

Let there be light

The kitchen of a dingy terrace has been transformed into a social hub, writes **Jennifer Loicht**. Photos Bob Barker.



Peter and Samira Lloyd wanted a "social" kitchen. When planning the renovation to transform their dingy rundown terrace into a light-filled modern marvel, they envisaged an open-plan area, integrated with the dining room which provided the perfect spot for when friends dropped in.

"The way we live now, the kitchen is the new fireplace of the house," says architect Shaun Carter, who has worked on two renovation projects with the Lloyds.

"It's the warm centre which everyone sits around and socialises in. Peter and Sam have been known to have the odd party so this was definitely going to be a social place."

Practicality and durability were important, too – hence the wide benches topped with CaesarStone, which was also used in the bathrooms and laundry.

"We also used subtle, earthy tones so it doesn't outdate in five years," adds Sam.

Subtle too, is the transition from kitchen to dining room – the rounded rail handles on the kitchen cupboards become finger pulls on the adjacent dining room cabinetry to help distinguish the different spaces without making it too obvious.

Extensive cupboard space was essential, given that the couple – who have two children, Max, 2, and Millie, 8 weeks – used their "unliveable" basement (which has received a new lease of life as a luxury, 44sq m main bedroom) for storage and now needed somewhere else to put everything from their Christmas decorations to cutlery.

Other favourite features of the new kitchen include its chunky island bench, the pantry and the fact there's loads of room to move.

"It is actually a big kitchen," says Sam. Every appliance – fridge, microwave, dishwasher,

bin, oven, cooktop, rangehood and sinks – has been integrated into the cabinets and bench.

"It's reinforcing that idea of furniture where it looks like everything is made to be part of the same thing," says Shaun.

"The appliances are subservient to the kitchen rather than the other way around."

Victorian values

The Lloyds bought their then two-bedroom inner west house as a "grotty" deceased estate in 2001, cleaned it up and lived there for a time while they worked out how best to renovate it.

One of the first things Peter, who was also the builder on this project, and Sam decided to do was move their room from the very top of the home to the very bottom – "we wanted a big main bedroom with a walk-in robe and ensuite" – and put the lounge room upstairs where it could benefit from the balcony, view and sun.

"The other fundamental thing was the house was so dark because most of the northern light was shut off by next door," recalls Shaun.

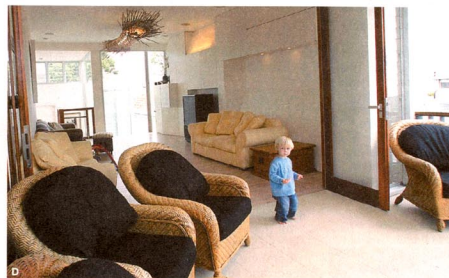
"It was just about the best brief you could get." The hard part was getting it through council.

"The neighbours all objected," says Shaun. "Leichhardt Council is very community focused – they advertised this house three times to over 50 dwellings, which meant we had quite a few objections in the first and second rounds."

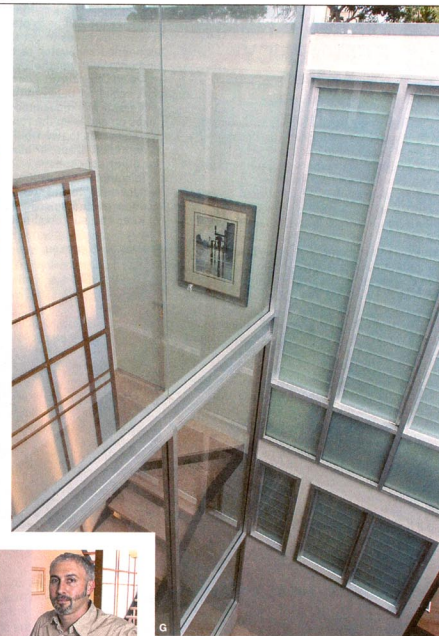
People were worried the planned changes would block their views, take away their ambience



A The old kitchen was rather tired **B** The gorgeous, understated new kitchen **C** The modernised facade has retained some Victorian elements **D** Max checks out the new indoor/outdoor living area upstairs **E** A Japanese screen forms part of the staircase **F** Sam, Peter and Shaun **G** The strikingly tall courtyard walls



"The central courtyard, which is so high it has become more of a light well, lets the house pick up natural breezes as well as sunlight"



and invade their privacy. Plans for a roof terrace above the living room were knocked back, while extra columns were added to the balcony in keeping with the Victorian terrace's solid style.

"I guess what we did was compose a building that's going to work to a Sydney lifestyle today from a Victorian model – which is a borrowed model from England," says Shaun.

Adds Sam: "We didn't want to make it too modern from the front, which is why we've put sandstone back in there – it's all new but at least it keeps with the streetscape."

Stacks of appeal

To allow light to penetrate the multi-level house, Shaun created a courtyard in the centre – this also served to separate the living and dining rooms from the sleeping areas which are stacked on top of each other at the front and back, respectively. He says the Lloyds' desire to relocate the lounge

upstairs meant these "public" and "private" zones could be organised vertically rather than horizontally as is the case with many homes – bedrooms upstairs, everything else downstairs.

The central courtyard, so tall it has become more of a light well, lets the house pick up natural breezes as well as sunlight – which is also able to enter from the rear of the home.

"This house feels bigger and more special than a normal terrace because you get light from both sides," says Shaun.

"[Usually] the front room gets a window, the back room might get a skinny one on the side and you've probably got a landlocked room in there somewhere. Here we have no landlocked rooms." Indeed, the Lloyds' home is now almost too well lit!

"I think we exceeded the brief to such an extent that the sun is probably too bright upstairs [in the lounge room] and now we've got to look at ways

MORE INFORMATION

- Design Carter Williamson, Shaun Carter, 9716 4566; www.carterwilliamson.com
- Joiner KAD Kitchens, David Stapleton, 0411 194 639
- CaesarStone 8339 7400; www.caesarstone.com
- Engineer O'Hearn Consulting, Matthew O'Hearn, 9896 2988

to cut that light down," says Shaun. But too much sun is better than not enough.

"We can have some automatic louvers on the outside that they can just retract or [re-angle] to shut down that western light," he says.

The elegant, elongated house appears to go on forever – but really just comprises five main rooms and a unique staircase featuring a bright, Japanese-style "shoji" screen.

All floors have 150mm limewashed Oregon boards – existing or recycled – except the main bedroom, which is tiled.

Multi-talented Shaun also designed the unique living room light, fashioned from cane and steel and affectionately known as the "lobster pot". ■

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