

## Renovate or Rebuild

Toby Johnstone



Reformation ... (clockwise from above) Robert and Susan Feltaous's Annandale house; the Jon Jacka-designed Parallel House in Newtown; Balmoral House, Balmoral, designed by Collins and Turner; Robert and Susan Feltaous in their house. Photos: Ross Honeysett, Tom Ferguson, Richard Glover, Fiona Morris

# Where there's a wall, there's a way

Barriers are broken down as a tattered terrace transforms in award-winning style.

**W**hen Robert and Susan Feltaous bought a dilapidated terrace that had been sitting on the market for years, they never thought their house would be celebrated alongside other award-winning homes. But on Thursday evening the couple's property took out the house alteration & addition over 200 square metres category at the 2012 Houses Awards.

However, this was no easy win. The architects, Will Fung and Tina Engelen of CO-AP Architects, had to overcome numerous obstacles before this four-bedroom house in Annandale came to fruition.

### WAITING GAME

Robert and Susan certainly didn't rush into their purchase. They first inspected the property before it passed in at auction in 2003.

The owner wanted \$1.2 million at the time so they played the waiting game, for three years, and then put in an offer of \$885,000 in 2006. With the offer accepted they were faced with a conundrum – what to do with a derelict terrace with a small industrial warehouse lean-to at the back and a large 12-metre wall running along one side of the property.

The warehouse was once used for making Christmas decorations and, as such, had to be decontaminated in accordance with the regulations for transforming industrial space into residential property. The wall was also tricky. It happened to be part of the historic Piano Factory next door and, as that building is heritage listed, it couldn't be



touched. It's not hard to see why other buyers may have been hesitant to buy the property.

### PLANS IN ACTION

Coming up with solutions to these issues was fairly straightforward for Robert and Susan – pass it off to the architects.

"We just trusted their expertise and gave our architects a blank canvas to run with," Robert says.

However, one thing the couple made clear was that they did not want a show home.

"We wanted something that was liveable and adaptable as the family grows," Robert says.

What Fung and Engelen came up with certainly achieves this. The

only part of the original property kept was the first two rooms of the terrace; the fibro extension was cleared away to make room for a bold new design.

Extending from the original terrace is a winding glass loggia that runs alongside the central courtyard and leads up to the living-dining-kitchen space. The owners love the extensive use of glass as it allows them to keep an eye on their children even while they're in the playroom across the courtyard. As the kids get older, that room will become a quiet reading area overlooking the garden.

"It's a property that can change with us," Robert says.

And what did they do about the

wall? Well, rather than try to hide it, the house is designed in such a way that the old red bricks have become a feature of the property, to the delight of the owners.

"We've got bamboo trees growing along the wall so it's nice contrasting the green plants with the red brick," Robert says.

A skylight runs the length of the living area, making up for any natural light that may have been blocked by the high wall.

### HONOURABLE MENTIONS

There were many finalists from NSW that didn't win on the night but deserve a mention. In Newtown, Jon Jacka Architect put forward its edgy design called Parallel House.

### IN A NUTSHELL: ANNANDALE

**Time** 15-month build.

**Land size** 423 sq m.

**Architect** Will Fung and Tina Engelen of CO-AP Architects, 9380 9750.

**Builder** Owner-builder.

### Green points

▶ The residence is solar passive with Low-E glass (low emissivity) throughout. It doesn't let heat in as much and retains warm temperatures.

▶ The house has a grey-water system. The 15,000-litre tank is used for flushing toilets and for washing.

▶ LED lighting is featured throughout the house, but with skylights they are only needed at night.

### Favourite feature

The owner says: "I love the living area overlooking the middle courtyard. My wife and I could be sitting there while keeping an eye on the kids playing in another room ... it also has a lot of natural light coming in."

Opposite the railway, it is spread over 75 square metres and forms a parallelogram. The coolest thing about this house isn't the artwork commissioned for the front, it's the fact that this house moves.

Many of the internal walls can be reconfigured so you can make rooms or create open-plan spaces. Whatever the layout, with the extensive use of corrugated metals and exposed timber, the overall look here is industrial chic. On the other side of town, Collins and Turner Architects has completed a house on the Balmoral slopes with views out the North Head. Aptly named Balmoral House, its east-facing facade is a cluster of boxes, each framing a unique view.