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PROPERTY FROM EVERY ANGLE

The Sydney Morning Herald

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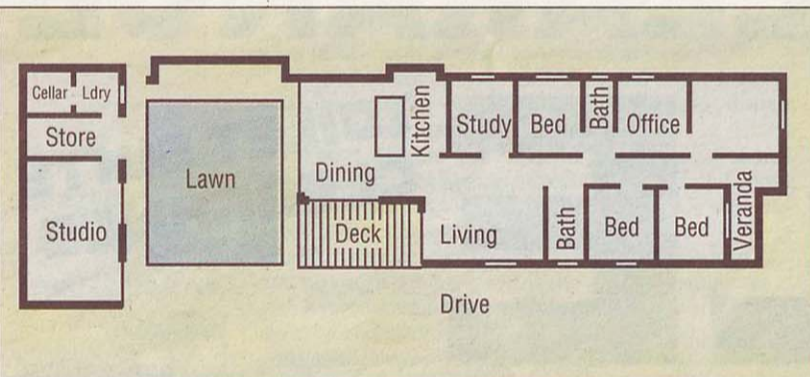
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home

Centennial spark

Guy Allenby visits a sympathetically rebuilt Federation home in Haberfield.



1. Large sitting room with deck and courtyard. Wall-height glass doors allow flooding light. Sofa "Biaggi" made and sold by Australian Living, Glebe (9518 8288), coffee table from David Jones. Lights from ECC Lighting and Living, Pyrmont (9380 7922).

2. West-facing windows in the dining room to allow afternoon light.

3. Deck with painted timber pergola (open) allows plenty of morning sun inside the dining area through the full-length glass doors.

4. The hallway is 1.5 m wide and stretches along the centre of the house. Running off the hall are two offices, three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a study.



VISITING a fine example of a fair dinkum Federation home, especially one that's been sensitively updated, is to realise just how poor a cousin Sydney's rash of newly built brick veneer "fauxderation" homes really are.

Case in point: this Haberfield home, its 100-year-old core restored and solidly and sympathetically added to by architect Steve Kennedy of Kennedy Associates.

His clients love it, Kennedy's apparently pretty chuffed too and the local council, notoriously pernickety, maintains "it's a model for what we're looking for".

"Their planners were very supportive of the scheme and their heritage guy loved it," says Kennedy. "They [said] they didn't want mock Federation, they didn't want cliches. They wanted sympathetic buildings that worked. We took the massing of the house and its original footprint and outside materials and we rebuilt it," he says.

From the street, there's no indication that there's anything other than the original building beyond. Once in the front door though the house reveals itself "as basically a sequence of unfolding rooms", as Kennedy puts it.

Peeling off each side of a 1.5 metre-wide corridor are three bedrooms and the client's studies (both owners work from home). To the right, at what was the end of the original home, is a large sitting room with courtyard beyond.

To the right and beyond that is the new kitchen and dining room, with 19 (17 openable) 2.5 metre high glass panels or doors that open to both courtyard and garden. Blackbutt posts support the kitchen's huge exposed roof trusses.

The addition is clad in rough sawn "Shadowclad" plywood. Behind is a small garden and a studio/workshop and laundry at the block's rear boundary.

"The house is very much an internalised space with the courtyard being one of a series of rooms," Kennedy says.

The original house had been divided into "two dwellings", Kennedy says, "and was a maze of rooms, corridors and accretions. There was no garden to speak of".

"It was a pigsty," adds the client. "We bought it in 1995 and lived in while it was being done."

Kennedy was involved from day one.

"I looked at the house before they bought it," he says. "We walked through it and decided that yes, it had the potential to do what we wanted to do. Which was quite specific."

The brief ran to a large studio space plus "two studies, several bedrooms, two bathrooms, a large entertaining area and a variety of wall spaces to hang art works, as well as a strong connection between the

house and garden, plenty of natural light and total privacy", Kennedy says.

They also wanted the house "to be both modern and timeless".

Kennedy and Associates admit to being "quite formal architects", although he points out that this job was necessarily "quite restrained for us".

"A lot of our stuff is far more outspokenly modern than this."

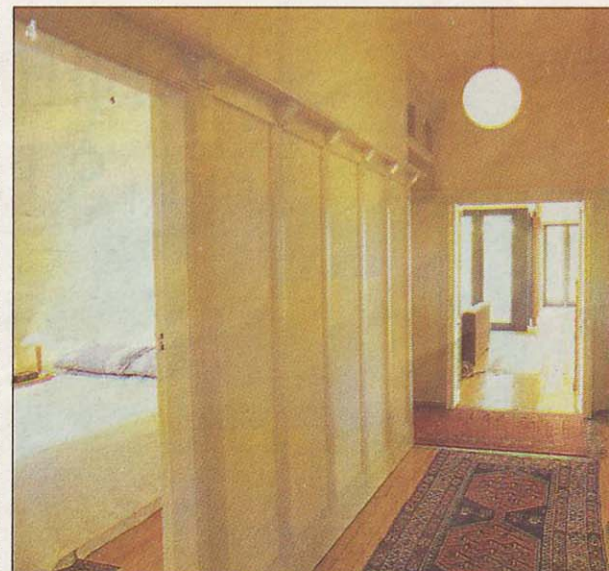
Haberfield, as an important conservation area, is not a suburb where architecture that smacks of the overtly contemporary or innovative is tolerated.

"We were told the height of the roof, we were told the structure," Kennedy says.

The other key governing factor in the outcome of the design was the close relationship with the clients Kennedy enjoyed.

"In this case you have two clients who are at the peak of their professions and their careers and both are absolute perfectionists. So the demands from them were extreme at all times. It's often the case that a client will suggest a change in the midst of construction that runs contrary to the direction of the architect's design."

"During building there are always periods of tension, but they were always resolved. It was one of those rare cases where the changes that the clients made benefitted the house rather than ..." Kennedy pauses and chooses his words carefully: "Having changes made by the client during the construction that are constrained by their lack of understanding of the totality."





THE AIM
To update a Federation home and insert more light, while keeping to heritage regulations.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE?
Nine months.

WHAT THE OWNERS WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY
Larger and more accessible kitchen cupboards

FEATURE OWNERS ARE HAPPIEST WITH
The continuity between the interior and exterior at the rear of the property.

ARCHITECTS
Kennedy Associates, 9564 6548.

Photographs by
Quentin Jones

5. A converted double garage serves as a studio, storeroom and laundry. Each room is sectioned off. The studio has three full-length glass doors to maximise light.

6. Dúker bath sits with African Ash timber veneer cabinet and semi-recessed Fowler "Florida" basin from Tradlink Plumbing Supplies, 9370 8444. "Bahrain" vitrified ceramic tiles (Classic Ceramics, 9560 6555) on the walls behind two frameless mirrors.

7. The kitchen shares the space with the dining room, in a 5 m high space that breaks from traditional high, flat ceilings. Five timber trusses support the area and are carried by recycled blackbutt timber posts. Benchtops are also made from recycled blackbutt. The windows open from the base. Island bench on the left, blackbutt top and sides and polished MDF drawers.

8. Walls are made of 19 1.5 m high glazed panels, 17 of which can be opened out and stacked to reveal the deck and courtyard. Dining table from Original Finish Newtown (9550 2365) and chairs are stained beechwood Crassevig "Teresa" from Space Furniture, Surry Hills (9380 6000). Sisal mat from Natural Floor Covering Centre, Stanmore (9569 6999)



"They said they didn't want mock Federation, they didn't want cliches. They wanted sympathetic buildings that worked."

Steve Kennedy, architect