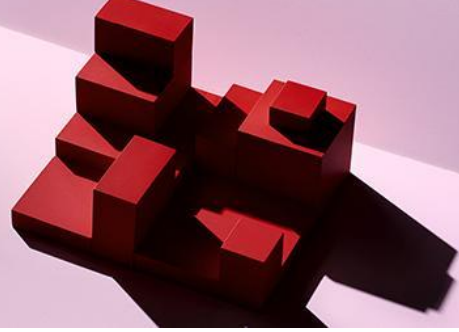


HOUSES AWARDS

The Pinnacle of Residential Design



BRISBANE HOUSE CLAIMS TITLE OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST EXCEPTIONALLY DESIGNED HOME 2021 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS

Australia's most exceptional homes have been revealed in this year's [Houses Awards](#), with an efficiently planned, elegantly proportioned and inventively adaptable home in the Brisbane suburbs, Three House by architect John Ellway, taking out the top honour of Australian House of the Year.

Chosen by a jury of some of the country's foremost architectural minds, this year's winning houses, apartments and gardens (which can be viewed on the [Houses Awards website](#) and the following pages) represent Australia's most outstanding residential architecture and design.

Announced at a gala event on 30 July, the Houses Awards recognise excellence across nine categories. From among those winners, one home is presented with the top architectural honour of Australian House of the Year. Highlights include: Three House by John Ellway, a deceptively simple house in Brisbane designed to be adapted in the future into three compact dwellings; Federal House by Edition Office, a meditative new house in the Byron Bay hinterland that offers elemental respite; The Hat Factory by Welsh and Major, which has transformed a notorious and partially derelict industrial building in Sydney's Newtown into a family residence, enriching rather than erasing a piece of the urban fabric; and 8 Yard House by Studio Bright, which threads a sequence of garden sanctuaries and courtyards into an inner-suburban Melbourne site to create a generous family home that prioritizes the pleasures of private outdoor space.

Beyond celebrating the most exceptionally designed homes in the country, the Houses Awards also act as a prism through which the current state of Australian architecture can be observed. Houses Awards Jury Chair and Editorial Director of Architecture Media, Katelin Butler, observed that the Houses Awards highlight how skilful design enriches the way we live - especially after a year in which our homes have come so clearly into focus.

"The last year or so has reminded us to not take anything for granted. The winning houses are exemplary built works, but the real skill is in the careful consideration of how to improve the daily lives of those who live in these homes," said Butler.

"In particular, access to private outdoor space has certainly been given even more emphasis since the onset of the pandemic – and how the interior spaces connect to these outdoor living spaces governs how often these areas are used."

The winning homes were judged by a distinguished panel of architects and designers who are themselves recognised for creating inspirational Australian homes. The 2021 jury included:

- Anita Panov - Director, Panov Scott Architects (NSW)
- Louise Wright - Director, Baracco and Wright Architects (VIC)
- Phil Harris - Director, Troppo (SA)
- Will Fung - Co-Founder, CO-AP (NSW)
- Katelin Butler - Editorial Director, Architecture Media

Now in their eleventh year, the Houses Awards have set a benchmark of excellence in Australian residential architecture. Seeking to uncover innovation and experimentation in residential design, the awards spotlight the work of the country's leading architects and designers and promote emerging talent.

The winners and commended projects in this year's awards reveal a consistent shift toward making design more inclusive and democratized.

"In Australia, there seems to be a growing interest in making something extraordinary from something ordinary – to ensure good design is accessible to all. It's about creating a humble, yet clever architecture that transforms the amenity offered to residents," says Katelin Butler.

"We have also observed many emerging practices are seeking to shift our collective approach to housing by considering new ways of living that is more environmentally and socially sustainable. We are excited about the continuing evolution of Australian residential architecture – we are an industry that puts empathy, inclusivity and sustainability at the forefront."

For further media information please contact Houses Awards Publicist, Adam Valentine:
hello@adamvalentine.com.au - 0411 302 769

THE AWARDS

AUSTRALIAN HOUSE OF THE YEAR

[Three House](#) by John Ellway (Paddington, QLD)



Photography **TOBY SCOTT** (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

Three House by John Ellway is a deceptively simple new house, the genius of which lies in the rigour of the planning decisions and in the detail resolutions. Set on a flood-prone gully in Brisbane's Paddington, the house is broken into three elevated sleeping platforms connected by a series of veranda-like living zones. This efficiently planned house belies the bounds of its physical dimensions by borrowing light and space, and by firmly connecting its internal spaces to the surrounding neighbourhood context. Living spaces have been raised above street level in response to the site conditions and to maintain privacy.

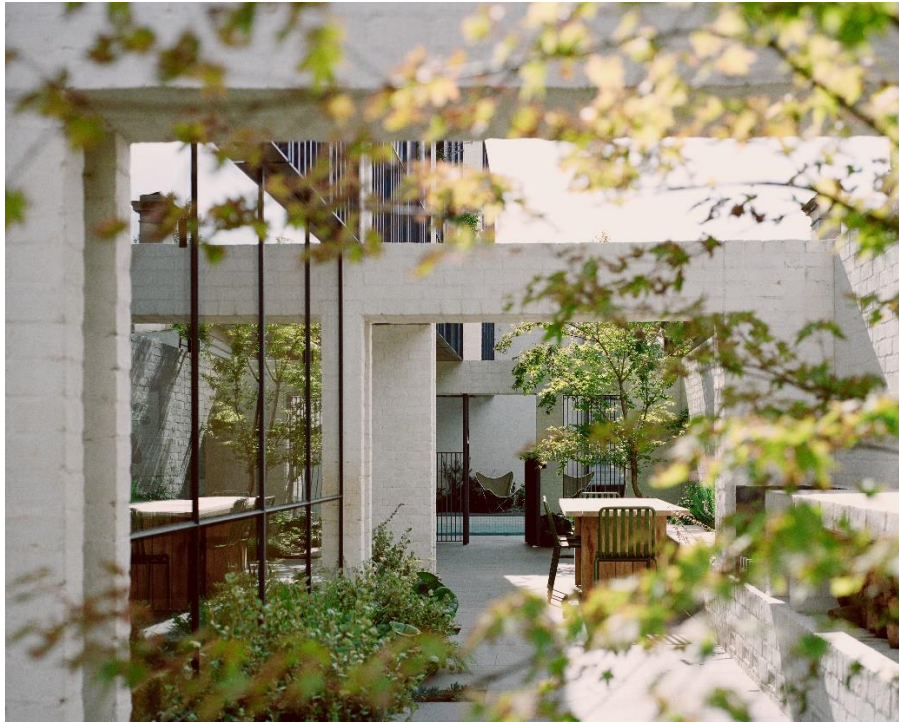
The three pavilions are shaded by pyramid roofs with deep overhangs, a requirement of strict character guidelines. Although this classic roof form is contextual to suburban Brisbane, it also demonstrates the influence of Japanese design on Ellway's practice. The elegantly proportioned square modules are punctuated by landscaped courtyards, and this connection is enhanced by doors and windows that slide away, vertically and horizontally, to embrace the outdoor spaces and the street beyond. In the bedrooms, a series of deftly detailed sliding panels can be moved up and down to control the level of privacy required at any given time. One pavilion – a self-contained granny flat – is detached from the other two, a move that adds flexibility to the configuration and use of the home, now and into the future. Three House could feasibly be adapted into three houses. This consideration for adaptability is not only commendable, but also imperative to long-term sustainability.

This resourceful home reminds us that you don't need an excessive amount of money nor a large footprint to live well; nothing here is superfluous and every detail is carefully considered. Immense joy is found in small architectural moments, such as a tree shadow cast across a wall, and daily rituals, such as the retreat into a calm sleeping zone after a long day. Quiet and understated, this house demonstrates ingenuity in making design look at once effortless and refined.

THE AWARDS

NEW HOUSE OVER 200 SQUARE METRES (JOINT WINNER)

[8 Yard House](#) by Studio Bright (Fitzroy North, VIC)



Photography RORY GARDINER (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

8 Yard House builds on centuries-old traditions of spaces for living outside. The courtyard is reinterpreted as eight outdoor rooms, which punctuate a dense house across a double-fronted lot in an inner-urban area of Melbourne. This outside space – sometimes yard, sometimes courtyard – is brought right to the facade, creating a deep and generous threshold to the house and offering transparency to the street through hit-and-miss brickwork.

Carefully detailed brickwork and relationships between the house and its courtyards, which are distributed along the length of the site, bring a looseness to the otherwise solid brick enclosure and restrained material palette. An unusual spatial richness is achieved through subtle variation in the stepped section, shifting room orientation and allowing adjacent rooms to borrow light and aspect from one another.

The outdoor spaces are rooms of equal value to their interior counterparts. Their interconnectedness layers a diversity of activity and inhabitation throughout the site. Crafted domestic moments and material celebration are dedicated to niches, corners and walls. This house invites a rich life.

Commendations

[Mystery Bay House](#) by Jack Hawkins Architect with Rob Hawkins (Mystery Bay, NSW)

[Mt Coot-tha House](#) by Nielsen Jenkins (Ashgrove, QLD)

THE AWARDS

NEW HOUSE OVER 200 SQUARE METRES (JOINT WINNER)

[Federal House](#) by Edition Office (Federal, NSW)



Photography BEN HOSKING (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

Located on a sloping remote landscape, Federal House is both hard and soft. The existential experience of inhabiting this ancient landscape is acknowledged through the confidence of the building as a discrete object, announcing "I am here." However, the quiet and elegant form is the first mediation between inside and outside: the apparent solidity of the object is deconstructed by fine-grain timber battens.

The interior experience of this house might have been a neatly contained but detached experience of one's surroundings. Instead, the interior establishes a layered connection to place and between overlapping activities. This is achieved using a deep veranda-like space that converts the hallway into a covered outdoor room, a type used similarly in colonial homestead buildings and, more acutely, in Asian architectures as layered and sheltering threshold spaces.

The section anchors the house to the site in the lower-ground spaces and has a reciprocal anchoring effect on the user, controlled through interiority and human scale. Literally grounding the project is a sheltered black-concrete subterranean pool, linked to a planted void at the heart of the home. From the entry above, this void allows glimpses through ferns to the still body of water beneath. Federal House recovers the calmness of shade and shadow where only certain textures become available, such as the silver patina of the crown of wood grain.

THE AWARDS

NEW HOUSE UNDER 200 SQUARE METRES

[Three House](#) by John Ellway (Paddington, QLD)



Photography **TOBY SCOTT** (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

Three House reposes easily in its treed, undulating inner-Brisbane suburban setting. It is without pomp or grandeur, yet beneath the surface lies a compelling logic. The 197-square-metre house is potentially three homes: a primary house, a studio and a granny flat or teenager's retreat.

In its even striding over the site, the house establishes diverse outdoor spaces – using space to both separate and focus internal activities – while at the same time allowing passage for surface water flow down the site's central landform, a gentle gully.

The house responds to the visual character code of the neighbourhood, which controls roof shape and verandah positions and dictates the use of lightweight timber detailing. A series of pyramid-roofed pavilions is rhythmically patterned without fuss, able to open and close to site opportunities and to momentary user responses to weather or privacy. Floor plates step to connect to the ground plane, establish undercrofts or frame different prospects. Detailing is pared back; inventive yet traditional. Vertical sliding shutters give all enclosed spaces a verandah-like experience. This house breathes beautifully.

Built from low embodied energy materials, adaptable and affordable: this is an architecture we can all learn from. Three House is informal yet elegant, rambling yet constrained; an easy Australian house.

Commendations

[Twin Houses](#) by John Ellway (Tarragindi, QLD)

[Night Sky](#) by Peter Stutchbury Architecture (Blackheath, NSW)

[Lambton House](#) by Curious Practice (Lambton, NSW)

[Highlands House](#) by Other Architects for Highlands House (Southern Highlands, NSW)

THE AWARDS

HOUSE ALTERATION AND ADDITION OVER 200 SQUARE METRES

[Highgate Park House](#) by Vokes and Peters (Highgate Hill, QLD)



Photography CHRISTOPHER FREDERICK JONES (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

This Brisbane home has a civic presence that contributes to its park-side locale. The new additions translate the form and scale of the original weatherboard cottage with a robust materiality that is fitting of both the heritage of one of the owners and the migrant history of the neighbourhood.

The arrangement of private and shared parts of the house is planned with exceptional clarity. Generous living spaces, designed to accommodate extended multigenerational family gatherings, continue into delightful walled gardens. Considered apertures in the brick and concrete boundary walls provide privacy yet also allow engagement with, and passive surveillance of, the street. An elegantly detailed metal gate offers access to and from the adjacent park. The beautifully articulated design response inverts what might otherwise have been a defensive approach to an exposed corner site.

This thoughtful project takes advantage of its site, not only for the benefit of the young family who lives there but also for the enrichment of the immediate neighbourhood.

Commendations

[East Fremantle House](#) by Nic Brunsdon (East Fremantle, WA)

[Milkbar House](#) by Kennedy Nolan (North Fitzroy, VIC)

[Richmond House](#) by Therefore (Richmond, VIC)

[SRG House](#) by Fox Johnston (Balmain, NSW)

THE AWARDS

HOUSE ALTERATION AND ADDITION UNDER 200 SQUARE METRES

[Annerley House](#) by Zuzana and Nicholas (Annerley, QLD)



Photography CHRISTOPHER FREDERICK JONES (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

Annerley House is a joyful addition to a Brisbane cottage, a transformation that demonstrates the effectiveness of thoughtful architecture at any scale within our suburbs. Zuzana and Nicholas has shunned the single-room, open-plan rear addition in favour of making a delightful series of indoor and outdoor rooms. This whole-of-site approach acknowledges the traditional planning arrangement of the cottage and establishes a contemporary response to the garden, within limited means.

The garden's presence within the home is heightened via varied threshold conditions – a generous concrete window seat, a finely crafted bay window and multiple “lookouts” from the library eyrie – allowing connectivity and framed views between the different rooms of the house and the garden. As part of the transformation, traditional elements, material choices and construction techniques are reinvented, resulting in an intelligent and playful dialogue between new and old.

It is easy to imagine spending an afternoon at Annerley House, or sharing a meal around its kitchen table, and it is this ease that demonstrates the architect's immense skill in facilitating not just the architecture, but also the life to be lived within it.

Commendations

[Smash Repair House](#) by Matt Elkan Architect (Paddington, NSW)

[Northcote Terrace](#) by Lovell Burton Architecture (Northcote, VIC)

[The Hat Factory](#) by Welsh + Major (Newtown, NSW)

THE AWARDS

APARTMENT OR UNIT

[Brunswick Apartment](#) by Murray Barker and Esther Stewart (Brunswick, VIC)



Photography **BENJAMIN HOSKING** (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

A frequently overlooked and neglected apartment typology in many Australian cities, the 1960s brick walk-up flat is celebrated in this joyous and elegant project. The design, a collaboration between architect Murray Barker and artist Esther Stewart, has done just enough to give the existing apartment a new life as a contemporary home. Without pastiche, the new work references the nostalgia of the 1960s with a palette of muted colours, figured stone and graphic terrazzo.

Original elements of the apartment, such as the pastel-coloured bathroom fixtures and the dairy hatch, are retained and celebrated. With a modest budget, significant improvements have been made to functionality and liveability. The reconfigured kitchen has been designed as an extra-compact living space and includes a new cleverly integrated skylight within the pitched roof space.

Acute observations and discrete, playful interventions have resulted in an alluring and sophisticated refurbishment.

Commendations

[The Lothian](#) by Kennedy Nolan (North Melbourne, VIC)

[MB Apartment](#) by Bokey Grant (Drummoyne, NSW)

THE AWARDS

GARDEN OR LANDSCAPE

[8 YARD HOUSE](#) by Studio Bright with Peachy Green (Fitzroy North, VIC)



Photography **RORY GARDINER** (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

Garden is everything in this home by Studio Bright, where as much design attention has been given to external spaces as it has to internal spaces. Set on an inner-urban site in Melbourne's north, this home is punctured by a series of eight yards, each with a different mood and function, some hardscaped and others softscaped. Working closely with landscape design studio Peachy Green, the architect has carefully choreographed the way each of these courtyards is experienced from within the home.

Connections are attuned to the nature of family life. Views to the pool area from the dining room enable child supervision without compromising a summer dinner party, while the sunken main living area connects to a flat and open space for kicking a ball or shooting some hoops. Quiet retreat from family life is also catered for, in the narrow study space that overlooks a calming, leafy courtyard, or in the main bedroom's private pocket garden, which allows glimpses of the street's activity through the undulating brick screen.

This is a remarkable home that genuinely establishes a connection between its inhabitants and the outdoors, in all weather and seasons. In a year that has seen a renewed appreciation of private open space and the need to prioritize wellbeing, it will serve its family far into the future.

Commendations

[Y3 Garden](#) by Dan Young Landscape Architect (St Lucia, QLD)

[SRG House](#) by Fox Johnston with Dangar Barin Smith (Balmain, NSW)

THE AWARDS

HOUSE IN A HERITAGE CONTEXT (JOINT WINNER)

[The Hat Factory](#) by Welsh and Major (Newtown, NSW)



Photography **ANTHONY BASHEER and BRETT BOARDMAN** (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

The Hat Factory by Welsh and Major has a colourful past. The building, most recently partially derelict after fire and its use as a notorious squat, is an important feature that anchors locally listed Hollis Park in Newtown. The brief to create a pair of flexible, contemporary residences could have erased history but instead has enriched it. The private residences acknowledge existing social attachment to the place and add a readable new layer. This public gesture is made more generous in the absence of a heritage listing or any requirement for the built fabric to be retained.

The retention of deteriorated fabric as a platform for new development required creative design, careful engineering and skilled building. From the street, the upper floor additions appear to effortlessly complement the old. The rudimentary nature of the factory is beautifully offset by the lightness of the construction and the industrial aesthetic. The staircase is an absolute highlight.

Welsh and Major has balanced the achievement of a flexible, future-focused home for their clients with a reworking of a gritty part of the public realm. The project should be applauded for demonstrating commitment to, and passion for, re-valuing our past as part of a richer future.

Commendations

[Smash Repair House](#) by Matt Elkan Architect (Paddington, NSW)

[Milkbar House](#) by Kennedy Nolan (North Fitzroy, VIC)

[Oliver Lane Apartment](#) by O'Connor and Houle Architecture and Landscapes (Melbourne, VIC)

THE AWARDS

HOUSE IN A HERITAGE CONTEXT (JOINT WINNER)

[SRG House](#) by Fox Johnston (Balmain, NSW)



Photography ANSON SMART (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

SRG House by Fox Johnston comes with an impressive architectural pedigree. The locally significant 1970s semi in Balmain is one of a pair formerly owned by eminent architect Sir Roy Grounds and his son Marr, an architect, lecturer and sculptor. Marr commissioned architect Stuart Whitelaw to design the two houses, and this semi was used by Roy as his Sydney pied-à-terre. As may be expected, the bones were excellent and the Balmain views were stunning. However, time had intervened and the original treehouse concept had been altered.

Fox Johnston prioritized retention of the existing structure and connection to the landscape, with the original zigzag plan established around major trees. The architect's work with landscape designers Dangar Barin Smith re-establishes the important bushland setting.

Clever interventions addressed deterioration and contemporary living requirements. New fixed and sliding window sections have been inserted, opening the house to natural air and enhancing its thermal performance. The garage, a 1983 addition, was transformed into a grandparents' annexe, connected to the main house by a glass bridge to provide multigenerational living. Research by Lymesmith revealed the materials and colouring of the original house, which the architect used to both restore and inspire new work.

THE AWARDS

SUSTAINABILITY

[Night Sky](#) by Peter Stutchbury Architecture (Blackheath, NSW)



Photography **MICHAEL NICHOLSON** (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

Night Sky by Peter Stutchbury Architecture is a modest home; unique, sustainable, biophilic and fit for purpose. It produces all its own energy, collects its own water, is made in large part out of recycled materials, connects to its local context and uses low-toxic finishes and fittings. Low-water gardens are planted with drought-tolerant indigenous species that support local biodiversity. Additionally, the house is fully accessible, designed to enable its occupant, who lives with a disability, to feel connected and at ease.

The home celebrates the local economy. The majority of its materials are Australian-made, recycled and obtained from within a 120-kilometre radius, and 75 percent of trades were sourced through one contractor. This minimizes carbon emissions related to travel time while also supporting local businesses, many of them craftspeople and makers.

The design is efficient not just in its planning, but also in its ability to stabilize temperature passively. Recycled double-brick and insulated walls store and release heat, and the skylight in the central vaulted parabolic room enables two-way ventilation.

Night Sky is equipped with 63 photovoltaic panels with 20 kW of power generation and 34 kW of storage. It uses evacuated tubes for hot water, minimum electronics, low-energy fixtures and 12-volt lighting. The home collects, stores and filters 60,000 litres of rainwater at ground temperature.

Commendations

[Limestone House](#) by John Wardle Architects (Toorak, VIC)

[Davison Street Collaborative](#) by Archier (Brunswick, VIC)

[Minima](#) by Trias (Somersby, NSW)

[Off Grid FZ House](#) by Anderson Architecture (Megalong Valley, NSW)

THE AWARDS

EMERGING ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE (JOINT WINNER)

[Curious Practice](#)



For Lambton House (Lambton, NSW)

Photography KATHERINE LU (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

In 1961 José Antonio Coderch wrote of architects: "Let them work with a rope tied to one leg, to stop them from staying too far from the earth where they have their roots, and the people they know best, and let them stand on a solid base of dedication, goodwill and integrity."

It is this commitment to building the "living tradition" – which Coderch also suggests might still be within our reach – that sees Curious Practice, led by directors Warren Haasnoot and Greg Lee, recognized as a joint winner of this award.

The practice aspires to produce work that has the highest regard for the community in which it is made, resulting in unassuming yet delightful homes; homes that offer neighbourliness and connectivity to our streets and public places.

As testament to this aspiration, the jury found a prolific portfolio of houses that shun profligate spatial and material choices, and are instead imbued with intelligence, innovation and, of course, curiosity.

Commendation

[Bokey Grant](#)

THE AWARDS

EMERGING ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE (JOINT WINNER)

[Other Architects](#)



For Highlands House

Photography **CLINTON WEAVER** (full image gallery [here](#))

Jury Citation

Other Architects, led by directors Grace Mortlock and David Neustein, is recognized as a joint winner of this award for the practice's tenacious pursuit of ideas in architecture, via built and unbuilt works, that seek to shift our relationship to housing.

The term "speculative housing" has become synonymous with profit generation. But, as an emerging practice, Other Architects' speculative focus is rather on generating propositions, advancing discussion and building a culture around contemporary models of housing through lectures and exhibitions – returning a focus to the inhabitants as we embrace increasingly dense living as a normative model in Australia.

An equally impressive emerging portfolio of built work demonstrates a skilful hand, which collects the practice's foundational research and makes spatial experiences that are intelligent, uplifting and delightful.

Other Architects describes its service as "documented thinking," and its ideas as "scalable, replicable and easily communicated." This broad definition – spanning from the big picture to the detail – leaves the jury excited about Other Architects' future, and its potential to positively impact our collective approach to housing.

-ENDS-

Houses is Australia's leading residential architecture magazine for designers and their clients. Houses presents inspiring residential projects by Australia's best architects and designers. These projects reveal the way that a house, through occupation, becomes a home – the architectural ideas, and the people and products behind them. Houses includes extensive pictorial coverage and engaging stories together with floor plans and detailed lists of the products used. It is the only residential architecture publication to carry endorsements from both the Australian Institute of Architects and the Design Institute of Australia.