



QUICK THINKER

A SMALL CHANGE LEADS TO A HUGE TRANSFORMATION
FOR A NORTH SHORE HOME



DETAILS

HOUSE SUBURBAN DELIGHT
LOCATION NORTH SHORE,
 SYDNEY

WORDS // PENNY CRASWELL
PHOTOGRAPHY // KATHERINE LU

A 1960s light-brick home on Sydney's Lower North Shore has had a major redesign without extending its existing footprint. The owners, a young family with children, wanted to transform their living spaces into bright, open and functional areas, with better flow and connection to the outdoors.

The architectural response was to reconfigure the existing fabric of the home, rather than adding a potentially costly extension that didn't suit the site or the needs of the owners. This meant rethinking every space and finding new meaning and purpose for those leftover, missing spaces that exist in many homes.

With the expertise of Bijl Architecture, the first step of the new design revolved around doing away with what director Melonie Bayl-Smith refers to as an example of the "lost space of the suburbs" — an old-fashioned strip verandah at the front of the house (complete with fake Greek columns). "The original architectural intent is that you would apparently sit on the verandah and look at the street, but there's no privacy and in reality, no-one would really sit there," says Melanie. "Instead, these spaces end up becoming a junkyard for old furniture — a weird architectural anomaly."

This verandah space was absorbed into the interior of the house, extending the living room to the edge of the floor plan and enclosing it with glass doors and windows wrapped in a façade made of vertical timber slats. This approach was about creating a design strategy that was seamless. Rather than trying to match the existing brick or adding a series of openings that betray the age of the house, the screen is a way of controlling the appearance of the house and brings an almost sculptural quality to the front elevation.



A light and bright kitchen
combines style with function





“WE CAPITALISED ON THE BENEFITS OF HOUSES OF THIS ERA — A LOT OF THEM HAVE TRUSSED ROOFS AND THE WALLS IN THE HOUSE CAN BE CHANGED RELATIVELY EASILY” - MELONIE BAYL-SMITH

ED'S FAVE THE OPEN-PLAN LIVING SPACE WHICH OPENS TO THE OUTDOOR AREA





“IT’S ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY — HOW CAN WE MAKE BETTER USE OF WHAT WE HAVE? SMALL CHANGES CAN AFFECT A LARGE TRANSFORMATION” - MELONIE BAYL-SMITH

The double skin of the façade offers a series of advantages, with the operable windows allowing fresh air and access to nature — the trees can be touched from inside the house — and timber slats acting as a balustrade/screen for privacy. Bijl Architecture associate Vanessa Tang-Lee describes the screen as the most important design element in the house and marks it as one of the most enjoyable to design. “We worked with the builder to source the materials and detailed the façade to make sure it looks good from inside, outside and from every angle,” she says.

Inside, the internal walls to the entry, living, kitchen and dining space were removed to completely reconfigure the

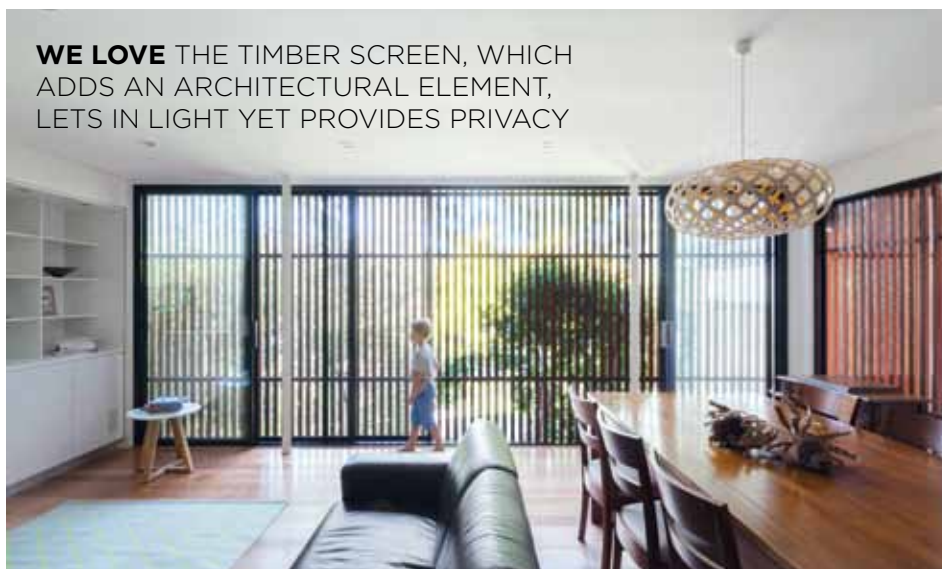
area. This was made possible thanks to trussed roofs, which are common in houses of this era and allow the internal walls to be moved. “We capitalised on the benefits of houses of this era — a lot of them have trussed roofs and the walls in the house can be changed relatively easily,” explains Melonie.

The new floor plan features two main living spaces — one living room at the front that connects to the street via the screen, and another kitchen and family room at the back that opens out to the backyard. This kitchen/family space also features built-in joinery units that act as storage, banquette seating and a desk for studying, providing the owners with a highly functional space

ABOVE Study in style
OPPOSITE BOTTOM A David Trubridge pendant adds warmth to the dining space



Outdoor entertaining is a cinch during the warmer months



WE LOVE THE TIMBER SCREEN, WHICH ADDS AN ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENT, LETS IN LIGHT YET PROVIDES PRIVACY

perfect for contemporary family living. “Before, when the computer was in a separate room, I felt like I couldn’t really participate in what was happening,” says the owner. “But now, because the computer is here, I can be in the kitchen and helping with homework at the same time.”

As well as providing an individual solution that perfectly suits this family,

the design also points a way forward for other architects dealing with similar types of homes and asks the very important question: why build more when you don’t need to? “The owners didn’t want to make it bigger,” says Melonie. “It’s about sustainability — how can we make better use of what we have? Small changes can affect a large transformation.” ♡

PROJECT TEAM

Architect and interior design

Melonie Bayl-Smith (director) and
Vanessa Tang-Lee
(interior designer),

Bijl Architecture (02 9958 7950;
bijlarchitecture.com.au)

Builder Wilkinstruct

Engineers

Cantilever Consulting Engineers
(cantileverengineers.com.au)

MATERIALS

Front door Sydney Woodworkers
(sydneywoodworkers.com.au)

Stairs Eco Outdoor
(ecoooutdoor.com.au)

Roof Colorbond (colorbond.com.au)

Benchtops Caesarstone
(caesarstone.com.au)

Mosaic tiles Academy Tiles
(academytiles.com.au)

FURNITURE & FURNISHINGS

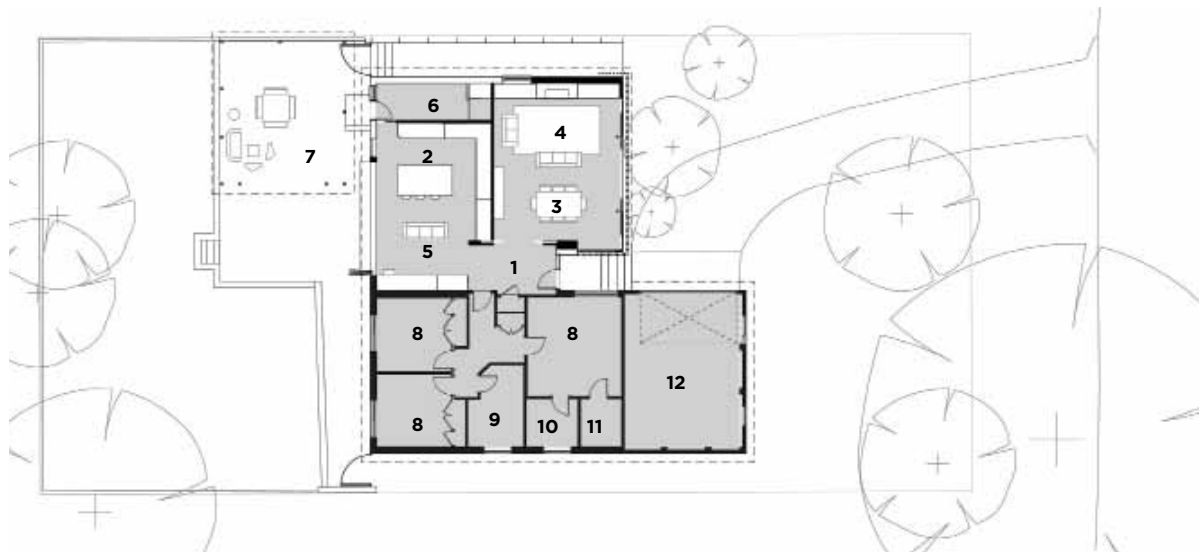
Living room rug Armadillo & Co
(armadillo-co.com)

Hooks Design by Them
(designbythem.com)

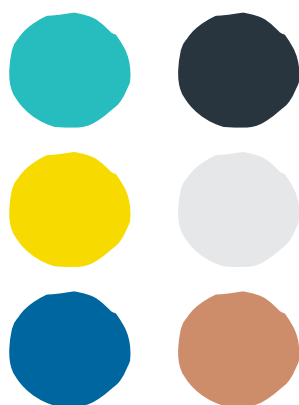
Feature light David Trubridge
(davidtrubridge.com)

LEGEND

- 1 ENTRY
- 2 KITCHEN
- 3 DINING ROOM
- 4 LIVING ROOM
- 5 SITTING ROOM
- 6 LAUNDRY
- 7 ALFRESCO
- 8 LIVING ROOM
- 9 BEDROOM
- 10 ENSUITE
- 11 WALK-IN ROBE
- 12 GARAGE



FLOOR PLAN



Colour Palette

Beachy is a word that comes to mind for this house. Blond timber with white joinery is decorated with teal, yellow and blues reminiscent of the ocean. This combination also gives a slight Scandinavian feel



A skylight puts the weather on show



Get the Look

01: Tadao pendant lights from beaconlighting.com.au **02:** Kina pendant from davidtrubridge.com **03:** Dial hangers by Nicholas Karlovasitis and Sarah Gibson from designbythem.com **04:** Calm Waters cushion from escapetoparadise.com.au

05: Lax Edge dining table from spenceandlyda.com.au **06:** Bryan bar stool (set of two) from zanui.com.au **07:** Errol sofa from jardan.com.au

08: Noon Petite side table from kiraandkira.com.au

