



custom-built homes | utz-sanby architects

The next level

With its effortless indoor-outdoor connection and light-filled spaces, this is a home like no other



Photography: Marian Riabic

A great deal can happen in 90-plus years, and for a 1920s California bungalow located on Sydney’s lower North Shore, it was high time for an update courtesy of Utz-Sanby Architects. The clients wanted a comfortable family house with all the trimmings — think open-plan living spaces, plenty of natural light and a generous garden — and that’s exactly what they got. In original condition, the residence sat on a block with a gentle slope and a well-established garden filled with tall eucalypts and a crepe myrtle tree for added flower power. Having worked with the family on a previous house, Utz-Sanby Architects was well-versed when it came to the clients’ sense of style. “This is the second time we have designed for these clients, who have two young children and are keen gardeners,” says architect Kristin Utz. “They saw the potential to have a beautiful garden and renovate the house

to take advantage of the sloping block, while retaining the character and details of the original home.” Thanks to the north-east orientation and sloping nature of the land, a two-storey addition on the south side was a feasible option. The older additions to the rear of the house were removed and replaced with an open-plan kitchen, living and dining room with adjoining covered deck on the garden level. With four bedrooms in total, a parents retreat — complete with a master bedroom, ensuite, walk-in robe and a large study — was added above the living area. “We were all in agreement that the established trees were to be retained,” says Kristin. “The master bedroom enjoys the northern aspect and views through the crepe myrtle.” With a focus on appreciating Mother Nature, the renovation revolved around exposing the living spaces to the great outdoors. “The ability to open the living areas onto the covered outdoor deck and provide a number of spaces where the garden can be appreciated led to the L-shaped plan at the





EXPERT TIP: Choosing the right architect — someone you feel completely comfortable with — is vital. It’s important to have open communication to work harmoniously.

rear,” says Kristin. “The connection of the new addition to the existing house also presented an opportunity to raise the ceiling in the hall at the top of the stairs to allow sunlight into the house, and create a dramatic double-height space between the old and the new.”

A neutral palette that blends in with the renovated home’s surrounding landscape was chosen. Mainly rustic materials were used, including teak, blackbutt, spotted gum, salvaged bricks and sandstone. “The colour scheme was kept light and neutral to reflect natural light and allow the colours of the landscape to draw the eye outside,” says Kristin. Case in point is the built-in daybed in the living area that sits in front of bi-folding windows, providing the perfect spot to unwind and watch the world go by. This is a definite highlight of the space, which also happens to be Kristin’s favourite.

Sustainability was a key factor in this project, with the

clients keen to be as kind to the environment as possible — now and in the future. Thanks to wide, open spaces, cross-ventilation is prevalent in this home, with ceiling fans and ducted gas heating assisting when necessary. All the lighting is low-voltage LED, and there’s also a 20,000-litre water tank with a Rainbank system in the backyard for flushing toilets, laundry and watering the garden. A mini ecosystem in the form of a pond is in the backyard, along with a large vegetable/herb garden and fruit trees, all adding to the charm of the outdoor space.

A fusion of clean, modern design with a healthy dose of nature, this residence comprises everything you look for in a family home and takes it to the next level. And while it retains that distinctive California charm, the finished product is very clearly a contemporary home that is expertly tailored to the way the family likes to live.

The facts

Location of home: Artarmon, NSW
Time taken to build: 10 Months
Year completed: 2015

The figures

Size of home: 305sqm
Size of land: 696.7sqm
Bedrooms: 4
Bathrooms: 2.5
Floors: 2

The details

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