



Featherweight

Richard Kerr Architecture

Architect Richard Kerr wanted to design a lightweight staircase for this two-storey townhouse. Located on a relatively compact site (10 by 20 metres), it was important to create a sense of transparency through the house. Referred to by Kerr as 'Fallingwater' steps (after the house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright), the staircase is featherweight and aims to provide a rise that has an almost temporary appearance. "I wanted to dissolve any solid connection between levels," says Kerr.

The low-maintenance contemporary residence comprises an open-plan kitchen and living area on the ground floor, together with a powder room/bathroom. The staircase, located at the entrance, links with the two upstairs bedrooms, study and ensuite. While the 180-square-metre home appears relatively spacious, this is largely due to the open tread staircase.

The staircase is constructed from Tasmanian oak treads. On one side is a single Tasmanian oak balustrade (90 mm by 45 mm). Framing the treads on the other side are fine steel poles, spaced at 125 mm intervals. "The steel has been hung from the ceiling and joined to each tread," says Kerr. Steel angles, embedded in each tread, have been carefully positioned in the plaster wall to create a floating effect. Natural light enters through glass louvred windows and is dispersed through the kitchen and dining areas.

While light passes through the stairwell, sightlines are also created through the treads and towards an adjacent park. "The front window (adjacent to the door) is almost like a display window. You could see right through the stairs," says Kerr, who limed both the timber on the floor as well as the timber used for the staircase. "It just gives the whole space a slightly lighter feel".

