



Appeased in a pod

Sympathetic to its suburban setting, this young family's compact abode showcases the beauty of downsizing

Southerners relocate to Queensland for our enviable lifestyle and now it seems we are also taking a little bit of our size down to them.

Earlier this year (June 10-16) *Brisbane News* featured one of the pre-made modular homes designed by architects from Donovan Hill for Brisbane company Happy Haus.

Shortly after that article appeared it was announced that Donovan Hill's Happy Haus DEAN range would be among the 10 designs used in the We Will Rebuild program, a joint initiative of the Australian Institute of Architects and the Victorian government to help those affected by last February's devastating fires.

Now Happy Haus is preparing to launch another range called the White Series which comes from the drawing board of award-winning architecture firm Owen and Volos.

This weatherboard-clad range, suitable for suburban, rural or coastal sites, is based

on the idea of a freestanding pavilion with an open-plan pod which can be changed to accommodate as many outdoor spaces, bedrooms or common areas as needed.

While not part of the White Series, a recently completed house on the Brisbane River in Bulimba acts as a preview of what the team envisage for their Happy Haus range. Nicknamed The Bulimba Beachhouse, it's a small house – 190 sq m – built on 490 sq m of prime residential land.

"In a downturn there's no reason why you can't build a small house or make small extensions that are clever," says Stuart Volos, co-founder of the firm that began six years ago. This statement resonates with the aim of the White Series for Happy Haus to provide an elegant, functional and flexible house for any Australian setting and for every Australian home buyer.

"Our client [for the Beachhouse] was a young family who were local to the area.



LESS IS MORE ... although on prime land The Bulimba Beachhouse shows stacked restraint, epitomised by the library, above left, and the uncompromisingly linear design of the dining room.

Owning a prime site right on the Brisbane River, there were presumptions from friends and estate agents that the family would build a large and extravagant house to apparently maximise their investment," Stuart says.

"But, fortunately, the clients were clear in their brief that they wanted a humble home that was sympathetic to the neighbourhood, zoning and history of the area and that focused on family interaction and books over TV."

This refreshing approach from the clients meant that they were more than willing to do away with open plan in favour of individual small spaces.

It begins with the entry: a narrow pathway down one side of the house past an open

garage. There is nothing pedestrian about the introduction to the house; the architects have captured just the right amount of view to the river that waits once you enter the interior and look out past the common area next to the galley kitchen.

"Stuart guided us into a world of restraint as a way to enhance the experience of space," the owner says.

"We have all experienced the law of diminishing returns when it comes to overt views. Stuart has shown that by carefully framing views and controlling spaces we can overcome this."

This does not mean that the house is a rabbit warren of rooms



WITH FRANCES RIDLEY



Photographs // Jon Linkins

"If you have a small site then you have to manipulate one's perception of the scale of that. The funny thing is that you have to make things even smaller than what they normally would be so that when things are normal scale they appear generous," Stuart explains.

In a world faced by the consequences of choosing needless excess and extravagance, now is the time to put into practice the small-is-beautiful thinking.

The library is confirmation of such thinking. And it opens to the values of a family which cherishes reading, conversation and contemplation and which disdain the usual dominance of "the box".

There is space, light and a thoughtful use of

the river view; a place in which to be alone but never lonely.

"Small has to be the way of the future," Stuart says. "It is not just because we have to, but because there are good things about it; being good for our environment and good for our back pocket, that contributes to making healthy neighborhoods and sustainable neighborhoods as well. We cannot all live in big houses."

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