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WINNER
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A LINK TO THE PAST

This project involved alterations and additions to a single-storey timber weatherboard semi-detached house including the construction of a new split-level extension.

The brief was to build a three-bedroom, two-bathroom, modern, functional, light-filled and airy residence — a comfortable family home (although small) with defined areas for work and relaxation while still retaining a link to the past history of the house.

Previously, the house only had one bedroom, a minute kitchen and a large bathroom separate from the house, which took up most of the garden! No hint of any previous grandeur or architectural interest was evident.

An awareness of the climate, the use of sustainable materials and green sensibilities were important considerations. Close attention to detail was also paid to the aspect of the building and clever definition of living spaces. An astute use of simple, quality materials and a cohesive sense of colour throughout enhances the illusion of spaciousness in this tiny abode.

Entering the house and moving down the interior passage you are immediately attracted by the common inner wall of wide weatherboards (late 19th century) uncovered in the early stages of renovation. The opalescent hues are the result of many different paint colours used unsparingly on this wall over the years. The surface has been sanded back lightly and sealed with a clear satin finish — a tangible link with the past and more than complementary with the rest of the house and its natural tones.

Entering the addition, three steps lead down to the living room. The oak-stained V-lined ceiling seems to soar to its full height and the floor, a pale honey blackbutt, reflects the

same tones. The living room is divided from the kitchen with a modern interpretation of a kitchen hutch cabinet, cleverly designed to make maximum use of a small space. On one side a bookcase and on the kitchen side, the cupboards store the microwave and all kitchen accessories and appliances.

Down three more steps is the kitchen/dining room, with clean and simple detailing. The distinctive blue-grey beams of the ceiling mimic the colour of the lower cupboards which conceal the bin and dishwasher. The refrigerator and pantry are invisible behind polyurethane cupboards.

Enormous sliding glass doors reveal a small sunlit garden. The concept of the garden as part of the house is not new, but here it has been done superbly.

The first-floor structure was designed/constructed to be sympathetic to the original house and the area's heritage nature. It has elements of an industrial space that may have been found at the surrounding dockyards in the early 1800s. It is built of exposed steel and timber lining boards. As the structure is lightweight it lends itself to modern times.

Both wet areas have wall-hung fittings and concealed joinery to utilise the already small spaces in which they are housed. The ground-floor bathroom has a discreet laundry under the stairs, hidden behind two doors.

The home's privacy, sun control and tranquillity are enhanced by a purpose-built, cantilevered steel structure, which supports the motorised retractable roller blinds. This was an integral part of the extension and a fundamental part of the building as it conceals the floor-to-ceiling glass windows looking out over the adjoining small Balmain gardens, with a distant view of the city.

Painted timber louvres to the front and first-floor windows allow superb cross ventilation and a high level of security and also maximise privacy.

A major design consideration with the construction was the bespoke joinery. Careful planning and implementation of tolerances ensure that the house not only looks beautiful but is extremely practical and user friendly. All appliances are hidden behind polyurethane doors and every kitchen item has a dedicated location.

The balance between visible and invisible has been beautifully envisaged in the design and carried out comprehensively through the construction of this house, creating a tranquil and relaxing environment.

Hagan Built specialises in boutique residential construction in the Sydney metropolitan area. Its services include alterations and additions, restorations/renovations, apartment fit-outs and new builds.

JUDGES' COMMENTS: This 19th-century weatherboard semi-detached cottage has been renovated and extended with a modern split-level extension. The original timber boards lining the shared common wall are a reminder of the old but complement the bright interior and the floor-to-ceiling glass wall at the rear of the extension. A steel portal frame also permits the use of a large expanse of glass in the top-floor rear wall, allowing the courtyard to become part of the house.

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