

BASE ARCHITECTURE

It was a case of going home again, reports *Jane Burton Taylor*, when *Tim Stewart* from *BASE Architecture* was asked by his parents to design a house for them on the site where Tim had grown up.

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Home Again

scenario

sunshine coast — QLD, australia

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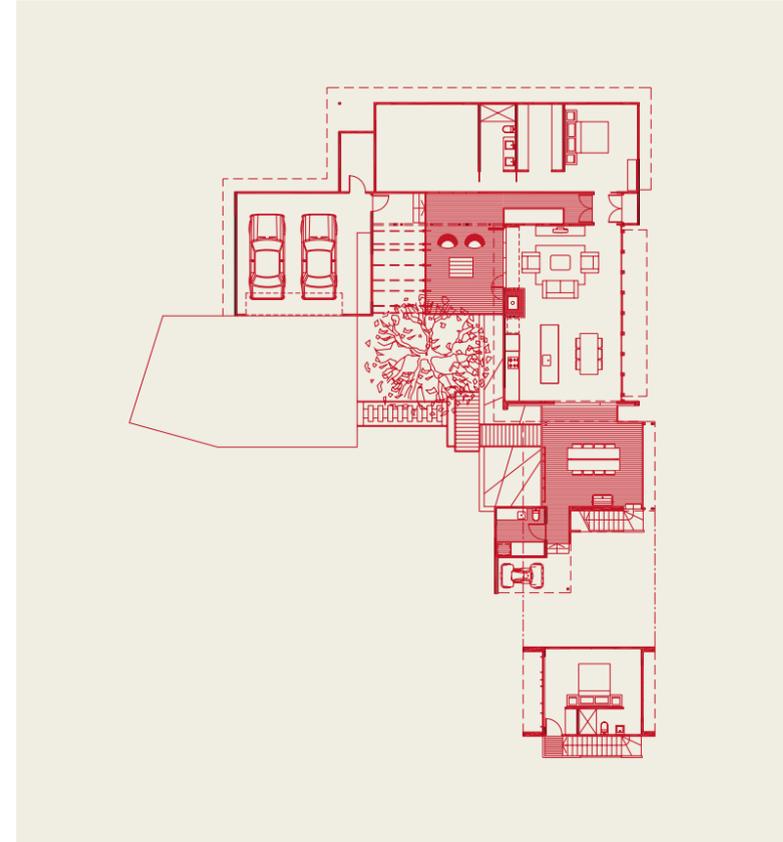


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- 01 A walkway over a pond leads into an entry deck, screened for privacy.
- 02 Guest quarters are located in a tower above the entry deck.
- 03 A deck off the main living space overlooks the lush central garden.
- 04 Plan.
- 05 Internal hallway with its own garden plus translucent roof lets in additional light.



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Designing a house for a site you grew up on is a circumstance few architects have the opportunity to enjoy. For architect, Tim Stewart, it was an opportunity which delivered his clients – his own parents – a house tailor-made for their green-thumbed passion for the place.

Marie and Wayne Stewart had owned about 40 acres of land in the hinterland of Queensland since 1980 and their two boys had grown up there. “They had a terrific time here,” Wayne recalls. “We had a dam and a flying fox that ran through the trees. They would climb a ladder, then they would slide 100 metres down and drop into the dam.”

“We had been living on the beach, but we thought moving back to the land would give us a more active lifestyle.”

When their children were teenagers, the couple re-located to nearby Caloundra so that the boys could go to school. They sold off their house, but kept most of the land, including the lychee, mango and custard apple orchards they had carved out of virgin bush during their time there.

A decade plus on, the Stewarts were living on the beach front and contemplating retiring. They opted to sell up and move back to their land – just 30 minutes’ drive away – and employ their son Tim, who had since become an architect, to design their dream home.

“We had been living on the beach, but we thought moving back to the land would give us a more active lifestyle,” Marie explains.

Their lifestyle was soon to be seriously more active. They lived on the land in a caravan and, while their son designed, they set about growing plants for their future garden and reinvigorating the orchards they had planted years earlier, adding citrus, fig, stone fruit and olives in any gaps.

They also put their backs to clearing their ideal site, an undertaking which harvested the timber for the house. “We chose a site that was a higher point than the other house had been. This one had views both ways, out over the Sunshine Coast, and the other way,” Marie says. “It was heavily wooded with Blackbutts, so we decided we’d use the timber from those [Blackbutts] for the house.”

“It was quite a task,” Tim recalls. “We had a mobile mill on site. We then had to move it off-site to be kiln-dried. So, cost-wise, there wasn’t any saving, but it was better timber than we were able to access and it was utilising some of the resources off the site.”



scenario

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As far as the design for the house was concerned – the couple left it to their son. “We told him we wanted to utilise the views and have the feel of the outdoors even when inside, and we are very keen gardeners so we wanted to incorporate that,” Marie says.

The project also had to be brought in on a tight budget. As Wayne points out, “We were retired, so there was a certain amount we could spend and that was it. Apart from that we didn’t say too much. He knew the block. He knew how we felt.”

The site they chose is on a ridge running north-south, with a sharp fall to the east and a gentler slope to the west, where the arable land is situated. But this site still had some slight variation in levels, so Tim opted to sit the house on a low framework of timber, around 500mm high.

“This allowed me to site the house right on the edge of the ridge,” says Tim, “maximising views and leaving the flat central area free for the garden.”

Once the house was completed, his parents planted their carefully tended seedlings.

“We are very keen gardeners and we gathered plants for quite a while,” Wayne recalls. “We’re hoping that in the future, you won’t be able to tell the difference between the garden and the bush.”

To enter the house today, you walk through the couple’s now lush garden and across a bridge over a pond crowded with gold fish.

A timber screen and a two-storey tower define an indoor-outdoor room looking down over the bush towards the ocean. This ‘outside room’ leads into the main living space with an open plan kitchen, dining and sitting areas all taking in views through an east-facing wall of glass louvres and windows.

The sitting area also opens to a deck which links across to the garage. The bedrooms are in the adjoining north-facing wing, along with a guest bedroom on the upper level of the tower at the other end of the house. This tower was designed as a quasi-independent living space to give both the couple and their guests privacy.

The tower and its deck serve, too, as the kind of aesthetic and physical anchor for the U-shaped house. There is a small shed at the back of it where the Stewarts keep their run-about bike. It is their point of arrival and departure, Tim says, a place from which they head out to, and return from, their daily work on the property.

From an architectural point of view, the house has been acknowledged in last year’s Australian Institute of Architects awards in Queensland. For the owners, it is a house fit for their own personal paradise, particularly in

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the way it marries itself with their much-loved site. “It is built around a courtyard garden and everything is only one room deep, so there are outside views from everywhere,” Marie says.

“On lovely days, when you open everything up, you are virtually outside,” Wayne says. “And on cooler, wet days, you can close it up. But you still feel as if you are sitting out there, in the environment.”

“You can be inside and it’s not that different from being outside,” Marie adds. “Inside is as good as outside.”

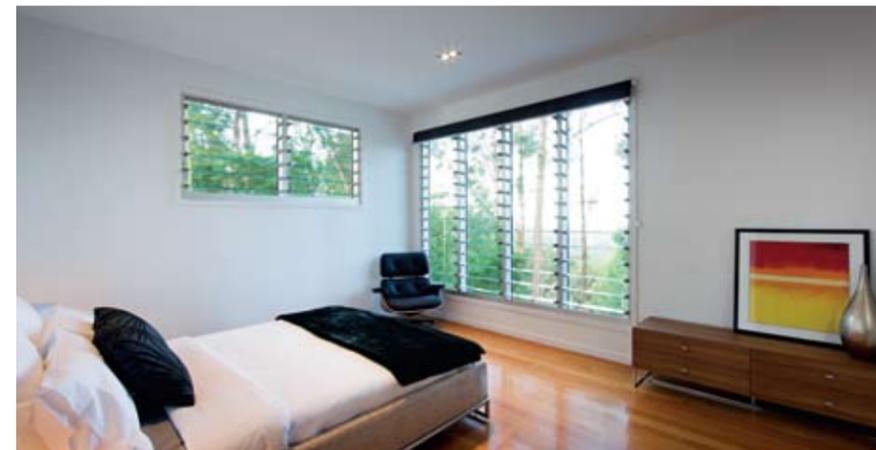
“It is built around a courtyard garden and everything is only one room deep, so there are outside views from everywhere.”



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06 Open plan main living space with glass walls and louvres.

07 A usable indoor/outdoor room in all weather.

08 The deck connects the house with a greenhouse and garage.

09 Main bedroom with views down to the coast.

ARCHITECT
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FURNITURE
Dining chairs Eames DSR side chair with Maple legs, available from Living Edge, livingedge.com.au. Outdoor deck table Isamu Noguchi Cyclone dining table, available from Vitra, vitraonline.net.

Outdoor deck chairs Bertioa Diamond, available from dedece, dedece.com. Side chair Eames lounge from Living Edge. Kitchen stools Kartell Charles Ghost from Space Furniture, spacefurniture.com.au.

FINISHES
Walls fibre cement sheet, rough-sawn plywood and plasterboard painted in Dulux, dulux.com.au, and Zinalume Custom Orb metal sheeting, bluescopesteel.com.au. Roof Zinalume Spandek from Bluescope Steel. Deck Kwila boards finished with Intergrain UltraDeck, intergrain.com.au. Timber screens, exposed structural beams and internal floors Blackbutt timber milled from site. Carpet Feltex Merito, feltex.com. Doors custom sliding and bi-fold doors in Kwila. Joinery 2-pac polyurethane in Dulux, dulux.com.au, and Caesarstone, caesarstone.com.au.

LIGHTING
All lighting sourced from various retail showrooms through the builder.
FIXTURES/EQUIPMENT
Bathroom and kitchen fixtures sourced from various suppliers through the builder.