the house. It's a model that moves away from the traditional Australian terrace house and looks north to the shophouse of South East Asia, eschewing the backyard for the courtyard and the internal focus that this arrangement brings to a site. It allows for the penetration of light and air, and it sets up that resonant conversation between the old and the new.

**CLIENT STATEMENT: NO DEAD SPACE ANYWHERE**

"I had decided that I should buy a house and this was actually the first one I looked at. It was completely run down, with a termite infested lean-to at the back. But what appealed to me were the bones of the old house. Demolishing the lean-to and building the extension was an educational process. I suspect ultimately I was one of Andrew's more demanding clients as I tend to have views on things.

I like that the front of the house retains its period details and has quite confined spaces and then there's a very modern space at the rear.

The courtyard and walkway make a nice transitional space between the traditional and the modern. The combined kitchen and dining space works really well... I like entertaining and cooking and it's great having people to dinner here because you don't have to go off to the kitchen to cook. The other great thing is that there's no dead space anywhere. The only downside is that I'm looking for a place to install water tanks and I can't find any room!"

**Michael Quinn**



**ARCHITECT STATEMENT**

*“The Vader House was completed over a year ago. This gives me the luxury of reflection and hindsight over what was a very long process. The project stopped and started, as many residential projects do, due to town planning, finance, etc. When I first designed the house in early 2005, I was still searching for a comfortable direction for AMA and more importantly a comfortable direction for my design vocabulary.*

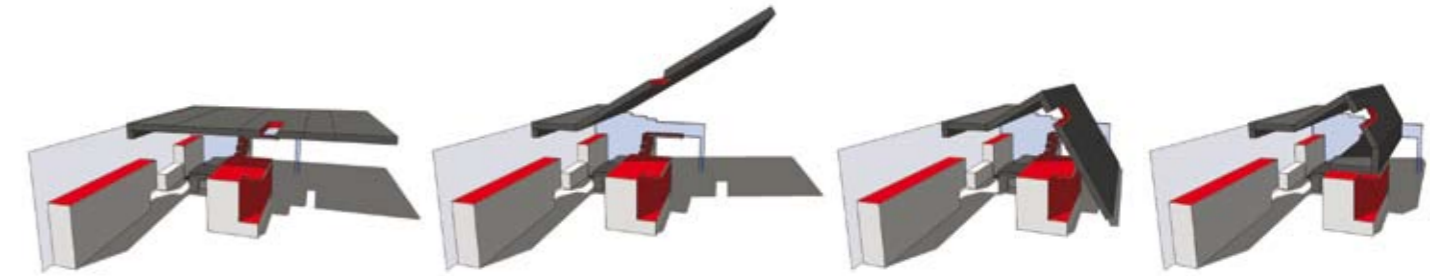
*When Vader went into construction in early 2008 it was almost unfamiliar to me. The work that I was designing at that time had a different agenda and language to Vader. I had developed as a designer. To now go back to the Vader House to oversee its construction was somehow cathartic. It gave me some measure or objectivity to assess the direction in which my designs had evolved, and continue to evolve. Architects are trained to be critical, and they are perhaps no more critical of anyone but themselves. I can see many ways in which I would*

*tackle Vader differently a second time around; not because there is anything wrong with Vader, I am simply a different person. I think that this is healthy for a designer.*

*Importantly, Vader provided a testing ground for a number of ideas that are now being refined in our current projects. These included the overlapping and blurring of function to ensure that spaces do not simply conform to a single use and therefore be redundant much of the time; the refinement of detailing as a narrative rather than simply a way to make a form work; and the external expression of structure rather than its concealment. These are critical tactics that are now present in all of my work.*

*If AMA does any work of significance in the future then I am sure that Vader will be assessed as an important stepping stone towards it.”*

Andrew Maynard



The comic book-like line of black roof over Vader House. **RENDERING AMA**



The boundary walls of the old house. **PHOTOGRAPHY PETER BENNETTS**



The assemblage of forms fits into eclectic Fitzroy. **PHOTOGRAPHY PETER BENNETTS**



Andrew Maynard at work in his studio. **COURTESY AMA**

**ILLUSTRATION** Comic panel of Dwight (played by Clive Owen in the film *Sin City*, directed by Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez) from Frank Miller's graphic novel, 00/00/2005. **FOTOBILITY/STILLS/GAMMA**



Original comic panel of Dwight. **ILLUSTRATOR FRANK MILLER**

**INSPIRATION NOTES: APPLIED SCI-FI**

Even before Maynard began to study architecture he was captivated by the vision of graphic artists such as Geof Darrow, and has been influenced by the cartoonist's detailed narrative of the city as a sprawling, organic machine full of inconsistencies in how the urban pattern is used by its occupants.

Frank Miller's spare black and white hard boiled graphics are another source of inspiration that, combined with Maynard's love of computer games and science fiction, bear directly on his design processes. Vader House has Tetris references with its accumulation of smaller objects dropped within the existing boundary walls, and what Maynard describes as a thick, comic book-like line of black roof over the top.

While this fusion of various influences may seem playful, Maynard's vision is both iconoclastic and informed by a serious environmental focus. Citing the views of Brisbane's Richard Allom, Maynard believes new structures revitalise those existing and he sees ResCode and planning legislation as a catalyst for challenging design.

Tools for conservation are more in line with his working philosophies. Born and educated in Tasmania, his regard for the natural wilderness is expressed in design concepts such as the Styx Valley Protest Shelter, an elegant tree house designed for use by eco-warriors protecting heritage growth from logging, and CV08, a suburb eating robot that converts urban decay into recyclable units and terraforms the remaining landscape with new fauna and flora as it progresses on purpose dedicated science lab legs.



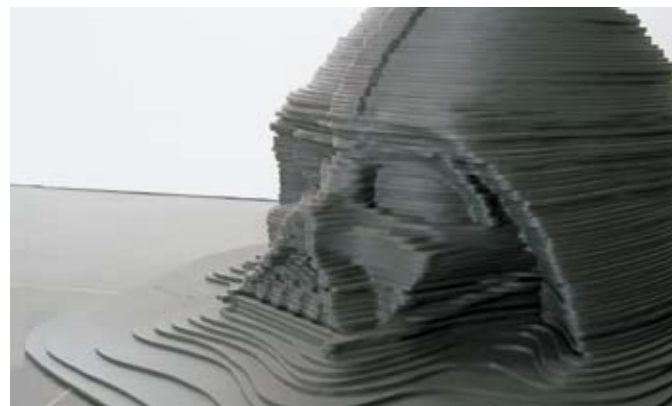


Wade Lageose, *Untitled*, 2007, mixed media (from *The Vader Project*).

## House of Vader

You'd deserve a medal if you could list the number of times Darth Vader has been referenced in the contemporary visual arts. Our favourite examples are those that involve literal representations.

If you were lucky enough to catch Ricky Swallow's *The Bricoleur* at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia earlier in the year, you would have been witness to Swallow's extraordinary hand-carved sculptures. One of his earlier pieces, *Model for a Sunken Monument* (1999), doesn't have the detailed sophistication that his more recent work has, but it is still an ambitious fusion of concept and material. Darth Vader makes for a malleable subject, and Swallow also references another sci-fi icon, *Planet of the Apes* (1968).



Ricky Swallow, *Model for a Sunken Monument*, 1999, MDF, synthetic polymer paint.

Exhibited in Superdome (2008) at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, Fabien Giraud and Raphael Siboni's sea of 300 black enamelled terracotta Vader masks evokes the terracotta army of the Chinese Emperor Qin Shi. The installation is striking in its symmetry and composition, as it trades on the *Star Wars* character's imposing presence. With the installation's sound component immersing the visitor, the artists have succeeded in creating a work that is very accessible.

And if you find yourself in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania before 3 May you should visit The Andy Warhol Museum for *The Vader Project*. The exhibition features 100 're-imagined' Darth Vader masks, each branded by its maker's own distinct artistry, which makes for an army of deliciously kitsch villains.



Fabien Giraud and Raphael Siboni, *Last Manoeuvres in the Dark*, 2008, mixed media.

UNTITLED COURTESY THE VADER PROJECT. MODEL FOR A SUNKEN MONUMENT. PURCHASED THROUGH APART FOUNDATION OF VICTORIA WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE JOAN CLEMENGER ENDOWMENT. GOVERNOR, 1999. COURTESY DARREN KNIGHT GALLERY, SYDNEY. PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA; LAST MANOEUVRES IN THE DARK (INSTALLATION VIEW), PALAIS DE TOKYO, PARIS). COURTESY GALERIE LOEVENBRUCK, PARIS. PHOTOGRAPHY LÉO SIBONI



View towards the original terrace. PHOTOGRAPHY PETER BENNETTS



This courtyard becomes the kitchen in the new build. COURTESY AMA

### PROJECT TEAM:

**ARCHITECT** Andrew Maynard  
**PROJECT ARCHITECT** Mark Austin  
**INTERIOR DESIGNER** Andrew Maynard  
**SENIOR ARCHITECTURAL TECHNICIAN** Matt McClurg  
**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER** Meyer Consulting  
**LIGHTING** Masson  
**BUILDER** Enviroline  
**LANDSCAPE** Andrew Maynard Architects

### KEY MATERIAL INFORMATION:

**BATH** Kaldewei Saniform 1800 x 700 from Reece Design  
**BATHROOM APPLIANCES** Miele Honeycomb Care T4224C tumble dryer and Miele Novoronic W502 washing machine both from Elite Appliances Carlton  
**KITCHEN APPLIANCES** Gaggenau Vario cooktop with 2 x Bontempi cucine D-400 single motor cylindrical unit rangehood, Integrated Liebherr SBS 5712 single fridge, Integrated Miele G2270 SCVi dishwasher and Gaggenau 2 x EB 200-110 right-hinged wall oven both from Elite Appliances Carlton  
**KITCHEN JOINERY** Creative Kitchen Workshop  
**KITCHEN TAPWARE** Gessi kitchen Quadro hi-tech sink mixer with pull out spray from Reece Design  
**LOUVRES** Black aluminium anodised finish by Shade Factor  
**ROOF** Timber and steel framed roof structures, Black Butynol  
**WINDOWS** Steel framed bi-fold doors and windows by Skyrange, Sashless sliders by Aneeta  
**SPA** Out of the Blue  
**STAIR** 18mm folded steel plate treads with non-slip paint finish  
**WALL COLOURS** Dulux Hotlips, Lexicon and Leadman



A new bathroom sits within the original terrace. PHOTOGRAPHY PETER BENNETTS



ANDREW MAYNARD BELIEVES DESIGN IS PLAIN HARD WORK AND NEGATIVITY IS TO BE AVOIDED. HERE HE CHATS WITH ARCHITECTURE STUDENT LACHLAN JOSEPH.

**Lachlan Joseph:** *Your work comes across as highly expressive. As a student I am interested to know about your design process and how you are able to introduce such strong initial concepts into your projects and have them remain in your final built form?*

**Andrew Maynard:** Design is difficult. It is difficult to find a strong central concept and it's even more difficult to protect your initial concept through the rigours of the architectural process. Finding one strong central idea is essential.

I'm a hoarder of ideas; many of my ideas are stored. I keep sketches and lists. I simply find the appropriate project to use them on. I am terrible at attempting to generate ideas out of the specifics of a particular brief or site. I am useless at project specific research. This is not to suggest that it is not worthwhile, it is simply not how I function as I just get confused and find myself off on tangents that are dead ends.

The vast majority of students work with too many ideas. Often new ideas are employed to solve problems as they crop up. I always encourage students to find a strong idea and test it against all scales and problems.

It may sound bloody minded, but I am far from that. Protecting your idea is about being flexible and accommodating. Bring people onboard with your idea; let them invest in it. Always have numerous justifiable reasons for it to exist. Find out what your audience is looking for and use that to gain their support for your idea. NEVER be adversarial. The image of the precious, bloody-minded architect is one that we need to erode.

**LJ:** *Is there a particular process you go through to help formulate your ideas?*

**AM:** Yes, I am all about process and method. I try to cut down the unknowns so that you can concentrate on the core task at hand; finding a strong central idea.

To me there is nothing metaphysical about design. It is hard work. It is like building, you need to roll up your sleeves, get in there, get dirty and just do it.

There's no magic formula. Leonard Cohen's writing methodology is described as workman-like. This reminds me of the architectural process.

There are formulaic pop songs, there are songs that simply come to you and then there are songs, like Cohen's, that need to be constructed, songs that require labour, constant revision and commitment. For Cohen, each song requires its pound of flesh. I feel a connection with Cohen's method.

**LJ:** *Your work features many propositional and experimental projects. What is it about these types of projects that interests you?*

**AM:** They act as a type of catharsis for me. They allow me some objectivity about AMA [Andrew Maynard Architects] and the world. They allow me to explore bigger issues than the standard 5m wide Fitzroy block tends to. Furthermore, there is no negotiation. There is no engineer, no council, no building surveyor. Just me. There is a purity in the propositional work that can't be matched through the often gruelling building process.

Propositional work reminds me of Fluxus. I am envious of Fluxus artists, whose work is often about quick, fertile application. Architecture is nothing like this. Rather than getting an idea, executing it and moving on to the next, architects are doomed to live with an idea until it has been constructed.

Over this lengthy period I think it is natural to begin to loathe your original thought process. For me, propositional projects are my attempt at Fluxus. Find a new, exciting idea and before you become bored with it or question its validity, quickly document it in a clear and articulate way. There is nothing Fluxus about being articulate, however the speed, energy and enthusiasm can be intoxicating.

**LJ:** *Many of your residential projects are located in distinct character areas and often involve renovations of existing housing. Do you have a particular view on how new architecture should respond to existing buildings with historical significance?*

**AM:** I like urban eclecticism. I dislike homogeneity. Luckily I am based in Fitzroy, whose context is eclectic, urban, gritty, layered and ever changing. Having studied at the University of Tasmania I have had regionalist dogma spoon fed to me. I am thankful for this knowledge, however,

I am anything but sentimental about context. I am glad to have studied Kenneth Frampton, but I can't follow his dogma. I try to engage with context in an energetic way. I avoid nostalgia or using kid gloves. This tends to put me on a crash course with council on every project, however, I have developed numerous tactics for navigating that minefield.

**LJ:** *How did you approach this problem in Vader House?*

**AM:** I have always liked how aggressive Herzog and de Meuron were in their application of constrictive legislation with Rudin House. In this project they supplied the statutory body with simple drawings of a nostalgic vernacular form, however, in their execution they made the house as brutalist as possible, just to stick it to the statu-

tory body. Vader had a similar agenda. Build the planning legislation setback lines. Give council exactly what they ask for and it becomes exactly what they don't want.

**LJ:** *When you are working with existing buildings, do you find it difficult to incorporate ESD principles and not have them obstruct your design intent?*

**AM:** It can be difficult, however, I am not a purist when it comes to ESD. It is not binary. It is not a case of NOT ESD vs ESD. It is a scale and you need to make the most of what you have and take the victories where you can.

My primary strategy for ESD is size. In the end I really don't care if a client chooses not to put solar panels or water tanks on their homes. However, if we build only what is needed, maximise outdoor space, reduce demolition and re-use existing structure and space then I think this is a much greener strategy than knocking down and starting again with the aim of creating a huge monument to sustainability. I think that this approach [the huge monument] is more about the architect and client's ego rather than making a sincere attempt at reducing one's environmental footprint.

**LJ:** *As a student, the balance between creating a sustainable product while still maintaining that initial design intent seems tricky. Do you think that sustainable design in some ways impedes theoretical ideas being fully explored in architecture?*

**AM:** No. Finding a solid theoretical position, creating a sustainable structure, getting the detail between floor and wall right, writing a clear and correct specification; the architectural process is long and gruelling.

It is a complex jigsaw that never quite fits together properly. I don't see any of these issues as separate, contradictory or in conflict. They are all part of the process.

The weighting of agendas or the compromising of one position over another is inevitable, and it is up to the author to justify. As Thom Mayne of Morphosis says, "architecture is value laden", and students have the impossible task of navigating through endless personalities who throw difficult questions and push agendas.

In the end, one must find a position that they honestly believe is best and work with it. Even if it is in conflict with a tutor or peer. The worst thing a student can do is work towards good marks.

This makes them a slave to their tutor's theoretical/sustainable agenda. Instead, a student should work towards good projects that they are sincerely happy with, regardless of their marks.

**CONTRIBUTOR:  
LACHLAN JOSEPH**

is the Student Winner of the 2009 Boral Design Award. Interested in both residential architecture as well as the design of public spaces, he is currently undertaking his Masters of Architecture at Queensland University of Technology.



**LJ:** *A lot of your smaller scale work is conceptually strong but at the same time is highly technical. For you, is the combination of these two aspects the most testing part of architecture?*

**AM:** Finding the concept is the difficult part. The tectonic issue is very important to my work, however, it is something that I find natural as I have grown up around tools and making.

This was further developed when I was at the University of Tasmania, which has an incredible workshop and is committed to learning through making.

For me the tectonics of a building is another layer of the architectural narrative simply at a smaller scale. I dislike the idea that tectonics and detailing are simply a method of achieving a form. The structure and the making of the building offers a wonderful way of making the large intent accessible at a smaller, human scale.

**LJ:** *For young architects what do you see as the most challenging aspects of the profession?*

**AM:** Well, I'm a young architect and I am still learning my trade so I am not sure how much authority I can speak with, however, I find patience, diplomacy and management to be highly challenging and absolutely necessary. These are the things that we are not taught. Things that can't be taught.

Design is a tiny part of getting a building built, however, it is the most important part. It requires thought and experience to protect a design from councils, consultants, builders and the unnecessary masculine, political and financial games that are constantly being played beneath the surface.

Navigating through this process with as little damage as possible [both to your ideas and your self-confidence] is the only way of carrying your concepts through to completion, and this is something that we are still struggling with at AMA.

I think that the biggest challenge, regardless of age and experience is to avoid cynicism and negativity. Architects can be such cynical creatures; simply look at some of the comments on some of the great architectural blogs. Architects tend to eat their own. Life's too short. I respect those architects that employ enthusiasm and energy as weapons of choice.

I love talking with people who ask "What if?" rather than those who choose to see things as implausible or flawed. There is always a reason not to do something and nothing is perfect. I think that this stops a lot of people from doing what they want. Leave the cynics and doubters to comment on blogs and get out there and participate, engage and enjoy.

