

A MATCHLESS 'BACH'

Fond memories of childhood holidays in New Zealand inspired the design of artist Lee Mansbridge's Fremantle home

ARTIST Lee Mansbridge didn't need to pore over magazines or scour the internet to find ideas for this building project. Happy childhood memories of holidaying on New Zealand's South Island provided all the design inspiration she needed to create a self-contained home behind the 1930s heritage-listed Fremantle residence she shares with her husband, Paul.

Lee's vision was to add a "bach" on the rear of their 653sq m block that was reminiscent of the holiday homes she used to stay in.

To this end, she briefed her architect to come up with a black, container-like structure.

"We used to have these 'baches', which were holiday homes in the bush," Lee says.

"They were ply and used to be made out of car packing cases, and then they were painted with Creoseal to stop the white ants, so they have a black stain."

Philip Stejskal of Philip Stejskal Architecture, swiftly translated his clients' aspirations into a workable plan.

Lee says she never thought about hiring another architect, after watching "with pleasure" how Philip had project-managed her daughter's stunning abode while working for Coda Studio a few years earlier.

"Being an artist you've got this vision and sometimes it is hard to articulate what you actually want," she says. "But with Phil, he just got it."

Lee's requirements were for the 120sq m extension – which acts as a separate house – to be in complete contrast with the older home. She also wanted "robust materials" used throughout so that her walls of art could "speak" to guests.

The deliberate separation gives Lee and Paul privacy from the original dwelling, which has been renovated to provide accommodation for Airbnb guests.

"I like the fact that you can't see it from the street – I like giving people a surprise," Lee says.

The new addition, which was built using structural insulated panels, has concrete floors, a concrete and plaster kitchen bench and masonite walls.

The stark materials offset an impressive art collection that includes paintings, drawings,

sculptures and photographs, either designed by Lee or her friends, or collected on her travels.

The couple say that they were conscious of using "simple" and less "showy" products in the fit-out.

"Masonite is an old product they would use in the old homes and I liked the idea that these materials aren't as common anymore," Lee says.

The design period, including council approvals, took nine months and the build took 12 months – a remarkable effort, given the home was an owner-builder project by Paul, and it was his first time building.

"Thank God we had the original house to live in and coffee shops down the road," Lee says.

"The shell of the house took like two weeks to go up. They just brought it on a trailer, but then it was fitted out."

The veranda and lean-to were the only elements of the original residence to be demolished.

The old kitchen, which has been deliberately separated from the existing home and is now

used as a scullery, represents the transition from old to new.

The two-storey, bach-inspired abode has one bedroom, an art studio, bathroom, study nook, large kitchen and living area, plus a courtyard and an alfresco area.

Philip says the level of finish Paul achieved would rival that of many professional builders.

"He was the best builder in that role of coordinating and detail, more so than some professional builders," he says.

And it doesn't look like Paul will be retiring any time soon. A roof terrace next to Lee's upstairs studio is on his agenda.

ALYESHA ANDERSON

FAST FACTS

// The original house is a separate residence that operates as a holiday rental via Airbnb. Airbnb is a website that lets homeowners rent out rooms or units for lodging. It has more than 800,000 listings in 33,000 cities and 192 countries. Visit www.airbnb.com.au for more information.

// Translucent polycarbonate has been used to disperse light throughout the extension.

// Masonite boards have been used as a style feature on the interior walls.



PICTURES: BO WONG; MARIE NIRME





GET THE LOOK

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