

home

Siobhan O'Brien



Sky's the limit

A tight budget turned the designers of this terrace into masters of illusion.

FROM Studio Five, high above Surry Hills, architect Sam Crawford works in a shared warehouse space. His latest project, a revamped terrace in Paddington on a heritage-listed street, is designed in conjunction with another Studio Five dweller, architect Heike Rewitzer.

The client, Simon O'Neil of Gunlake Constructions, is also the builder. The result by this thirtysomething trio is the quintessential inner-city bachelor pad.

Paddington terraces weren't designed with the Australian climate in mind. This one was no different: poky, damp, cramped.

Spaces were unusable. Ground-level kitchen living, dining and bath rooms had no access to the outdoors. It was devoid of skylights, expansive windows or cross-ventilation. Upstairs, bedrooms were like cupboards.

Enter Crawford and Rewitzer, their only impediment the budget. "Having a limited budget helps you to be more creative in a lot of respects," Crawford says.

"You work within the parameters, which can be frustrating at times, but you often come up with a better, more interesting solution as a consequence and you build upon that every time you work on a project."

Today, the house has a sense of space and light. The living space is now at the front of the house, with polished floorboards throughout. An acoustic guitar takes pride of place.

A seamless alcove and storage area in recycled jarrah, the West Australian hardwood, appears to float along the right side of the living area. Beyond are an informal dining area and a kitchen that extends to a rear courtyard, complete with water features.

A painted sapphire-blue wall and detailing at the back of the courtyard add a sense of theatre. "We've got plans to fix up the decking and the garden in the courtyard," O'Neil says, "I want it to be the sort of place you can hang out in with your friends for a barbecue during summer."

An island bench is the kitchen's hub. Clusters of pots and implements hang above it. Light floods in

from glass doors and windows framed in jarrah. A long skylight runs the length of the kitchen. Down lights are recessed throughout.

The original toilet has been retained, tucked alongside the kitchen; an entire wall running beside and beyond the kitchen has a mirror that reflects the garden back into the room.

As well, a bronzed mirror sits above the sink. "The use of mirrors gives the illusion there's more space," Crawford says. "Another trick to opening it all up."

Before the kitchen, a narrow original staircase leads to the bathroom and bedrooms. The bathroom

Photos: Eric Sierins

was relocated there to allow the lower level to be opened up. A Japanese-inspired western-red cedar bath enclosed in glass was a fusion of ideas, built on-site by Crawford and O'Neil.

There's an extra bedroom on the second level, while the main bedroom retains a private balcony overlooking the street. A new loft makes a third bedroom or study.

"We work together so well," Crawford says, "we know how to design, he [O'Neil] knows how to build and together we come up with the best solution in relation to price, effectiveness and buildability."

1 The terrace is only 3.4 m-wide so opening up the space as much as possible was a priority. The facade is painted Dulux Charcoal. Flooring throughout the lower level of the house is waxed recycled Sydney blue gum.

2 A skylight runs the length of the kitchen. Doors trimmed in jarrah open onto the courtyard. The building at the end of the garden serves as a workshop/garage. Kitchen table and chairs by Aniek from Anibou, 9319 0655.

3 The kitchen is tucked along one wall. The benchtops are recycled jarrah with two-pack polyurethane finish. A mirrored panel above the sink serves to visually open up the space. Taps and sink by Blanco.

4 A Bayliss Interiors (9810 4300) blind allows light to pour in from the street, but maintains privacy. Coffee table by Caroline Casey from Anibou.

THE AIM
To maximise light and space in a narrow south-facing terrace at a reasonable cost.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE
Seven months design and documentation, four months with council, six months to build.

WHAT THE DESIGNER WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY
Push council to allow a higher boundary wall next to the skylight to create more privacy.

FEATURES DESIGNER IS HAPPIEST WITH
The quality of light and the sense of space.

BUILDER
Gunlake Constructions, 53 Cross Street, Double Bay, 9363 1744.

ARCHITECTS
Heike Rewitzer, Architectural and Interiors, 0414 797 521. Sam Crawford Architect, 9280 3555.