

Wings of desire

A house with good bones maintains its facade while its interior has a major makeover

Over the years, I've often driven by this house, en route to a relative's place in Fig Tree Pocket, and admired its simple, single-storey beauty. With white weatherboards and terracotta-tiled roof, I loved its homestead-like presence, sitting on a rise overlooking acreage. It's a substantial house – with a number of wings housing an above-average number of rooms – but something about its conservative design, a hint to its birth in the 1960s, seemed to suit the site.

It's been almost a year since I drove over that way – the floods forced my relatives to relocate temporarily – so I was a little alarmed when architect Shawn Godwin told me he had finished work on the house. What kind of “work” I wondered, worried that the home's ingenious charm may have changed through a structural update. My fears were unfounded.

“We went through a few iterations,” Shawn says of the design process with his clients. “We thought, ‘Oh, we'll demolish that wing and then we'll do another spine through it’. But as we explored things we all agreed that the way the house was, planning wise, was generally right. It just needed a rehash inside.”

By rehash, Shawn means a near total gutting of the interior, providing him with a blank slate to update the finishes with bespoke touches.

“It had really good bones but nothing had been done to it for years, except some work to the kitchen,” Shawn adds. “It needed a refresh to bring the interior up to date.”

As for new additions and extensions, nothing more was needed except a pavilion over the main outdoor living space.

“Previously the outdoor space was an exposed tiled zone but it needed an enclosure to make it usable. Adding that was probably the main



THERE'S A SENSE THAT THE FIELDS BEYOND BELONG TO A SAFARI PARK AND THE HOUSE IS THE LUXURY LODGE



structural component to the renovation, yet a lot of new joinery was done inside,” says Shawn, who clearly appreciated the chance to focus on details that, in most cases, have to be bought off the shelf, such as the handles on cupboards and wardrobes, for example. These details may be small in physical stature but as any home renovator will tell you, they can loom large in the overall scale of time-consuming decisions. How liberating it must be to have these finishes custom-designed to suit your home's style. And for the architect, well, in Shawn's case it was a whole lot of fun.

“We even refurbished the fireplace,” he says. “A new plinth was made for the base and the builder installed it so it appears to hover over the floor.”

The luxury of focusing on these details was afforded by the home's already sound layout. On his first visit to the house, Shawn was impressed by the way it captured natural light thanks to its interesting shape. Two rectangles intersect at the entry-foyer space, creating four wings. Each of the two children effectively has their own wing as does the main bedroom, which also has a study. The kitchen forms another wing, along with a self-contained flat. Living on-site during construction was not as stressful as it could be; the clients moved into one wing while work went on in the others.

Awash with a new coat of white paint, the interior borders on austere if not for the shine of the polished spotted gum. Carrara marble in the bathrooms adds a textural change of pace.

Looking through the living room to the newly covered outdoor space by the pool, there's a



sense that the fields beyond belong to a safari park and the house is the luxury lodge. Things may have changed inside, but the house still has the ability to fire the imagination, which is no doubt due to owners and architect realising that, in the grand scheme of design, there's no reason to change what clearly works wonders.

ARCHITECT • Shawn Godwin, Base Architecture, ph: 3352.5899
BUILDER • Craft Building Company, ph: 3862.4187

FAR HORIZONS ... clean, elegant lines dominate.
PHOTOGRAPHS • Christopher Frederick Jones