



Michelle Burton



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Michelle, you recently moved to the Camden Haven area from Sydney's Northern Beaches with your partner G. Tell us what prompted the sea change.

Actually, it wasn't too much of a sea change for either of us, as we have been living on the Northern Beaches of Sydney for the past 15 years. We are now living in Lake Cathie, which is very similar, but with one huge difference ... it is so wonderfully quiet and restful. Lake Cathie has all the good things about the Sydney beach life, without the driving stress.

I fell in love with the area some years ago, when I was overseeing the interior design on a beautiful home in Dunbogan. We have been back and forth many times since and are now planning to build a beach cottage, which I have designed, somewhere in the area.

You're an interior designer. What first enticed you into that industry?

I was born in Louisiana, USA, and from an early age I was always in love with the buildings and interiors of the beautiful old homes in New Orleans – which we visited often. Now, wherever I travel my biggest pleasure is experiencing the architecture – old and new. I enjoy seeing how people live and to experience their lives – especially their home life.

As an interior designer, tell us about where your career headed over the years ...

I started my interior design studies in Los Angeles (UCLA) and completed my final years in Sydney, when I moved to Australia (I am now an Australian citizen). I am continually attending professional development courses and visiting design expos both in Australia and overseas. And of course, each design project is new and presents different challenges. So, by loving what I do, each year takes me in new directions. And here I am, at the start of a new year, living in beautiful Lake Cathie in the Camden Haven area.

I think the biggest difference about the interior design work in America and Australia is that Australians are less conservative. It is probably the influence of so many cultures in Australia that gives designers and homeowners the confidence to be more adventurous and eclectic in their design choices. It is refreshing working with families living in Australia.

Most recently you were acknowledged for your work by being named the 'Australian Bathroom Designer of the Year'. Tell us a little about this prestigious award.

The Kitchen and Bathroom Design Institute (Australia) is the only national organisation exclusively for kitchen and bathroom designers. Each year, the KBDi Awards

acknowledge the excellence in design, innovation, talent and professionalism of kitchen and bathroom designers in Australia. The short listed entries are judged by leading designers and industry professionals.

This year I was awarded the 'KBDi Australian Bathroom Designer of the Year 2011', as well as the 'KBDi Designer – Large Bathrooms NSW 2011' award. Obviously, I was thrilled for myself and my associates.

Please briefly describe your winning bathroom.

The practical design obstacles on this family home bathroom renovation were many, but the most challenging was designing to a triangular floor print that stepped down off a walk-in wardrobe. The existing double shower (which the client wanted to retain) splashed water, leaving behind a wet floor.

The key to resolving this design challenge was the installation of a custom stainless steel shower tray with a timber floor drainage grate, that collected the water spray and two large, glass, full height panels installed to partially enclose the shower. A curved vanity and round, semi-recessed basins were designed to allow for safe circulation at the most narrow point of the room, along with other innovative joinery storage solutions, such as a power point for hair dryers, were fitted inside the vanity drawers. The end result was a design that included a mix of innovative materials and eco-sustainable products within a clever space-planning design solution.

The judging for such an award is based on a point score across a few areas, such as ergonomics, client brief, environmentally friendly products. How did your bathroom design meet those criteria?

The entries have a strict criteria. Points are scored in the areas of design solution and layout; industry compliance; eco-sustainability; accuracy of documentation i.e. plans, elevations and 3D images; specification criteria of materials; fittings and fixtures; and of course, fulfilling the client brief. Oh ... nearly forgot. It also has to look stunning.

The KBDi judges commented on the astute use of space and ingenious design solution.

"This is a cleverly resolved solution to an awkwardly shaped space that has created a fresh and appealing bathroom," they said. "The client's brief to create a light, airy, spacious and relaxed space has been met in this clever design".

The prize for your bathroom is a trip to Italy, but specifically to attend an expo. Tell us about that.

Held in Milan, Italy, the bi-annual 5-day design show, 'Eurocucina', is the global event for cutting-edge kitchen and

bathroom design. The exciting expo showcases the European kitchen and bathroom trends. Thousands of international visitors attend to view the latest in materials, such as laminates, wood, metal, masonry, lacquers and the finest in finishing accessories. World class designers and manufacturers display concept and design solutions for the home: innovation in appliances, furniture and ergonomic and sustainable design ideas for kitchens and bathrooms.

With home design attracting unprecedented attention in terms of consumer interest and financial investment, I see it as my responsibility to inspire, educate and to be at the forefront of design, including awareness of new and improved materials.

Having now settled into the coastal lifestyle, where are you heading with your business and designing now?

More of the same – and more of anything new. After 15 years in the interior design business, I have a fantastic network of professional colleagues and associates, and I welcome new design opportunities. Last year, for instance, I worked on more commercial and office fitouts and consulted on a 5 star island resort interior fitout. But I really love helping people and families get more out of their home – their personal living space. I also think I will continue to develop my design skills in the alfresco indoor/outdoor integration of living spaces. It is a fast growing trend, so suited for coastal living, and there are so many new products and design choices. I am looking forward to meeting new people in the area and would like to wish all your readers a safe, happy and healthy 2012.

Thanks Michelle.

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