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Chris carries clout in the industry

my HOME

After just over a
year running his

own design
company, Chris
Clout has taken out national awards.
Ann Rickard reports.

He's 25 years old and has had his licence for just over 12 months, but Chris Clout beat 68 of the country's best designers to win the overall award for excellence in the recent 2009 National Design Excellence Awards.

After receiving two of the four residential design categories, Chris' name was called out as the overall winner and he was ecstatic.

"When you consider I've only had my licence for a year, and the other entrants were a lot older than me, it's unreal," he said.

Chris – nephew of designer Paul Clout – is young, talented and determined to stamp his own imprint on the evolving architectural scene.

He designed his first house at age six. Admittedly it was a cubby house, but an elaborate one at that, which was quickly

followed by a more complex and liveable tree house.

At just 16 he designed his family's home in Jervis Bay, NSW. With curved roof lines and exciting features, it was well ahead of its time.

His fascination with design led him to an apprenticeship as a carpenter and now, at 25, Chris has just branched out on his own after designing and working with Paul Clout for five years.

This Castaways house, one of many he has designed since working under his Chris Clout Designs name, is a reflection of his goal to stand out.

Japanese-themed, the house has a strong street impact.

Circular patterned white aggregate stone features in the driveway, elevated "top hat" Colorbond roof lines and custom-made gutters were shaped to give a clean finish.

Although Chris confesses

he has never been to Japan, his imagination and research have captured a strong element of that country's charm in this large four-bedroom home.

"I wanted to do something different," he said.

"A lot of people (in Queensland) love Asian design. I thought it would be interesting to do something different to Paul's work."

The home's impact begins at the gate, where stacked granite columns and timber slats in circular form hide the landscaping from the road. Water is an essential element.

"I wanted the water to lead people into the property," Chris said. "Most houses begin with the front door but I wanted this to begin with water, so it would have a resort-style feeling."

To this effect, Chris has created a flowing canal



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leading to a central courtyard pool, where the house wraps itself around water.

Inside the house, Shoji screens, feature doors, Australia beach floorboards, Indonesian wood-panelled ceilings, oodles of sliding glass doors and louvres and the clever use of timber features give it an unmistakable Japanese look.

Yet with the dominating presence of the pool and water features, it becomes a melding

of Queensland and rural Japan.

"I think it's important to see the landscaping and the water from the house," Chris said.

"When you are sitting

inside looking out it should be light on water, light on plants and foliage, light on features."

A massive glass and wood panelled front door pivots easily to lead in to the large living, dining, lounge and kitchen area.

Dark timber and cream limestone has been used in the kitchen for dramatic contrast and blends well with high Indonesian ply ceilings.

Sliding dark timber doors open the living area to the pool and, on the other side, sliding doors open the house to a wide timber deck overlooking natural reserve.

Across the pool, a Japanese tea room has its own bathroom, wardrobe and

easily assembled futon.

Chris' design takes into account everything for easy and practical living.

"I used a stone island bench to separate the kitchen from the living areas and gave it three sculpture-like brushed aluminium features," he said.

"Dark timber slats around the island bench give it Japanese appeal and I used pendant lights over the bench, as well as normal down lighting as a feature and to bring the light right down to the bench."

The lounge area has been given the Japanese treatment, with a feature wall showcasing travertine squared off in



Chris Clout takes a holistic approach to design and enjoys full control over landscaping, lighting and furniture along with the house.



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striking design function by aluminium beading.

“We built the television into the wall and used the aluminium to trick the wall up,” Chris said.

“It has feature lights on the sides (of the television) and it has a beachy/Japanese/Asian feeling.”

The owners have kept furniture and accessories to a minimum so as not to spoil the dramatic flow of the home and also to let nature and water outside excel.

Out on the back timber deck the high-set house looks down on natural reserve and then up to neighbours on the distant hill.

Chris has used clear glass on the deck to bring the reserve up to the eye and put movable rosewood Japanese screens up to block out the high neighbours

The master bedroom suite is hidden behind the kitchen, a large, tranquil space with low bed and white bedding, enjoying cleverly screened views over the reserve. Custom-designed Shoji screens shield the ensuite wardrobe and bathroom from the bedroom’s main space.

It has its own private courtyard off the bathroom to give an alfresco appeal.

Chris also designed much of the built-in furniture for the

house, as well taking care of the landscaping.

“I like to have full control over landscaping, lighting and furniture,” he said.

“These are the things that make a house. You can have the best designed house in the world but if the owners put in the wrong furniture and don’t landscape it accordingly it spoils it. I used frangipani, black bamboo, heliconias, yakkas and baby bamboo to theme the garden.”

This whole approach to design has already given Chris Clout an edge and helped him build his reputation.

