



Benchmark set in stone

Fitting in with the neighbours while exhibiting individuality is never easy, though this property suggests otherwise

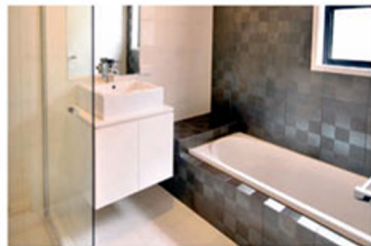
Charles Howroyd had no trouble finding a builder for this two-storey, four-bedroom house in Woolloowin; the builder came to him.

Having worked with the director of CDI Architects on other projects, Robert Cupo trusted Charles to translate his ideas for the 460sq m lot into a workable design. But what Robert had in mind wasn't exactly what council planners look for when it comes to residential projects in character-home areas such as Woolloowin.

"Robert's brief was for a modern design with a varied layout, and my own objective was for a distinctive external appearance that would also provide a tactful streetscape. One of the major challenges, however, was to deliver this while meeting council requirements," Charles says.

Like many Brisbane architects, Charles solved character planning issues by choosing the

WITH FRANCENE RIDLEY



HAUTE CUISINE ... a custom-made terrazzo bench in the kitchen was one of the challenges in creating this family home on a small lot. Photographs // Richard Waugh

distinctive features of Queensland architecture and adding them to his contemporary plan. For example, Charles used "skillion roof forms to integrate with adjoining older styles".

Sympathetic features, rendered in modern materials, are also seen in external elements such as the weatherboard cladding and the timber battens used with fibre cement.

Inside, however, there is no reference to the floor plan of the typical worker's cottage – no dark, tiny rooms branching off a narrow hallway; instead, there's an extra large living area facing an outside patio and a plunge pool.

"I would say, the overall style of the home is spacious, contemporary and light," says Charles.

A void over the rear lounge room on the ground level helps to achieve this, as do the taller-than-normal doors used throughout – a specification Robert requested so that

the feeling created by the airy void continues through the house. A walkway on the second floor transverses the void and links the main suite with the other bedrooms.

Also on this level are a breakout family room and a deck that faces the street and is more practical than most decorative balconies because, Robert says, it's of a "decent size".

That description could also be applied to the bench in the ground-level kitchen, although "massive" would be more to the point.

This bench is a standout feature: custom-made and assembled on site, it's a solid panel made of terrazzo – a smooth slab of pebbled brilliance, which the architect lists as one of the two challenges encountered in the six months of building.

It was worth it though, says Robert's wife Veronica, who also joined the project as interior decorator.

The effect is dramatic and works well because there is enough space around the bench for it to be truly appreciated, thanks to the open-plan lounge and dining room and the void above it.

Veronica was also convinced of the need for family-friendly details such as a laundry chute.

For a small-lot home, Charles has planned for the maximum use of space. There is a double-car garage and even some lawn.

"Woolloowin is an older suburb but housing intensification is developing in response to demand," Charles says, conceding that it is a challenge to formulate a design for a modern family – that needs more space – in a small-lot, character home area.

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