



Turning Japanese

The Clout surname is well-known in the Queensland design industry but the first name is just coming into its own. Chris Clout – nephew of building designer Paul Clout – is young, talented and determined to stamp his imprint on the evolving architectural scene.

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Chris Clout designed his first house at age six. Admittedly it was a cubby house, but an elaborate one at that, and was quickly followed by a more complex and liveable tree house. At age 16 he became serious and designed his family's home in Jervis Bay, NSW. With curved roof lines and exciting features it was well ahead of its time. His fascination with design led him to an apprenticeship as a carpenter and then building designer working for his uncle, Paul Clout, for five years. Now working for himself and at just 25 years of age, Chris has already won four BDAQ awards.

This Sunshine Coast house, one of many he has now designed under the Chris Clout Design name, is a reflection of his goal to stand out from the crowd.

Japanese-themed, the house has elevated 'top hat' Colorbond roof lines and custom-made gutters shaped to give a clean finish and to flare the Asian-style roof. It all makes the kind of design statement that has people slowing down as they drive past, some even stopping, to enjoy the home's striking lines.

Although Chris confesses he has never been to Japan, his imagination and research have captured a strong element of that country's charm in this large four-bedroom home on a canal in Noosa Waters.

"I wanted to do something different," he said. "A lot of people (in Queensland) love Asian design. I thought it would be interesting to do something that would not be confused with Paul's work!"

The home's impact begins at the electronic gate that leads visitors onto a timber bridge over water, and past the pool,

complete with an island daybed. Water is an essential element in the property. "Water is cooling and tranquil and creates a welcome visual space," Chris said.

The timber boardwalk leads the visitor past tropical plantings on one side and soothing water on the other, and through the arc of a concrete beam that serves as a false entry to the home. It is only once past all this eye-popping appeal that the visitor gets to the house where a huge, sculptural wood and glass pivoting front door acts as a precursor to



the delights beyond. Inside the house, Shoji screens, marble and high-gloss timber floors, Indonesian plywood ceilings, oodles of sliding glass doors and louvres, and the clever use of timber and stone features give the ground floor an unmistakable Japanese identity. With the dominating presence of the pool and the canal frontage, it becomes a delightful melding of 'Queensland meets rural Japan'.

"I think it's important to see the landscaping and the water from the house," Chris said. "The outside area should be seen as an extension of the house, not apart from it. And a house and garden should look good at night. When you are sitting inside, you can be surrounded by darkness, or looking out at sparkling light on water, dramatically lit plants and foliage, and features. This house is beautiful at night; the light brings out the colour of the water and timber. "The massive glass and wood panelled front door pivots easily to lead past the feature wall of lava stone from Indonesia on one side, and a curved wall of columns and glass into the large living, dining, lounge and kitchen areas ... all overlooking the pool on one side and the canal on the other.







Hardwood timber cupboards with Shoji inlays and finished by a French Polisher with a custom blend of stains frame Quantum Quartz Coral Reef benchtops for dramatic contrast and blend well with high Indonesian ply ceilings. Sliding timber-framed doors open the living space to the pool, and on the other side, sliding doors open the house to the canal.

Chris' design takes into account everything for easy and practical living. "I used a floating stone island bench to separate the kitchen from the living areas. The dark timber feature on the face of the island bench gives it Japanese appeal and I used pendant lights over the bench as well as normal down lighting as a feature and to bring the light right down to the benchtop."

The lounge area has been given the Japanese treatment with a floating feature wall showcasing timber panels squared off in aluminium beading. "We built the television into the wall and used the aluminium and deep blue LED lighting behind to trick the wall up," Chris said.

The owners have kept furniture and accessories to a minimum so as not to spoil the dramatic flow of the home. A large timber dining table, a soft ivory sofa and low coffee table (designed by Chris) add comfort yet do not detract from the streamlined simplicity.

The master bedroom suite is a large tranquil space with low bed and white bedding, enjoying views over the canal. Shoji screens shield the ensuite wardrobe and bathroom from the bedroom's main space, and have been used as hopper windows above the bed. The bathroom is all Japanese simplicity with low feature cupboards beneath the wash basins featuring timber slats.

Chris also designed much of the built-in furniture for the house as well as taking care of the landscaping. "I like to have full control over landscaping, lighting and furniture," he said. "These are the things that help make a house. You can have the best designed house in the world but if the owners put in the wrong furniture and don't landscape it accordingly it spoils it. I used frangipani, black bamboo, heliconias, yuccas and baby bamboo to theme the garden."

Shoji screens shield the ensuite wardrobe and bathroom from the bedroom's main space



This whole approach to design has already given Chris Clout an edge and helped him build his reputation. His ambition and talent will no doubt take him far. Although he is just 25 he has designed more than 80 houses during his time working with Paul Clout and now on his own. He is currently working on projects throughout Australia and overseas.