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# Great designs, tight budgets

There are lessons to be learnt from the money-saving ideas of these architects, writes Jane Burton Taylor.

henarchitects design their own homes they face the same challenges as the rest of us. They negotiate tricky sites council guidelines and potential budget blow-outs. They obviously save on the architect's fee (usually about 10 per cent to 15 per cent of overall cost) but they also save by applying very practical knowledge such as choosing classic economic materials. Here they share their own stories and some of those tips they

# BUY A HOUSE THAT'S EASY

TO RENOVATE For Emili Fox of Fox Johnston keeping the budget tight was a priority in renovating the family nome. Even the decision to buy the Californian bungalow on a corner block in Lilyfield was influenced by how easy it would be to renovate.

When she and husband Reiner Schuster first saw the house, it was virtually derelict. It had been tenanted for years and the toilet was outside and had to be accessed from the street. Despite these cons, Fox says the house had great bones, a north-east aspect and easy access.

'We were on a very tight budget. so I wanted it to be very accessible for the builders and a very easy addition to construct," she says.

The couple reined costs in by doing much of the work themselves In her design, Fox also retained the original house almost completely, reinstating its two front bedrooms revamping its bathroom and then adding a back living space plus an upstairs parents' retreat.

"We tried to retain the essentials of the house," Fox says, "Any integrity of the old."

Fox designed an open-plan living room with a window seat at one end A small playroom that doubles as a guest room was shoehorned in behind the side entry and both this and the living space open to a side deck and a small grassed area with a gate to allow for parking, if needed.

"I wanted to make lots of play areas for the kids," Fox says. "It is likewe are living in the garden and taking advantage of the north-east aspect and breezes,"

The front garden was converted into play space as well, plus it now has a small but thriving vegetable plot. "I wanted to use every square metre and create special hideaways for the kids," Fox says.

Materials throughout the \$300,000 renovation were kept affordable and usually bought online or through auction houses

#### DO YOUR RENOVATION INSTAGES

Richard Cole of Richard Cole Architecture says doing his renovation in two stages did not

save money but it did save stress. "It may be cheaper to do it in one hit but this way allows you to budget for two smaller hits rather than one large one," he says. "And it meant we had a better chance of getting it right because we had more years of experience of the house."

Cole tells how when he and his wife, Cilla, first visited the Avalon house, it had been on the market for a year and the garden was wildly overgrown. Others had thought about dismantling the house but the Coles saw the value in the old house and the garden. Cole kept the original sandstone

house but changed its roofline. In the first renovation, which cost \$140,000, he lifted the roof, installed highlight windows and put in a walkway leading to a new bedroom and en suite.

In stage two, which cost \$500,000, he added a new kitchen with big sliding glass doors linking it to a covered deck, plus an adjoining guest bedroom with a studio on top.

To keep the new structure in harmony with the old. Cole chose to put skillion roofs on the new predominantly lightweight addition. "They are sympathetic without copying," he says.

The overall concept for Cole's design was to create summer and winter living spaces and it works just as he intended. "The new kitchen has become the new summer zone. ng on to the garden," he says. The old sandstone is the winter zone, where we retreat to the old fireplace and living room."

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## DO SOME OF THE WORK

Architect Manuelle Schelp of Studio Schelp recognised the potential of a single-storey terrace in Darlinghurst on her first inspection In particular, she saw that she could improve the home's planning and use the slope of the site to put in parking accessed via a back lane.

Schelp, together with her husband, Klaus, opted to act as owner-builder. She says it was a definite saving but does not advise it unless you have a healthy knowledge of the building process. "You are avoiding the management fee of the builder but it involves a lot of work: organising trade people; ordering materials; the whole logistics."

Like the Foxes, the couple did vork themselves as well, including all the painting. Another saving was pocketed by living on site during construction. The renovation. which cost just under \$500,000 added significant value to the house. It started as a two-bedroom terrace with one bathroom and ended up with three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a garage.

Schelp explains how she rejigged the floor plan, moving a sitting room in the middle of the plan, to locate bedrooms at the front of the house and living spaces opening to the back. She also created internal split levels; this allowed her to drop the ceilings to fit in an attic bedroom and make the living area



Self-styled ... (clockwise from main) Emili Fox, inset, and her Lilyfield living Cole in his Avalon kitchen. Photos: Steve Back, Quentin Jones, Brett Boardman

flush with a back deck, which onceals the new garage. The splitlevels, a side passageway

converted into an internal courtvard adjacent to the bathroom and kitchen, together with the deep back deck, all combine to give the little terrace a more generous feeling of space and indoor-outdoor connection. "When you arrive at the front door you see straight through. so it creates a sense of space from

front to back," Schelp says. "And when you are in the kitchen, you look over the sitting room to

GO FOR SIMPLICITY Architecture and his interior

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designer wife Carol Sansoni bought land in Church Point about nine years ago but had to design and document the house twice. In retrospect, Simmonds says he should have known better but markone blew the budget. When they realised how much the initial design would actually cost, they seriously considered selling the land but reneged at the last moment, opting to try a much leaner and more

affordable design. 'After some soul searching we decided to give it another go," Simmonds says. "We designed a very simple, modest house just for the two of us. It is 110 square metres internally with some decks."

The modest size was just one way

of keeping cost down. The design was pared back as much as possible as well. "The whole thrust of what I had to do was keep it simple as," Simmonds says, "The house is two simple platforms. It steps down with the slope of the site twice. It is two very simple little boxes with a skillion roof."

Then there is what Simmonds describes as "the nice joy" of the bathroom, which opens via translucent louvres on both the internal and external walls. The site is a private bush block, so they can open the louvres and let breezes flow through the house.

Inbuilding, Simmonds opted for a pre-cut steel and timber frame that went up in just four days. The house

main) the back deck of the Darlinghurst home of Manuelle Schelp, inset, conceals a garage; Warwick Simmonds and Carol Sansoni; their house at Church Point. Photos: Des Harris, Warwick Simmonds



is designed on a 3.6-metre grid so he could use off-the-shelf units of materials and windows and doors.

One element that cranked up the budget of \$495,000 was the access to and excavation of the steep site. Simmonds says it cost about is above the road) of rocks and excavate a parking bay.

One economic value addition was the studio space for Sansoni that Simmonds added into the undercroft of the little house.

"We clad it in a material that is like milk-coloured glass and it lets in a lovely translucent light," Simmonds says, "And we put in a couple of outward-opening doors, so she can look out on to Pittwater.

# Smart Beach Buys Anna Anderson



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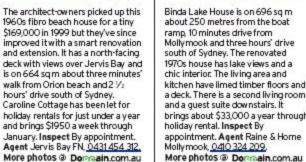
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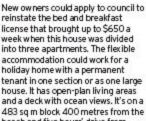


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