Living at its Best

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Tracey Hall knows a thing or two about creating a dream home quite literally from scratch. Over the last five years she and her partner Perry have lovingly rescued, renovated and re-instated three properties in the Brisbane metro area. The process has been well rehearsed, each time starting with the pursuit of a bargain and ending in a beautifully designed and furnished home for its creators – or for at least as long as it takes for her restless eye to start wandering all over again.

And so it was that this vacant block of 14 perches, set amongst the tree-lined streets of Brisbane's up and coming east end came to have Tracey and Perry consumed with desire. They had to have it, and after three months (and many more envy-ridden drive bys!) succeeded in buying the property at the 11th hour, and turning a less than perfect block into a dream home that would, for once, encourage them to stay longer than any other previous investment had.

"I think we are actually getting worse!" laughs Tracey as she attempts to explain the couple's fixation with real estate. "We find one property, do it up beautifully and settle in for a long and loving relationship together, but inevitably the eye starts to wander again and we find ourselves attending weekend auctions and open days in the search for our next great find. You could say it's our addiction!"

From the moment they saw this block of land they had a shared vision for it, so the designing began as soon as the hammer fell at auction. "We had our first site meeting the very next morning with Johnaton Harris from Harris Design. Perry and I knew exactly how we wanted the internal layout and from that brief Johnaton created his magic."

The property went through only five months of construction under the guiding hands of John Haig , whom Tracy refers to as a wonderkind. "We are fortunate to have such a good team of tradespeople that we use on every project – they say practice makes perfect!".

The house may be contructed in a modern style teamed with features of vertical timber slatting to add symmetry and a magnificently moody coat of Kosciusko Pebble paint by Dulux, yet it still manages to sit comfortably amongst its more traditional Queenslander-style neighbours whilst at the same time, standing out from the pack with its more modernistic features. Manicured lawns and low maintenance shrubbery help to disguise the fact that you are in a busy metro area, whilst the installation of an 8 metre lap pool in the backyard has added an emphasis on al fresco living.

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High ceilings to the entrance and an open plan layout on the lower level give a light and airy feel from the moment you walk in. Doubling as a work studio for her successful business Noba Interiors Design & Styling, the lower level presents a clean interior design in line with Tracey's penchant for minimalism, yet never does it surrender to the emptiness so often associated with this decorating style. Blackbutt timber floorboards add warmth to an otherwise white and ivory-dominated decor scheme that is all about subtle luxury.

The downstairs open plan living area offers an impressive introduction into Tracy's signature style – fresh and modern with a nod to the finer details. A powder room is luxuriously decked out with the finest of fittings, stainless steel cabinetry, and cross-cut travertine bench top and floor tiles from Country Floors. In the sitting area, a range of earthy and organic artworks by Sunshine Coast artist Isabelle Lawrence are

hung on Stowe White walls (Dulux); ivory roman blinds from Verosol allow a tailor-made distribution of natural light; a stark white console, custom designed for Tracey to hold her fabric swatches also displays treasured family photographs; a lounge upholstered in 'Ivory' Warwick macro suede invites you to touch; and 93 low voltage halogen lights (Perry does the lighting plan!) illuminate the many stainless steel finishes and luxurious appliances, reminding you that the home owners like to enjoy the finest things in life.

"We are keen entertainers, often having friends over for a relaxed al fresco dinner of an evening," confirms Tracey as she mixes up another round of her famed strawberry fizz mocktails. "We saw a real need to have open communal spaces which allow the option of accommodating a group of people sitting around the kitchen bar for drinks as I prepare a simple meal, or heading out onto the spacious covered timber deck overlooking the pool and the back garden which we never tire of, especially on balmy summer evenings."

Designed in galley-style, the kitchen is favoured by Tracey for its space and ease, and features stainless steel work benches and cabinetry matched with a massive cross cut travertine work bench which is delightfully workable and smooth to the touch, yet incredibly durable. Four stylish stools from Corso di Fiore, complete with plush white leather seats, add the defining element of style.

A studded timber staircase with wire balustrade leads to the upstairs quarters which are reserved for the three guest bedrooms, one of which is now home to Tracy's niece Katie, as well as a guest bathroom and Tracey and Perry's master bedroom with huge en suite and spacious balcony.

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And whilst clean white and ivory dominates downstairs, it is upstairs where the colour's at! Peter Alexander bed linen and brightly coloured cushions add impact to guest bedrooms, whilst the long timber deck fronting the home is entered via stainless steel venetians to provide the perfect spot to enjoy breakfast at one of two cafe-style steel tables and chairs under the dappled shade of a jacaranda tree.

Spacious and filled with natural light, the master bedroom is reserved for an uncluttered layout which allows room to breathe, with plush pure wool cream carpet and crisp white linen against a 'Raisin' macro-suede covered bed head, with the chocolate tones of a nearby water hyacinth lounge providing the perfect anchor for the overall starkness.

The master en suite is luxury at its finest, with its spacious oval bathtub, shower and only the finest of fittings from Bretts Design, cabinetry from JTM Cabinets (who also whipped up her custom-designed stylish white console/fabric storer found downstairs) covered with dark mahogany timber laminate from Formica, and an Empradoor marble bench top which was a must have for the couple, who first saw this divine surface material in the bathrooms of the Crown Casino during one of their many buying trips to Melbourne. This is a reminder that bathrooms can be associated with style.

And if interior design and renovation is Tracey's first love, then coming up a close second would have to be her fondness for designer handbags – she has literally dozens of them. "Now this is my real addiction..." she laughs as we are shown her quirky walk-in display of bags, clutches and purses. Obviously, Tracey's current penchant for minimalism only applies to her interior designs! GH