

As modern as TOMORROW

WORDS: Ann Cadzow

An opportunity to buy land at Dicky Beach on the Sunshine Coast just metres from the beach yet hidden from the tourist bustle does not come often. So when the old Camp Cal Retreat was razed and its sprawl of land sub-divided, Ray Watson, a long-time beach devotee, was there.



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Hidden away from the beach, shops and caravan park that so epitomise Dicky Beach, yet just a few steps away from it all along a shrub-flanked path, the new development was a prize indeed. Ray secured one of the best north facing blocks in the prestigious enclave.

Brisbane Architect Con Zahos was asked to create a property for Ray and his partner Beni Arnott that would reflect its beach location, make the most of the land, give privacy, offer stylish living, yet be family-friendly when the grandchildren visited.

"We designed the house as if it was two apartments," Con Zahos said. "One had to be a beach side apartment centered around Ray's activities with a main living area and a master bedroom above it, and the second apartment had to be for guest rooms, the media room and utility rooms. We separated the apartments by a breeze-way. The boundaries of the block were out of alignment, but we arranged the apartments in alignment, creating geometry in the breeze way."

Set well back from the street, the home is a towering structure of modern architecture using contrasting soft and harsh metals as well as timber, ply, aluminum, glass and corrugated iron. The result is a yin and yang approach playing on the concept of two separate buildings.

More than a 1,000 louvres have been incorporated into the house and with stacking doors opening the living areas out to a verdant park, the flow of air and flood of sunlight makes year-round living comfortable with rarely a need for air conditioning or heating.

Contrasting matt and polished tiles interspaced with mondo grass in the long driveway lead the visitor to a wall of green bamboo by the front door and then into the entry area over tiles from Massa-Carrarra in Italy, Beni Arnott's homeland.

However, the main impact at entry is the soaring height of the glass atrium where a massive but understated chandelier, a German work of art, dominates. Interior designer, Eileen Middleton sourced the chandelier.

"It's made of aluminum with stainless steel cables," she said. "I wanted to relate back to a traditional style with a contemporary piece but it is also a tad industrial. It reminded me of little candles on aluminum circles. Outside, you can see the chandelier at night and it is spectacular."



“My approach with this project was to conceal the mechanics of interior elements with interesting materials allowing the function and the technology to prevail. This shows off the architecture.”



Eileen has worked with Con Zahos on other projects and she slid easily into working with his architectural style on this Dicky Beach property.

A striking photograph of the *SS Dickey* ship wreck on Dicky beach, taken by Con Zahos and enlarged and printed on canvas, acknowledges the beach location and the area. That and a simple but striking print of an African woman in vivid red and yellow colours, bought inexpensively from Indo Products, are all the wall adornments needed in this mostly glass and timber house.

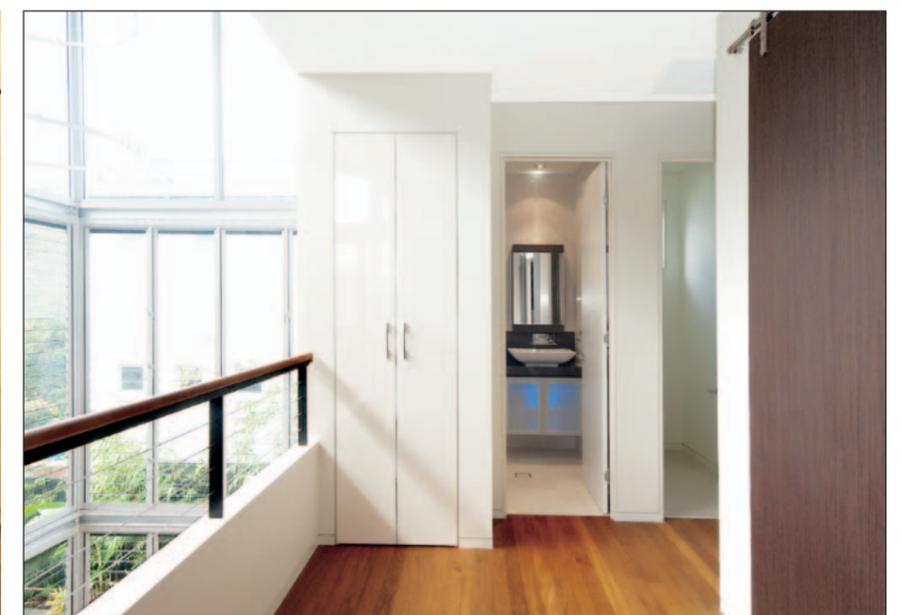
Eileen Middleton did all the interior design with input from Beni and worked around Con Zahos' architectural concepts. "Con's work is well resolved and at times thought-provoking. My approach with this project was to conceal the mechanics of interior elements with interesting materials allowing the function and the technology to prevail. This shows off the architecture. I concealed the entertainment unit in the living area to hide the workings but put louvres in the doors for easy function. It's like it is not there."

The same goes for the built-in cabinetry in the dining area and the integrated fridge in the kitchen; they all form part of a striking feature wall, hidden behind sandblasted veneer doors.

"The kitchen was a welcome challenge," Eileen said. "The space is not as large as some, so I specified an off-white 2-pack to create the illusion of space. The kitchen flows into the dining area. I selected timber veneer with a weathered appearance to relate to the driftwood you find on beaches. I designed a bar area in the dining space, including a feature backlit onyx panel and chocolate perspex aluminum framed doors. The illuminated cabinetry throws soft light and becomes a mood feature at night."

Solomon Island timber floors throughout give connection and add warmth to the house. Eileen has even incorporated some of the Solomon Island timber into the kitchen breakfast bar over looking the living space.

Beni has kept furnishings in the living area simple yet stylish with a white African cow-hide lounge suite and burnt orange leather chair bought





from Natuzzi. The living area flows to the outside tiered deck, built amphitheatre style down to the garden and barbecue area overlooking the park.

"The idea is to use the deck as a seat, put cushions on the steps, and have a much more casual interface with the park," Con said.

The pool, although connected to the building on the east side of the deck and viewed from the atrium area inside, has a natural pond look surrounded by lush greenery.

Upstairs the master bedroom leading off the breeze-way and opening to a long Pacific Gum timber deck with retractable steel louvres that open

and close automatically with wind-change, runs the length of the house and forms a cover for the deck below.

"The interior design intent (in the bedroom) was simplicity and concealment," Eileen said. "An understated approach was required."

Beni's input in the master bedroom reflects her Italian heritage. Eileen selected an Italian inspired fabric from Harris and Nugent to create a padded bedhead which separates the room from the wardrobe and bathroom. In a silver and taupe stylised pattern on a black background, the bedhead, although statement-making, takes nothing away from nature outside where the kookaburras wake Ray and Bernie each morning and chatter to the myriad bird life.

The travertine stone bathroom, a design that has just won Eileen Middleton the HIA Bathroom Designer of the Year Award, is all about a minimalist and natural appeal.

"We used natural Gris Pulpis stone in here and all the joinery is made out of sandblasted veneer," Eileen said. "When you touch it you can feel the textured timber. We took an environmental approach, the lighting is about conserving energy, the taps have the correct rating for water flow."



Two guest bedrooms, one with its own Juliet style balcony, a second bathroom and media room are all contained on this upper level of the second apartment.

Outside, landscape architect, Mark Conlon has planted frangipani, heliconias, gingers and various types of bamboo to soften the exterior and give privacy.

With no road noise at all, this house that is so close to so much beach and tourist activity, is a haven for Ray and Beni when alone, and a resort-like retreat when they share it with family and friends.

This home was built by Sunshine Coast builders, G & N Building Company Pty Ltd.