

# MARK

J Mayer H  
Landmark in Seville

# FOLLOW

Christian de Portzamparc  
Concert Hall in Rio  
de Janeiro

# ME

X-TU Architects  
Jeongok Prehistory  
Museum

# OUT SIDE

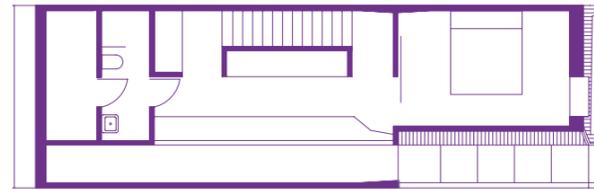
SelgasCano  
Skate Park in Mérida



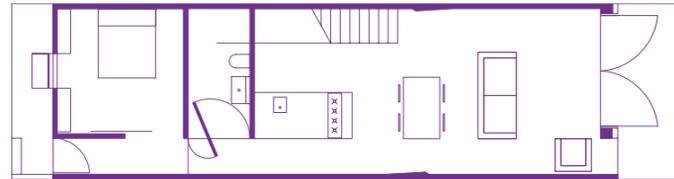
Europe € 19.95  
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# Muir Mendes

## did it themselves



First floor.



Ground floor.



Section.



Text Peter Dykes  
Photos Peter Bennetts

In a narrow street in Melbourne, Australia, sits a house sandwiched between two buildings that couldn't be more different from each other. Its façade is so nondescript that you might not notice it as your eyes slide from the heavily vegetated red brick of one neighbour to the timber ornamentation of the other. The house belongs to – and was designed and constructed by – Bruno Mendes and Amy Muir, who worked on it at weekends over a period of five years. Built where a late 19th-century workman's cottage once stood, the house applies the history of its site to the ethos of its construction and, more abstractly, to its form.

'Given that the original cottage was riddled with termites, we couldn't physically incorporate it into the design. It was more about maintaining a formal memory of its existence,' says Amy Muir, one half of Muir Mendes. 'The form of the ground-floor ceiling is driven by the original roof line of the existing house, which was defined by multiple lean-tos. The façade takes on the original cottage's proportions – the window, the door – but is completely stripped of ornament.' The only feature of the site that they preserved is the palm tree in the back garden. Whereas the façade distances itself from the street, the back of the house is open and responds to its context. 'The tree, which is aligned with the front door and corridor, determined

one aspect of the initial brief – to capture a full-height view of it upon entering the house.'

The approach they took throughout the project was admirably earnest. They used what materials, building methods and skills were available, even enlisting Mendes's father, a steelworker, to help with the cladding. 'Building with one's own hands formed a very important part of the brief. Details were guided and drawn based on how we could build them,' explains Muir. 'We lament that the "craft" of construction is seen within the Australian building industry as a commodity rather than as a serious option.'

[www.muirmendes.com](http://www.muirmendes.com)