



INVENTION TEST

Architect Philip Stejskal overcame more than a few design dilemmas when he added a new zone to the rear of this 1890s Fremantle home

THIS historic Fremantle home had more than its share of character and old-world charm, but it didn't come close to fulfilling the demands of today's modern lifestyle requirements. Built in the 1890s, its design glitches included a badly positioned bathroom, a dilapidated lean-to veranda and a 1.5m disconnect between the main floor level and the garden.

Owners Philip Burns, an exhibition designer for the National Portrait Gallery, and Kim Cannon, a textile designer, knew revamping their residence required expert attention and called in architect Philip Stejskal.

The Beaconsfield-based architect came up with a plan that involved removing the lean-to veranda, shifting the bathroom, creating a passage from the house to the garden and building a flexible living space, which has been dubbed the outdoor dining room.

Undertaking this work on a narrow site complicated the process somewhat and, Philip says, ensuring each room had "acoustic privacy" was one of his biggest concerns.

"The first move was to get the bathroom out the way," he says.

"So we pushed it as far south on the site as possible – it is a very narrow block of just 5.5 metres. The move was basically to squash the bathroom against the southern wall and flatten it out. We used it as an acoustic buffer from the immediate neighbours."

Philip then decided on a space that allows the owners to engage with the garden, without having to physically enter the backyard.

This space negotiates the 1.5m change in level from the main floor of the existing home to the garden, through a series of platform changes.

"The next part was to create this outdoor dining room," he says. "The notion was to create a space that wasn't quite inside or outside."

This "design device" effectively overcame the previously insurmountable barrier between the home and its garden.

"This room actually has a step in it," Philip says. "The idea was to physically come down to the level of the garden."

The new space was constructed in timber frame, clad in masonite board.

"Often when you talk about connecting the inside with the outside, the initial response might be to just put in a big bifold, which you can open up and have this very direct connection," Philip says.

"That's not what we wanted to do. We wanted to explore different conditions of proximity to the garden, some which would give you physical access out to the garden and others which wouldn't."

This level of consideration clearly impressed the judges of the Australian Institute of Architects WA Chapter Architecture Awards.

"This project stands as a handcrafted jewel," the judging panel's report says.

"The architect achieves an inventive transition from the internal space of the 1890s home to the garden.

"The materials, coupled with the delicate proportioning, ensure the extension is considerate of the historical setting while being uniquely contemporary."

ALYESHA ANDERSON

The project won the Architecture Award for the Small Projects category at this year's AIAWA awards. It has also been short-listed in the national Australian Institute of Architecture awards for Alterations and Additions.

THE FIX

THE BRIEF

// Add an innovative yet sympathetic extension to this 1890s home on a narrow lot in Fremantle.

// Move the poorly positioned bathroom and address the 1.5m difference in level between the house and the garden.

THE RESULT

// The relocated bathroom now acts as an acoustic buffer between the house and the neighbouring home.

// A new multipurpose room contains a series of platform level changes, enabling the owners to negotiate the previously steep "drop" from their living area to their backyard.



PICTURES: BO WONG

Before





GET THE LOOK

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phone: 0401 727 405, www.architectureps.com

// **Builder:** Old Oak Building & Construction, Bicton,
phone: 9339 3762

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