



Better THAN EVER

A 1980s square yellow rendered brick box with multiple rooms, all of them tiny and airless, had nothing going for it but its spectacular Noosa Sound waterfront location.

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IT COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN PULLED DOWN.

In fact that was the intention of the owners when they bought it. But after living in it for a short while a change came over them.

"We thought about our carbon footprint," they said. "We realised it would not be very resourceful or environmentally friendly to pull it down when the slab was good. So we thought, 'we can still do this', we can blend the old with the new. It would have been such a shame to bring in heavy machinery to take out a slab and then put down another."

Stephen Guthrie and Lindy Atkin of Bark Design Architects were called in. The owners had worked with the architects before on other projects and trusted them to come up with a design that would provide them with a lovely modern home that could take all the advantages of its irreplaceable position, yet at the same time, not be wasteful or disrespectful to the existing house.

A year later, where once stood an ordinary square box, now soars a glorious home of contemporary design that includes all the elements necessary for billion-dollar Noosa-style living.

"Our strategies (to modernise) included actually reducing the floor area by creating voids, giving generous double height volumes and a clear legibility and contrast of spaces," Lindy Atkin said.

The result of these strategies is dramatic and begins at the entry where the measure of space gives a feeling of serenity. Although the eye is drawn immediately through the wide entry, past the vast living space, out to the deck and beyond to the tranquil Noosa River and green backdrop, there is still a strong sense of the surrounding house due to the massive and eclectic artworks on the walls.





"The idea was to have a flowing effect out to the water," the owners said. "And we wanted an upstairs space, that was important. The old house had all these small square tiny rooms. We wanted big space but the house had to be low energy."

The transformation was quite a challenge for Stephen Guthrie and Lindy Atkin. Off came the roof, down came internal walls. There was much gutting, reconfiguring, re-zoning. An under-house boat storage space had to be built on. A wide deck leading to the lawn and water had to be built. The jetty had to be modernised. The changes were dramatic and all-embracing. "We kept some walls and slab on the ground floor, but chopped a big hole in the middle of the upper floor to create generous spatial volume," Lindy said. "We needed to introduce high level operable clerestory windows to bring in the northern winter sun and encourage natural cross flow ventilation into the spaces by harnessing cooling river breezes."

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Because the owners' art works were so large, so distinctive (some striking abstracts, some Pro Hart), white planes with the warmth of natural timber were used as a contemporary backdrop. This not only allowed the art to stand out, but acted as a clean palette for the fine furniture pieces.

Function was vital, especially in the kitchen as the owners are as passionate about cooking as they are about collecting art. A practical square space with a gas strut window opening to the outside barbecue and dining area holds all the elements required for a busy cook: a scullery nook, satin two pack cupboards, grey granite bench tops; deep sliding drawers.

The entire kitchen and living area sprawls to meld as one, leading to the outside deck through bi-fold doors. An interesting concept within the outdoor deck is a separate indoor/outdoor space at the south east corner with long river views. It is in this outdoor room with its distinctive French canvas patterned banquette seating that quiet contemplation can take place over a cup of coffee in the mornings or a late afternoon glass of wine. This is one of the most used spots of many tranquil nooks in the house. A new self-contained guest room on the north east corner of the property was built - with its own bathroom, kitchenette and separate access, it offers house guests complete privacy.





The tall gallery is bridged over the entry to provide passage between the more public living and guest areas and the private sleeping, working and bathing spaces of the house. Upstairs the space had been divided in two and linked by a walkway. "Soaring ceiling lines and northern clerestory glazing in the new roof structure encourages winter sunlight into the spaces as well as providing natural cooling with stack effect cross ventilation through the house," Stephen Guthrie said.

On one side, a casual living area is home to all the components required for fun, casual living: a flat-screen television, a sprawling lounge, cupboards, a sideboard hiding a bar fridge, comfortable furnishings, more art works including a portrait of the owners' beloved labradoodle Harry. It's a place for teenagers or grandchildren to hang out, a place for the blokes to gather and watch the footy. A guest room on this level leads off the bridge area and is quite separate from the casual living space.

Across the walkway is the owners' private space, off limits to teenagers, grandchildren and sports lovers. In this wing, a mini-world away from the rest of the house, an enormous office/studio is where work and creativity takes place. Anything could happen in here, from something as simple as keeping the books up to date, to the creation of a painting or sculpture. It's big enough for two people (and more) to share at the same time.



Across the hall from the office/studio is the master suite, an area that evolves as you first go through the large ensuite wardrobe area (which is big enough to double as a gym) and then into the serenity of main bedroom with its white bedding ... and finally out to an enclosed deck area where the views of the river and green backdrop can be closed off at night with sliding aluminium shutters and timber batten screening.

The owners are thrilled with the transformation of their 1980s square box, and even more delighted that they were able to have their dream Noosa home without leaving a large carbon footprint.