

MEDIA RELEASE

29 July 2023

HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS

The Most Outstanding Australian Homes of 2023 Named

Australia's most innovative and sustainable homes have been revealed in the [2023 Houses Awards](#), the country's premier residential design awards. This year's winners are an extremely diverse group of homes with something to inspire every Australian. Each home represents the pinnacle of intelligent design from the most talented, established and emerging residential designers in the country. The winning projects and jury citations are detailed individually on the following pages of this media release.

The winning homes for 2023 include a sleek, modular suburban home using prefabrication; a bold update of a 1970s CBD apartment that dares to defy conventional design trends; a meticulously restored stone terrace house in one of the most strictly protected heritage areas in the country; a former garage cleverly transformed into a peaceful courtyard; and a sprawling farmhouse-inspired home that exemplifies the serene retreats we aspire our homes to be, post-pandemic.

Houses Awards jury chair and editor of *Houses* magazine, Alexa Kempton, commented on this year's diverse, winning homes: *"The winners demonstrate the skill and ingenuity that architects and designers can bring to residential projects of all scales and budgets. The jury recognised the designers' ability to craft homes of exceptional quality, that push back against convention. We also saw a commitment made by design teams and their clients to creating homes resourcefully and with restraint, signalling the sustainable message of doing more with less."*

"These projects were designed and built amid disruption in the construction industry, ongoing economic uncertainty and the urgency of the climate crisis. This year's winning homes demonstrate creative and responsive design in the most challenging of circumstances."

The title of **Australian House of the Year** was awarded to **Merricks Farmhouse** by **Michael Lumby with Nielsen Jenkins**. Chosen because it is a marriage of what are sometimes two diametrically opposed ideas: a triumphant and accomplished architectural project that is also a warm and welcoming home. The confluence of house and landscape creates a sophisticated and tranquil home for the post-pandemic world.

The award for New House Under 200 Square Metres was awarded to **Blok Stafford Heights** by **Blok Modular with Vokes and Peters**, a dignified and unpretentious home that demonstrates the possibilities of prefabricated construction. Economical without compromising on amenity, it is an inspiring example of how clever and restrained design can produce a beautiful, low-cost family home in a time of economic uncertainty.

The New House Over 200 Square Metres award was given to two homes. **Shiplap House** by **Chenchow Little Architects** is an extraordinary new home whose unconventional form responds to a battleaxe site and an exposed headland site. The joint winner in this category was Australian House of the Year, **Merricks Farmhouse** by **Michael Lumby with Nielsen Jenkins**.

An inspiring home for a couple wishing to live on a small footprint without compromising liveability, **Sunday** by **Architecture architecture** was named the winner of the House Alteration and Addition Under 200 Square Metres

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category. Highly individual and beautifully crafted, Sunday exemplifies inventive and delightful small-space living on an inner-suburban block.

House Alteration and Addition Over 200 Square Metres winner **Armada House** by **Neeson Murcutt Neille** is a masterclass in minimal intervention. This renovation of a grand Victorian home and its 1990s addition fine-tunes the plan for modern-day living, while simultaneously minimising unnecessary new construction.

Apartment or Unit winner **Spring Street** by **March Studio** is a fabulous example of the conscious move away from 'broad appeal' and towards a highly individualised design that reflects the clients' personalities and individual lifestyle needs. A 1970s apartment is bravely and skilfully updated, harnessing the style of that era to create a joyful and memorable home.

Smart and subtle, **Coogee Courtyard** by **Saha** – a commendable example of corrective overdevelopment – is the Garden or Landscape winner. **Saha** (also the **Emerging Architecture Practice** winner) has transformed a former garage into a courtyard sanctuary, providing valuable outdoor space where previously there was none.

Sustainability winner **Monty Sibbel** by **Nuud Studio** is a renovated project home from the 1970s. Modest in size, the Sibbel home has been rejuvenated with care and commitment, authenticating the argument for repair over rebuild. The home's environmental performance has been radically improved, ensuring this home will endure for decades to come.

An extraordinary commitment to restoration underpins the House in a Heritage Context winner, **Millers Point Townhouse** by **Design 5 Architects**. Rigorous conservation work repairs earlier damage and is paired with respectful new interventions, resulting in an architectural triumph in one of the most fiercely protected heritage areas in the country.

The complete list of 2023 Houses Awards winners are (further details, commendations and jury citations on following pages):

- Australian House of the Year - Merricks Farmhouse, Michael Lumby with Nielsen Jenkins
- New House Under 200 Square Metres - Blok Stafford Heights, Blok Modular with Vokes and Peters
- New House Over 200 Square Metres (joint winner) - Merricks Farmhouse, Michael Lumby with Nielsen Jenkins
- New House Over 200 Square Metres (joint winner) - Shiplap House, Chenchow Little Architects
- House Alteration and Addition Under 200 Square Metres - Sunday, Architecture architecture
- House Alteration and Addition Over 200 Square Metres - Armada House, Neeson Murcutt Neille
- Apartment or Unit - Spring Street, March Studio
- Garden or Landscape - Coogee Courtyard, Saha
- Sustainability - Monty Sibbel, Nuud Studio
- House in a Heritage Context - Millers Point Townhouse, Design 5 Architects
- Emerging Architecture Practice - Saha

This year's winners were chosen by a panel of jurors who represent the best architectural and design experts in the country – some have themselves been recognised in past Houses Awards. This year's jury also includes three experts across sustainability, heritage, and landscape design. The 2023 jury included:

- Melissa Bright - founder, Studio Bright
- Sioux Clark - co-director, Multiplicity
- Kieron Gait - founder, Kieron Gait Architects
- Anthony Gill - director, Anthony Gill Architects
- Simone Bliss - creative director, SBLA Studio (gardens and landscape advisor)

- Helen Lardner - director, HLCD (heritage advisor)
- Clare Parry - sustainability manager, Development Victoria (sustainability advisor)
- Alexa Kempton (jury chair) editor, *Houses* magazine, Architecture Media

The winners of the 2023 Houses Awards will be announced at the Art Gallery of New South Wales on the evening of Friday 28 July, with projects awarded across ten categories. Each award category offers a \$1,000 cash prize, and the winner of the Australian House of the Year will receive a \$5,000 cash prize.

The winners and commendations will also be published online, Saturday, 29 July 2023 on the [Houses Awards website](#). A full report of the winners will also be published in the August issue of *Houses* (no. 153), on sale from Thursday 3 August 2023.

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2023 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS AUSTRALIAN HOUSE OF THE YEAR



Australian House of the Year Merricks Farmhouse by Michael Lumby with Nielsen Jenkins (VIC)

Jury citation: This courtyard house on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula harnesses the many opportunities of a large coastal site to support a restorative experience of place. Blessed with the luxury of space, the design's adept handling of scale achieves a domestic ease that is hard to perfect on large sites. A decisive form and robust materiality are elevated by precise detailing and meticulous execution, achieving a building that is at once an ambitious and accomplished architectural project, and a warm and welcoming home.

The jury was captivated by the consummate interlacing of house and landscape, which instils calm and equilibrium in the home. Living, sleeping and bathing spaces capture views of outdoor rooms and private courtyards, framed by the home's elemental walls. Vistas of immediate and distant landscape enable individual introspection, as well as enriching connections with place and with others – qualities that we all seek out in a post-pandemic world.

Merricks House explores the idea of the farmhouse as a place of elemental shelter. A large, pitched roof unifies the residence, its deep eaves providing protection in all weather. Externally, this reads as a singular and solid form, but within the house, dramatic incisions introduce volume and offer glimpses of sky through the depths of the roof. These sculpted fissures achieve spatial drama and richness, and they connect occupants to both ground and sky.

A material palette of concrete, charred timber and oak joinery is both hardy and understated, elegant in its restraint. There is a comfort and a familiarity in this house; simplicity and solidity are its strengths. It is easy to imagine spending the day here, surveying the stillness of the courtyard from the sunken lounge or watching the summer evening sun descend over the bay from the covered terrace.

Composed with confidence and clarity, Merricks House is deservedly named 2023 Australian House of the Year.

2023 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



**New House over 200 sqm (joint winner)
Shiplap House by Chenchow Little Architects (NSW)**

Jury citation: It is complicated to build a house on a headland ridge in Sydney's eastern suburbs, even more so on a battleaxe block surrounded by existing houses. Sites are subject to strict planning constraints and a harsh natural environment and bound by fiercely defended harbour views. Chenchow Little has embraced these constraints to deliver an extraordinary new home for a young family.

The unconventional floor plan, chamfered to avoid conflict, results in a unique form and, without a typical street presence, the house is viewed in the round as a beautiful but foreign object. Its materiality anchors it to place: shiplap timber cladding references the fishermen's cottages that were once typical on this headland, contrasting the house with the now-predominant masonry of its neighbours.

Carefully balancing the need for privacy and the desire for views, living rooms are located on the top floor. Structural concrete walls are exposed at their lower portion, and this continuous datum provides a sense of security and containment that contributes greatly to the success of the project. Large, fixed windows carefully frame various views, and adjacent ventilation panels capture and control the cross breezes.

Rich and robust, this accomplished design is a glorious example of an architecture practice responding to the challenges of a site with clarity and conviction.

Commendations:

- Bass Coast Farmhouse by Wardle (VIC)
- Bronte House by Tribe Studio Architects (NSW)
- Enclosed House II by MORQ (WA)
- Mori House by MA Architects and Aires Mateus (VIC)
- Somers House by Kennedy Nolan (VIC)

2023 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



**New House over 200 sqm (joint winner)
Merricks Farmhouse by Michael Lumby with Nielsen Jenkins (VIC)**

Jury citation: Connection to landscape is an often-cited aim for clients and architects alike, but rarely is it achieved so completely and successfully as it is at Merricks Farmhouse. On an extraordinary site, this abstraction of the Australian farmhouse is an equally remarkable building, carefully considered and beautifully resolved.

Located on a prominent hilltop site with sweeping vistas and corresponding exposure to the coastal climate, the house skilfully balances prospect and refuge. Under a large roof, thick block walls project out to anchor the structure while managing privacy and framing views. At the home's centre is a generous, protected garden courtyard that provides the perfect backdrop to domestic life.

The organization of the house ensures a level of intimacy that is difficult to achieve at this scale. Large sections can be made dormant until needed, ensuring the house is comfortable for few or for many. Interiors are spatially rich, with the belly of the roof carved out to create light-filled volumes of varying scales specific to program. The materiality reinforces a sense of ease: warm finishes and fine detailing complement the robust and direct structure.

This house is a rare and important example of architecture truly at one with its landscape.

(Commendations named above)

2023 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



New House under 200 sqm

Blok Stafford heights by Blok Modular with Vokes and Peters (QLD)

Jury citation: In the face of massive cost escalation and uncertainty in the construction industry, Blok Stafford Heights provides a compelling example of how clever and restrained design can produce a low-cost family home that sits at ease in its suburban setting.

Modular home builder Blok Modular and architect Vokes and Peters have collaborated to deploy a modest series of site-built blockwork elements, which anchor a prefabricated house – installed in one day – to a sloping site in the Brisbane suburbs. They have created a home with two distinct settings for family life to unfold: a generous courtyard garden and an elevated platform overlooking a panoramic city.

Every element in this project has a purpose. Adornment and fanciful detailing are eschewed in favour of clear spatial connections and economy of means. The project gives much of the site to landscape – one can imagine that, in a few years' time, once the shade trees have grown and the gardens have flourished, this house will feel as if it has always been here.

Blok Stafford Heights is a refined and beautiful home that does a lot with a little. Unpretentious, dignified and generous to its suburb, there is a lot to learn from this deserving winner.

Commendations:

19 Waterloo Street by SJB (NSW)

Copacabana House by Polly Harbison Design (NSW)

Mossy Point House by Edition Office (NSW)

2023 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



House Alteration and Addition over 200 sqm Armadale House by Neeson Murcutt Neille (VIC)

Jury citation: In the current economic climate, the construction industry has been beset with uncertainty caused by escalating material and labour costs, rising interest rates and increasing pressure on the housing market. Compounded by the urgency of the climate crisis, these challenges demand solutions that are respectful, resourceful and responsible.

This composed alteration and addition is attentive to these fundamental responsibilities by working with the existing fabric and intentionally doing less. Strategic and surgical, the interventions retain most of the grand, Victorian-era house as well as its 1990s addition, skilfully repositioning rooms and openings to fine-tune the plan for contemporary use. A delicate new stair unlocks circulation, greatly improving connection between floors and drawing light deep into the floor plan.

The project is simple and humble yet elevated through restraint and understated clarity. New insertions are carefully detailed and show quiet refinement and precision, permitting old and new to harmoniously coexist. Fineness and solidity are deployed to bring a calmness to the spaces.

As much of the existing house has been reused as possible, and the synergy between all consultants is evident in the coherence of the finished outcome. In finding new life for a house's older layers, Armadale House demonstrates the value and skill of the architect in re-use and reinvention.

Commendations:

- Bungalow by Other Architects (NSW)
- Fitzroy North Terrace by Clare Cousins Architects (VIC)
- House for BEES by Downie North (NSW)
- Mary Street House by Edition Office (VIC)
- Trilogy House by Peter Stutchbury Architecture (NSW)

2023 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



House Alteration and Addition under 200 sqm Sunday by Architecture architecture (VIC)

Jury citation: Exceptional houses are always idiosyncratic in some manner or form. They are about making space in place, with context critical to the recipe: it drives the architect and helps shape or define the nature of the lived experience.

This adaptation of a narrow cottage in Melbourne's Fitzroy fully embraces its gritty urban context. The design maximizes its site, hugging all perimeter boundaries in the process. It is a courtyard house made to work exceedingly hard to accommodate the stuff of life. The courtyard is a literal extension or, more pointedly, an extrusion of the form, with living arrangements stretched visually and programmatically into the outdoors. It is both playful and finely wrought, a very personal examination of what makes a home.

This highly perceptive exploration of living arrangements uses the material elements of the structure to demarcate space in a decidedly crafted and unusual way. There is simply no room to not have fully fleshed out the brief. All spaces work hard to fulfil their function as well as to imbue the next with a flavour, or a continued thread of delight.

Ultimately, this is an interior landscape, a highly individual home fully confident in its approach.

Commendations:

H House, SO Architecture (TAS)
Hopscotch House, John Ellway (QLD)
North Perth House, Simon Pandal Architect (WA)
Steel House / Stone House, Retallack Thompson (NSW)

2023 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



Apartment or Unit **Spring Street by March Studio (VIC)**

Jury citation: The task of reimagining an apartment can be a challenging one. Adjustments are constrained by the existing building structure, and, in a predominantly interior setting, it can be hard to find context to refer and respond to. These limitations are overcome with confidence and flair in this accomplished apartment fitout, which is resolute in its response to place.

The brief was to rework a 1970s apartment in central Melbourne, and the architects have relished the opportunity to pay tribute to the home's former glory in a building that was once dubbed the Tower of Power. A crown of extruded aluminium panels is a mercurial canvas that registers changing light and city views. Inspired by the reflective ceiling of McIntyre and Partners' Parliament Station (1982) – the metro station beneath the apartment building – it explores how the fabric of the city can be reinterpreted at a domestic scale.

Newly expanded social spaces are generously scaled and intentionally loose, enabling reconfiguration. A restrictive material palette of concrete, Tasmanian blackwood, brass and silver aluminium is punctuated with intense colour, achieving a design that is both joyful and unexpected.

This accomplished project possesses irrefutable joie de vivre and demonstrates how apartment design can simultaneously offer escape from, and immersion in, urban life.

Commendation:
Oxlade by J.AR Office (QLD)

2023 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



Garden or Landscape **Coogee Courtyard by SAHA (NSW)**

Jury citation: This understated courtyard space is a timeless and carefully considered landscape intervention.

Engaged with an initial brief to build more space for a growing family, the design team's counterproposal was to practise the art of undoing rather than accumulation: removing a two-car garage to permit the reinstatement of the home's primary outdoor space.

In the new courtyard, a modest selection of materials is enhanced by highly considered details and the delightful play of light and shadow. This is a place for pause, for sitting in the afternoon sun to watch dappled light move across the courtyard. A covered verandah, open-air garden, outdoor shower and dining area offer ample flexibility and encourage the occupants to use this outdoor room as part of their everyday living space. Parking for bicycles and electric vehicle charging is also provided, but vehicle use is secondary to family participation in the courtyard. This is a scheme that prioritizes people over cars: a human-scale response to what could easily have been another garage on a tight block.

Warm and delicate, this space has been realized with restraint and care. This is a commendable example of correcting overdevelopment in the suburbs, and it demonstrates the possibilities of doing more with less.

Commendations:
James Garden Pavilion by UME Architecture (QLD)

2023 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



House in a Heritage Context Millers Point Townhouse by Design 5 Architects (NSW)

Jury citation: Perched on an escarpment in the state-listed Millers Point Heritage Conservation Area, this pair of neglected 1840s row houses has been transformed into a sophisticated single dwelling by Design 5 Architects. The meticulous analysis, exceptional conservation work and attention to detail that has been invested in this project has resulted in a reinvigorated and exemplary outcome.

The architects' delight in careful physical and documentary investigations signals their commitment to the scheme. Collaboration with archaeologists, stonemasons and tradespeople has led to the diligent reconstruction and revelation of original features that had been impacted by 1940s renovations. This painstaking work restores the interior spatial arrangement and access to natural light, ventilation and passive climate control. An important and rare historic record of housing from early-nineteenth-century Sydney is revived.

The stonework of the street facade, newly stripped of paint, is celebrated with the reinstatement of light wells, arched entries and French doors to first-floor balconies. These revived features make an exceptional contribution to the streetscape, unifying this dwelling with neighbouring townhouses and providing occupants with stunning views to Sydney Harbour.

While the conservation works are restrained and rigorous, contemporary interventions successfully reinterpret lost elements and meet their clients' modern brief. This project illuminates 1840s life while guaranteeing the building has a bright and beautiful future.

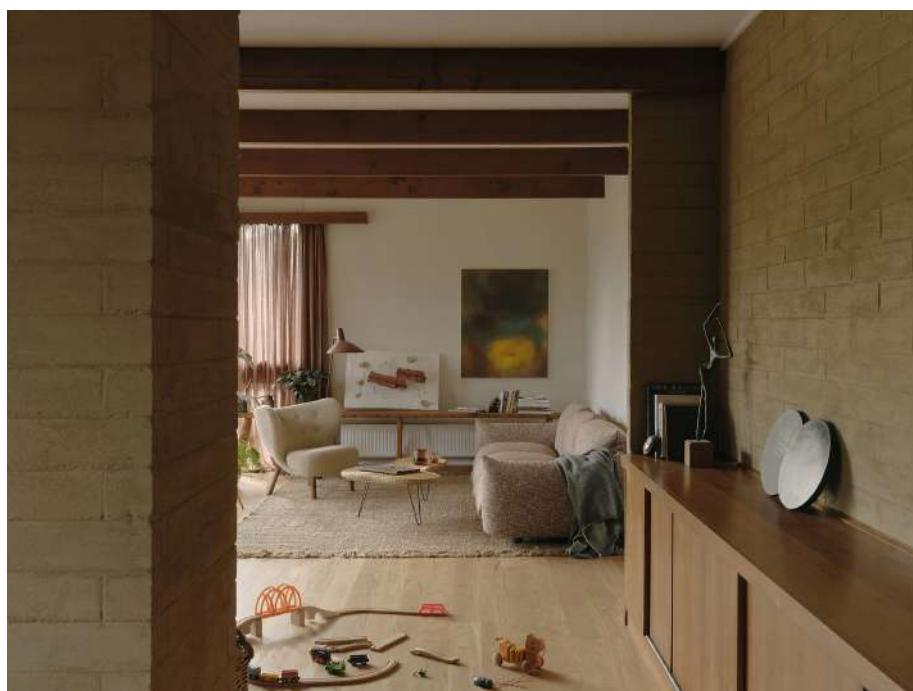
Commendations:

Fitzroy North Terrace by Clare Cousins Architects (VIC)

Northside House by Wellard Architects (VIC)

The Redoubtable by Virginia Kerridge Architect (NSW)

2023 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



Sustainability

Monty Sibbel by Nuud Studio (VIC)

Jury citation: The words “refresh,” “renew” and “refurbish” don’t wholly elucidate the new state of this wonderfully crafted home. This careful rehabilitation of a 1970s home honours and elevates the original design, the lived experience of the home and the environment that it sits in.

Honest and hand-built, homes of this era can feel ephemeral, and many exist on borrowed time. But those who have lived in similar dwellings will feel a warm appreciation for this considerate renovation, which will steward the house into a new era. This is a project that authenticates the sustainable message of repair over rebuild. Resisting the urge to extend down, up or out, the architect-owners have attentively and deliberately ensured that this home delivers a new standard for comfort, bettering the performance of its contemporaries as well as new builds.

This sensitive restoration rectifies the lacklustre environmental performance of the original structure, enabling better quality of living. The owners are to be commended for their significant efforts to bring new life to existing elements, such as replacing glazing but preserving original hardwood frames. The home has been converted to all-electric power, cavity walls have been properly insulated, new inclusions have been consciously selected and waste has been minimized. Respectfully restored original handmade elements are paired with beautifully crafted new details, achieving a home that is sure to stand the continual test of time.

Commendations:

19 Waterloo Street by SJB (NSW)

Farrier Lane House by MDC Architects (WA)

Haines Street by Foomann Architects (VIC)

Off Grid House by Archier (VIC)

Park House Northcote by DiMase Architects (VIC)

2023 HOUSES AWARDS WINNERS



Emerging Architecture Practice
Saha (NSW, Pictured: Balmain House)

Jury citation: Saha is an emerging Sydney-based practice comprising Harry Catterns and Sascha Solar-March.

In a short period of time, Saha has produced a remarkable and refined portfolio of work that shows the confidence and restraint of a practice with a clear sense of purpose. Quiet, poetic and understated, their buildings seem embedded in place and time. In particular, the jury found their treatment of interstitial space exemplary, as they anticipate and allow room for different uses on the thresholds of their architecture.

It is no surprise to learn that both Harry and Sascha have had hands-on experience in the building industry. Their work expresses the craft of construction and possesses a materiality that shows a respect for and understanding of the maker. Details are direct and purposeful and appear to have an effortless elegance.

These are architects who have a firm understanding of “measure,” able to clearly determine when enough is enough. Projects demonstrate the practice’s maturity and confidence to pare back an idea to its core – there is nowhere to hide with this type of architecture, which requires a skilful hand.

The jury also applauded Saha’s commitment to high-quality, attainable and economical buildings. The results bring to mind the words of Charles and Ray Eames: “the best for the most for the least.” The future looks exciting for this young practice.

Commendations:
Office Mi-Ji (VIC)
Oscar Sainsbury Architects (VIC)

THE PINNACLE OF
RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

**HOUSES
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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.

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