



Windows of opportunity

Verdant vistas through a wall of glass and a cantilevered upper storey transform this inner-city property into an Asian-style oasis

WITH FRANCENE RIDLEY



It's a case of East meets West for this extended house sitting on 405sq m in a quiet New Farm street. From the front, it's the quintessential high-set Queenslander – the architectural legacy from our colonial settlers.

Sit in the lush, subtropical garden at the back, however, and you're transported to a private villa in a Balinese resort. The story of how the two cultures met began in 2008 when the owners approached Shawn Godwin, of Base Architecture, with a brief to expand their cottage, which they had lived in for eight years.

"After we initially approached Shawn, the GFC happened," recalls Mark, one of the owners. "While Shawn kept working on the design, we didn't push him because we didn't know how expensive it would be to build. But it turned out the GFC benefitted us as we found a window to build before the industry started picking up again."

During the seven months of construction, the owners moved next door after fortuitously securing a short lease from their neighbours. And so the owners watched as their extension took shape.

An old covered deck that was "constantly getting dirty and exposed to weather", says Mark, has been replaced with a more practical indoor-outdoor space. From the kitchen, which is roughly at the centre of the house, steps lead down to a living area and formal dining room. These spaces open to a courtyard garden, with water feature, at the back of the block. Cantilevered above the new living-dining area is the owners' bedroom suite.

"One of the clever things about the design of the extension is how the bedroom cantilevers out so we end up with more floor space without increasing the footprint a lot. We didn't want to lose the garden and have one of those homes that's all house and no yard."

The courtyard garden seems large in comparison to the block but the design of the extension also helps to give the illusion of space, especially when it comes to capturing views. A wall of glass to the east side of the formal dining area gives the feeling of space and acts like an ever-changing landscape painting and, although it's a formal dining area, this is no mere showpiece of a room.

"Three days after moving back in, we had 20 family members over, all eating laksa, all needing to find a place to eat at a table. So yes, we do use the formal dining table," Mark says.

Opposite the glass wall in this area is a total contrast – a bank of solid, wooden blinds.

"One of Shawn's ideas was to use doors as blinds on this western wall to prevent the sun coming in and heating up the whole room," says Mark. "I suggested using the Chinese screens we had restored and custom fitted. When closed, they are like a feature wall and when they are lit up at night, they look like a piece of artwork."

An artisanal effect can also be found in the wall of exposed bricks at the point where the staircase goes up to the main bedroom.

Mark explains the history built into the wall: "There was a fireplace in the kitchen that took up about 900m and because it was a dead space we decided it would be wisest to demolish it. But



MERGER DEAL ... creating a better relationship with the outdoors. Photographs // Christopher Frederick Jones

we liked the look of that old brick. So we mixed a lot of them in with some PGH Sandstock bricks, which are handmade and designed in Sydney for projects such as The Rocks. The new wall is probably two-thirds Sandstock."

Mark also admits the attachment to the original bricks stems from a love of the New Farm-Teneriffe warehouses, so while the

combination of Asian and European influences is a dominant theme, another relationship necessarily, and naturally, emerges: the meeting of old and new.

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