

Someone to watch over me

How the charms of an unloved 1960s cottage were finally revealed **10**



Hello yellow brick road

A decision to save this old 1960s cottage leads down an unexpected path, writes **Robyn Willis**

The site slopes gently away from the street, which was managed with a set of internal and external steps.

Not many people would see the charms of the kind of 1960s yellow-brick cottage that confronted architect Christopher Polly when he first saw this site at Woolooware. But, he says, he quickly found himself convincing his clients to renovate rather than demolish.

"It was also about retaining some semblance of the cultural value of the old house and its contribution to the street," Christopher says. "That type of yellow brick, modest cottage is slowly disappearing and I was looking to keep as much of it as possible."

He was also concerned that demolishing the old house would add considerably to the cost, both in terms of the environmental footprint and the budget.

Having said that, Christopher says the internal layout was uninspiring, at best.

"The interior was awful," he says. "The kitchen and the living area were tiny at the back and the laundry was external. The bathroom was tiny and you walked down a tiny corridor to the tiny living space. There was no dining area and the sunroom at the back was enclosed with no connection to the garden."

Catching the sunset

Christopher's solution was to create a modest addition at the back of the house and divide the old and new into private and public spaces respectively.

The original house was reconfigured to provide three bedrooms, two bathrooms and an internal laundry while the new work at the back offered an open-plan kitchen, living and dining area leading on to the backyard. An open-tread staircase leads to an upper-level sitting room with the potential to become a guest room, plus a spot to view the setting sun.

"They wanted an upper floor to capture sunsets, because they're into sunsets," Christopher says. "If you look back towards the street, they get a view of the rooftops of the suburb."

While the new work is a departure from the old house, Christopher was keen to visually connect the two buildings. So he created two internal courtyards, with large windows in the new work facing onto the old house.

It also serves to draw natural light into the centre of the house while thoughtful landscaping keeps the connection to the outdoor environment.

"I've seen so many extensions where the new work turns its back on the old house," Christopher says. "So I made a conscious decision to always have that presence within the new build."

PROJECT

Owners

A couple who have recently relocated from Melbourne

Architect

Christopher Polly
christopherpolly.com

The problem

A poorly planned 1960s yellow-brick cottage that did not provide enough space

The site

A 786sqm block that slopes away from the street

Design solution

Re-designing the existing cottage and extending to create open-plan living

How long did it take?

14 months design and DA. Just over three years to build



IF YOU DON'T HAVE A BIG SPACE, A DOUBLE HEIGHT CEILING WILL MAKE IT FEEL SO MUCH LARGER

Small but grand

While the new work is modest in size — the house is 220sqm and sits on a 786sqm block — it still has a sense of grandeur.

Internally, this is most obvious in the double-height void, which makes the dining space feel larger than its footprint would suggest. Outside, the angled roofline is a deliberately dramatic statement.

While Christopher took the house from design and planning through to the conclusion of the Development Application process, he says the owners took on the project themselves from that point.

"They had a builder to get it to lockup stage and then the owners took over," he says.

"They wanted it to feel like it came from them. I was on hand the whole time so I managed to watch over the fundamental things that are important to the design. "As first-timers they made some mistakes but I was there to help unsitch them."

As a result, the build took much longer than usual, and was broken down into two stages, with the owners living in the old house once it was finished while they moved on to the new work. And there are no regrets about hanging on to the old house.

"The whole character of the hipped roof and the type of bricks at that time, you don't see that anymore," says Christopher. Pictures Brett Boardman

THE SOURCE

Roof BlueScope Colorbond Custom Orb in Monument, colorbond.com
Plywood veneer Hoop Pine BB Plywood kitchen, ceiling and bedroom from Mister Ply & Wood, misterplywood.com.au
Kitchen benchtop Caesarstone Sleek Concrete, caesarstone.com.au
Living room lights, Paris Au Mois d'Aut Josephine pendants from Hub Furniture, hubfurniture.com.au
Dining chairs Seth chairs, from Clickon, clickonfurniture.com.au



Plywood has been used extensively in the old and new parts of the house, especially in the kitchen and on the bedroom joinery to add warmth.



The open-tread staircase leading to an upper level sitting area is a quiet nod to 1960s architecture.