

HOME & GARDEN

weekender.



Stacey
Lambkin



STRIKING: The award-winning Hamilton Garden House, in Hamilton South, designed by Mark Szczerbicki. Pictures: Tom Ferguson



CURVE APPEAL: Every space is considered. Interior design: Liz Szczerbicki

Special place a personal delight

MARK Szczerbicki's "less is more" approach to the design of this Hamilton South house has been embraced by his clients and the architecture industry.

Mark's design studio, MSDS, based in Sydney, won the residential section of the 2022 Australian Institute of Architects Newcastle awards for the project, referred to as Hamilton Garden House.

The accolade is particularly rewarding because at the heart of this new home is family. Mark's clients were his parents, Anna and Edward, and Newcastle holds a special place for the Szczerbickis.

"The award is very special to me, personally, as Newcastle was our first home in Australia after we migrated here from Poland in 1994," Mark explains.

"I attended school at Merewether High, just around the corner from the Hamilton house, and the landscape and architecture of Newcastle shaped my early impressions

of Australian design.

"It is very satisfying to give something back to the architectural scene here, even it is a small, modest house in the suburbs."

Mark's modesty belies what the institute judges called the "concise planning" behind the project, which was constructed by BMC Building. The new build replaced a 16-year-old project home on a corner block. Fundamental issues with the original dwelling ruled out a renovation so it was demolished and as many materials and fixtures as possible were sold and recycled.

"Hamilton Garden House was designed to maximise privacy, natural light and connection to garden to create a peaceful sanctuary for my parents," Mark, who tutors at the University of NSW, says.

"By reducing the previous footprint in favour of more garden and more quality in the spaces, the design aims to achieve more with less."

Anna and Edward had lived closer to

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SKILLS ON SHOW: Joinery is key to the home's interior design.

Newcastle University, where they worked for more than 25 years before retiring. Anna was an English teacher at the Language Centre and Edward a Professor in the School of Engineering.

Hamilton Garden House is unpretentious yet striking from the front, with an angular roof, pop-out window and stack bond feature brickwork. A central, north-facing courtyard links the linear living space inside - with its kitchen, dining and lounge zones - to the lush garden beyond. The courtyard's louvred roof moderates the elements.

A high, strip window adds architectural interest, height and light to the living space, which is arranged between two wings. The front wing contains the entry, garage, guest accommodation and utility space. The main bedroom, en suite and laundry are at the rear. A reading nook and study are separated by the central garden.

The southern facade, which faces a vacant block, is intentionally solid to ensure privacy from any future development.

"The quality of natural light plays a huge part in shaping the atmosphere of the main living space from sunrise to sunset. In terms of materials, the use of brickwork is an important feature. It is used for low maintenance and solid quality on the outside and is brought inside in the living room's curved

feature seat to show off the tradespeople's skills in putting the house together," Mark says.

A custom-built display wall showcases impressive trade skills as well as treasures from Anna and Edward's world travels.

"The joinery is a key aspect of home interiors - we believe it should be practical and beautiful at the same time," Mark says. "The display wall is designed almost as an exhibition space."

Anna and Edward's green thumbs are on display outdoors, where natives and succulents surround feature plants such as the courtyard's Japanese senkaki maple. Mark praises their maintenance of the gardens designed by landscape architect Melissa Wilson.

"My parents have done an amazing job taking care of the garden since moving in," he says. "It is now thriving and even more of a feature than we originally hoped for."

The pair love living closer to the city, and are proud of the son who started building houses from Lego when he was very young.

"Our new place is the first in which we have lived that feels 100 per cent us. Every single part of the design and every object has its 'home'," they say.

"We use every square metre and it makes us happy and proud to live here."



WOW-FACTOR: The custom-built display wall. Pictures: Tom Ferguson



SERENE: Connection to the garden creates a peaceful sanctuary.



IMPACT: Creating architectural interest with height and light.