

Master of illusion



my HOME

Another Chris Clout design makes a statement at Castaways, as Ann Rickard finds out.

It is typical of designer Chris Clout to think big. He recently gathered another swag of awards, including three Building Designers Association of Queensland (BDAQ) gongs, to add to the eight he collected from BDAQ during the past year.

This on top of three national awards from the Building Designers Association of Australia in April. So it was when he was asked to design a refurbishment project at Castaways, with a brief to either go up another level or extend outwards on the old house in the middle of the block, he chose to do both.

The house had location, right across the road from the beach, but it also had three roads bordering it.

"We told Chris, either up or out, that was all we could afford but, of course, Chris let his hair down," owner Glen Watson said.

Bringing the outside in has become Chris Clout's signature and his penchant for pools, ponds and water features beginning at street entry, leading to the front door and then appearing to meander through the house to the main swimming pool, is reflected in most of his new designs.

"I like illusions," Chris said. "I like gardens and water to play a big part in the house, to link up. I like to confuse people into not knowing whether they are inside or outside the house. Every millimetre of the property should be used for this effect."

Recycling and using as much of the old house as possible was important to both Chris and Glen and Jenny Watson.

A lid was put on the old-fashioned pool at the back of the house, turning it into a water tank, which gave the property a third water source along with bore water and town water.

The house was gutted, although much of the slab was retained. Adding another storey and extending the home almost to the back boundary line meant a total change.

As work progressed, in place of a run-down old house rose an arresting home of grand design with Asian appeal, ambiguous indoor/outdoor flow, lofty spaces, open-plan living, sumptuous imported finishes, curved ceiling lines, suspended balconies,

"I like gardens and water to play a big part in the house, to link up. I like to confuse people into not knowing whether they are inside or outside the house."



A spacious new living/dining and kitchen area extends to the back of the land, with the new pool and undercover entertaining area flowing gracefully alongside it.



blackbutt timber floors, marble tiles and internal walkways.

The impression begins from the street entry. A wooden boardwalk, made from recycled 100-year-old bridge timbers flanked by water, leads the visitor to the house past a Balinese pavilion.

A thick clump of pandanus trees in the front garden was removed, separated and replanted in a more spacious arrangement.

Once through the massive pivoting timber and glass front door, the soaring entry space draws the eye up to the second level, where the underside of a bridge walkway is timber-lined to create intriguing ceiling appeal.

The two-car garage was extended to hold three cars and, behind the garage, Chris Clout created a long office space with its own entrance and a floor-to-ceiling-glass window at one end to look out to a lush mini rainforest.

Leading off the entry is a

self-contained guest wing (christened the Island Room) with bi-fold doors opening out to the pool and entertainment area. A thatched ceiling in this room enhances the resort atmosphere so typical throughout the home.

A kitchenette in this suite leads to a spacious bathroom, where a free-standing marble bath takes centre stage.

"We had the bath carved from a solid piece of marble in Indonesia," Glen said.

Two more bedrooms on this downstairs level are served by a large bathroom lined with white volcanic pebble.

A round mirror over the marble wash basin adds elegance; a small circular glass "satellite" dish around the sleek tap reflects the shape of the mirror and allows the water to flow softly into the basin. It's a small but significant detail, typical of Chris' daring to be different.

"I like to jazz things up in bathrooms and powder rooms," he said.

A spacious new living/dining and kitchen area extends to the back of the land, with the new pool and undercover entertaining area flowing gracefully alongside it.

"We virtually turned the house around to face north and to cut out the road noise," Chris said. "This part was once just a scruffy yard with nothing in it."

The kitchen has a long, low glass window as a backdrop to the hotplates, which floods the space with light and brings in the outside greenery.

Thatched ceilings in the living area add personality and Jenny's keen decorating for understated style means furnishings are minimal but with beachy impact.

A solid glass wall at the end of the living space not only acts as a buffer for road noise but, once again, brings the outside greenery

right inside.

At night the house takes on a seductive personality. With the glimmering pool, spurting water features and tropical gardens all softly lit, the Watsons turn off all the inside lights and enjoy the romance of it all.

Decorations in the dining and living area reflect Glen and Jenny's love of the beach and her taste to use just a few pieces of good furniture and accessories – including a long dining table, once a Chinese village door, still with its original hinge, bought at Summer House in Noosa.

Upstairs is the media room, with oodles of storage in the floor/roof space off the timber bridge walkway. Up another step the master suite, with glass stackable doors leading out to a suspended balcony, is a luxurious retreat taking in the beautiful ocean views.

"We had to gain those views,"