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# Young designer has clout

WHILE most 16-year-olds are concerned with girls, the latest blockbuster and having fun, at 16, Chris Clout was building and designing the family home.



Not much has changed for the now 24-year-old, except he has honed those skills and runs his own successful business.

In the past five years alone, Chris has designed 80 homes and has a swag of accolades that prove his immense talent.

As a student who excelled in art, woodwork and maths, Chris left school at 16 to pursue an apprenticeship in building, working under the supervision of his father.

His first major project was building the family home in Vincentia, New South Wales, where Chris's designing talent shone through and he took it on himself to not only build the home, but design it right down to the water

features and much of the furniture within.

Chris said he was learning roof angles at TAFE and decided he wanted to incorporate as many as he could into the home.

"There I was, 16 years

old with a chippie's belt, putting together a Balinese style house but with every different roof line you can think of, which made it really stand out," he said.

"People were stopping almost daily, saying wow and asking 'who's the designer of this house?' Of course I would say me and they would laugh."

Today, Chris is putting the finishing touches on the third home he's designed for the family, the first one was sold in 2001 and broke real estate records for the local area.

Since that first home, his career has gone from strength to strength and after obtaining his Building Services

Authority (BSA) Licence (Building Design – Low Rise) in October last year, Chris has been able to expand the scope of services offered from pure concept to a comprehensive offering of design.

Since then, Chris has added another 24 homes to his portfolio, including one as far away as Bali and others scattered around Australia.

His unwavering dedication to his career has developed because he thinks it's "fun" and designing is something that is ingrained in his life ... even away from the office, where he gets his inspiration.

"Relaxing in a different environment away from the office, where no expense has been spared in terms of design and

fit-out and taking in all the different geographic and cultural styles, is the foundation for remaining creative," he said.

With a plethora of designs, Chris is confident that everything he produces is "unique", something he puts down to getting to know a site before starting.

"When I start a project, it starts with the site," he said.

"I like to get a sense of the space, feel the breezes and see the views, or site features in lieu of views, from a range of different angles.

"From there I can pretty much picture something straight away, it has a lot to do with the shape of the land, the aspect and what the client needs.

"To that end, each design is unique. It's not like you can look at it and immediately say, oh that's a Chris Clout design."

And the secret to his success as a designer? While Chris won't give too much away he will admit his building experience helps.

"A lot of builders complain that the architects design things that just can't be built or shouldn't be built. As a carpenter, I am designing with construction and materials in mind," he said.

If the past is anything to go by, Chris Clout's future is bright and his name is one to watch as this talented designer is going places.



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