



Occasionally one hears of an unusual and unique building project where the relationships on site are harmonious from beginning to end, where the quality of workmanship, rather than time or cost, is the only measure of success, and where everyone emerges from the experience fully satisfied with the final result. This house in Queensland is one of those projects.

Great lovers of the sea, the owners of this seaside home remember one day being so outraged that much-loved Bondi had been closed because of pollution that they decided to leave Sydney. Entering a new phase of their lives after having built an extremely successful business, they were looking for a tranquil place where they could enjoy the company of family and friends while continuing to manage business interests. They searched the eastern coast from Noosa to Malacoota

with very exacting requirements – “a house in the bush, on a surf beach, a few minutes to good shops, and a cinema”. Eventually they found the ideal site a few minutes south of Noosa, nestled among banksias, with glimpses through to the surf.

An old friend of 25 years, Andrew Wiley was the only choice as designer for the house. “Designing for a friend, and knowing his personality and how the family worked was a huge advantage,” says Wiley. “He’s a perfectionist with a deep understanding of design. He’s also a very private person and not especially showy. The house had to reflect these characteristics.” Consequently, the house presents itself discreetly to the street and is largely hidden behind a garden wall and the garage. Its delight is in the experience of the interior journey, and in the variety of spaces it offers after passing through the entry gate.

Above left: the second study with Knoll ‘Womb’ chair and ‘Lachlan’ sofa, custom-designed to fit all the grandchildren at the same time. Centre: downstairs living area is open on two sides and includes a kitchen, bar, terrazzo dining table and canvas daybed; kitchen wall is Dulux ‘True Yellow’.



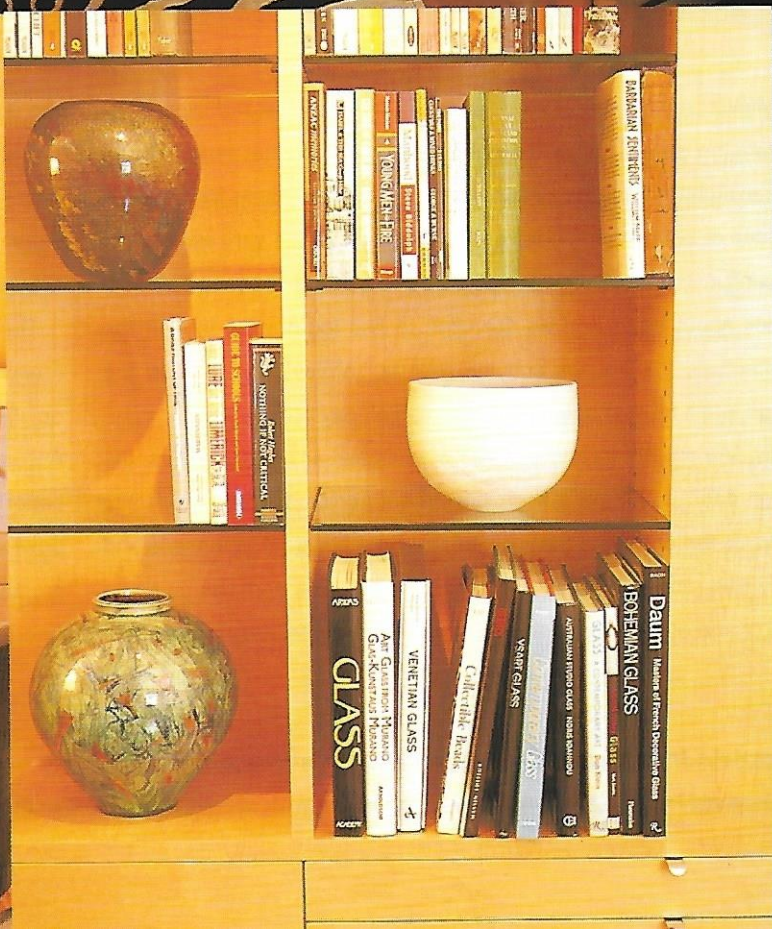
Wiley spent part of his career in South-East Asia and wanted to capture the 'sensuality' of the regional architecture "that people like Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa express most beautifully, for instance, the idea of living in pavilions with no walls. I think it's very appropriate for living in south-east Queensland. Before we started I gave the client a book about Bawa and we travelled to Bali together to look at the architecture, the houses and the resorts." Wiley then distilled the design into a more modern interpretation of 'pavilion' living.

Dividing the house into a series of enclosed and open spaces, the design centres around a large private subtropical garden which sits between the entry and the main body of the house. A colonnade and study flank one side, enclosing the space, and the pool sits up half a level on the other side. Cascading water follows the entry path beside

the colonnade to a still pool of water further inside. The house itself is divided into a more private apartment upstairs and a cool undercroft below where most of the public living is done. Guestrooms and a second study sit off to either side of this open and well-appointed breezeway with its own kitchen and bar, terrazzo table, and daybed.

During the design stages, the clients asked designer George Freedman, with associate Ralph Rembel, to join the project, focusing on the interior furnishings, finishes and joinery. George Freedman Associates had worked with the clients before and welcomed the opportunity. Wiley agrees that Freedman's input was important in providing a different perspective and feels that the house is better for it. "I was always concerned for the house to have a relaxed feel. George, on the other hand, understood the level of sophistication the

Above right: from the entrance, the view is to the internal garden and pools of water, which were inspired by the work of architect Geoffrey Bawa. A colonnade leads to the main body of the house with guestrooms and open living area downstairs, and a staircase to the owners' apartment.



This page: a view from the garden into the main study, which was the most intensively designed room in the house. Opposite page: the study has an internal focus, is air-conditioned, sound-proofed and lined with joinery and lighting, all custom-designed by George Freedman Associates. The rear wall (top) is upholstered in a Jim Thompson fabric from Arkítex Fabrics, while a beige sueded-leather covers the Charles Eames armchair and ottoman – furniture the owner had desired since the age of 18; the ebony desk is used in the mornings as a 'quasi-office' (bottom left); bookcases holding the owners' collection of contemporary jewellery and glass (bottom right) were manufactured by The Designing Pair.





clients wanted for the interiors." Given that the house is a permanent home for the owners and not a holiday house, Freedman believes that the interiors help to balance the relaxed living environment created by the architecture and the climate with a degree of urbanity not normally associated with beachside living.

The owners considered in great detail how they would spend each minute of their day and then developed a list of activities which was constantly checked against the plans and furnishings. As a result, the house responds to the complexities of their lives with tailor-made perfection, and has been custom-built around their requests.

Throughout the house, there are many places to read a book, to sit in the full winter sun, to warm up after a swim, play with grandchildren, or to be alone. Wiley says, "for a house not to be boring to live in, it has

to have options that suit the varying moods of the occupants. Mood changes have to be 'coped with' by the house." As the guestrooms are on the ground level, visitors, who will often stay for up to a week, can maintain their privacy while sharing in all the choices the house has to offer. Says the owner: "The house works beautifully in this way. There are so many places to sneak away and read. It soaks up people very well."

George Freedman Associates went to great lengths to ensure a perfect fit to the owners' needs. "It was all to do with making them feel extraordinarily comfortable. There are many places to recline – it's a reclining climate." Furniture and joinery were custom-built around the owners' detailed requirements. The dressing room off the main bedroom "is a nice invention", says Freedman. "We conceived it as a complete cabinet that you step into, like stepping into a clothes box."

Above, left and centre: the owners' apartment on the upper level is the embodiment of contemporary comfort. Generous seating areas include a daybed in white cotton duck designed by George Freedman and pale blue sofa from Space Furniture. 'Kubik White' terrazzo tiles used throughout.



For Freedman, the study beside the garden was the most demanding room in the house. "The quality and quantity of detailing in that room is phenomenal," he explains. The study had been given an important place in the plan, forming a wall that encloses one side of the private garden. Wiley felt very strongly that the owner needed to have a personal room that would be his main retreat: "It was very important that the study have its own sense of place." The owner always imagined it "as a place of quiet and calm, with low lighting levels". It is an exquisitely detailed, finely furnished, long and narrow box with a vaulted ceiling. Air-conditioned, sound-proofed and light-controlled, it can be completely closed, or open to the colonnade and garden. The study was Freedman's to detail. The owners are keen collectors and the design grew around making places for the "things that they were

loving", says Freedman. "There was a simple appreciation of objects that they liked to hold in their hands," objects like glassware, books and fishing reels collected as a keen trout fisherman. From the beginning it was evident that the clients demanded a certain level of perfection. "We were looking for an eternal quality. For the house to be better in 30 years time," says the owner.

All are full of praise for the builder, Roy Schultz, who had developed a long working relationship with Wiley. The client credits that relationship as one of the reasons the house is so good. Wiley believes that "all the subcontractors performed beyond expectations". Freedman agrees that the builder did a fine job: "Everything was true and square, the plaster work impeccable, the paint finish superb."

As testimony, Freedman tells how the joinery for the study was

This page, clockwise from top left: exquisite detailing is evident with kitchen drawers faced in blue Abet laminate and lined in green; bedroom joinery in beech veneer with special drawer custom-designed to store personal items; kitchen; bedroom armchair by Pierantonio Bonacina.

shipped from Sydney with a case of packing wedges, commonly used to take up any discrepancies between the dimensions of the joinery and the walls as it is fitted. Extraordinarily, only one was used in the entire room, so true and accurate was the building.

Freedman says that the project was special because of the level of detailing. "The clients would get pleasure from a joinery detail or the

way a drawer closed. But also they would regularly express their pleasure and, as a designer, that makes it totally more satisfying."

The house is a most successful combination of complexities: the planning; the way it responds to the climate and the site; the quality of building work; the sophistication and urbanity of the furnishings; the balance between the need for privacy and the desire to enjoy the house



with family and friends; a retreat by the sea, but still close to the rest of the world – a project which demanded excellence from its inception. Remembering their checklist when they first started the search for a site, the owners say: “It seemed like an impossible ask at the time, but now it’s home – and here we are.” ●

DAVID CLARK

For further details of products and furnishings featured, see Selling Points.



Upstairs living and dining areas spill out onto the expansive terrace where a terrazzo table is cantilevered off a supporting column and surrounded by Pierantonio Bonacina 'Brioche' chairs. Right: an easy meander to the beach.

