

RENOVATION Jenna Reed Burns

Up front and spunky

A change of direction gave an old suburban box a new lease of life.

The House Dee Why Renovations completed October 2004

Cost \$210,000

Architects Melonie Bayl-Smith and Stephen Gray, of Liquid Architecture, 9958 8106

Builder David Lombardo, of DJ Building, 0408 407 489

Structural engineer NB Consulting Engineers, 9984 7000

Custom steelwork Peter Knight, of Sydney Wide Engineering, 0419 984 381

Aim "To create a new entry to the house and provide ground-level access from a new living space."

Welcome ... an imposing new entrance and a huge new living area opening to a front courtyard enhance the impact of this once nondescript house. Photos: Glyn Thomas



NEXT WEEK

SEACHANGE
visits
Townsville

In building parlance, the word "addition" usually means a new room or rooms tacked onto the side or rear of a house. Rarely does it mean something that's been added to the front. However, the unprepossessing style of this house in Dee Why, its position on a corner block, plus the slope of the land, meant that extending at the front was the best option.

"The house had no architectural merit," says Melonie Bayl-Smith, of Liquid Architecture, the firm responsible for designing the addition.

Originally built in the 1940s as a single-storey two-bedder, the house had suffered several renovations over time, including a second storey and the replacement of all original windows with mock-Georgian aluminium-framed versions.

However, for the new owners, Hannele and Alex Manu, more living space for their two teenage daughters was a priority once they'd given both the kitchen and bathroom a makeover. They rang Archicentre, the architectural advisory service, and Bayl-Smith and her business partner Stephen Gray were assigned to the project.

"We wanted something modern and fresh and sunny," Hannele says.

NEW ENTRY

The original house, featuring unusual "double log" profile (narrow and rounded) weatherboards, was perched on a masonry base. For Bayl-Smith, this represented wasted space under the building, as well as divorcing it from the garden and street.

"The house had a very narrow entry and a stair



that wound up through the garden," she says. "The entry had no presence from the street, so the key aims of the project were to create a whole new entry to the house, both internally and externally, and to get level outdoor access from the living space."

The new entry was moved closer to the street, with most of the original entry stair absorbed into the interior of the house. Paved steps now lead up from the driveway to a new landing in front of a handsome timber door featuring glazed panels. Overhead is a boxed parapet that projects from the front wall of the house, providing weather protection as well as a strong focal point. The new front of the house is clad in fibrous cement sheeting, painted with a textured paint in Dulux Kookaburra, to match the existing finish on the rest of the facade.

FRONT ROOM

A bedroom just inside the original front door was sacrificed to make way for a huge new living room (more than 50sqm in size) that leads directly off the new, lower entry. This new living room features three-metre ceilings, an open fireplace and a CaesarStone hearth, while the western wall, which faces the street, is fitted with floor-to-ceiling folding glass doors that open out into the new front courtyard.

"There was nothing under the brick subfloor," Bayl-Smith says, "so I saw an opportunity to use the one area that we did have, the front garden, to create this room, leaving enough space for a courtyard. Because of this new room's lower floor level there was an opportunity to have some separation from the rest of the house. In that way, the owners could entertain guests here and it wouldn't interfere with the way the rest of the house works."

EXTERNAL APPEARANCE

The front courtyard is another feature of the new addition. While the design of the planter beds and paved areas, and the positioning of the steps, was



all the work of the architects, the owners were responsible for the plant choice, selecting a mix of spiky plants such as yuccas, dracaenas and phormiums.

As well as the entry, part of Liquid Architecture's brief was to redress problems with the driveway, provide a second driveway entrance and a carport off the side street, and then unify the appearance of the property with new fencing and gates. The old masonry fence with lattice panels has been replaced with a new fence featuring a masonry base and horizontal timber battening above.

"We used two different materials so it wasn't so confronting because it is taller than what's usually allowed," Bayl-Smith says. "The original fence meant we had a bit of a precedent. We could argue that we wanted to improve it aesthetically and structurally. The new fence provides a better sense of privacy and security, without making the house look too fortress-like."