



OPEN HOME PLANNER

Take the hassle out of home-hunting with Inspection Planner. You can even access the Inspection Planner on your iPhone. Go to Domain.com.au/planner

The true value of owning an

The architects are happy, but does a prize add to your sale price? **Susan Wellings** reports.

When Sydney architect Virginia Kerridge stepped up last night to receive the prize for the Australian house of the year in the inaugural national Houses Awards, she was thrilled.

Designing and overseeing the building of the spectacular house around an original bushranger's stone cottage in country NSW out of recycled ironbark, with roofs tilting towards the mountains beyond, had taken at least three years of her life. Yet in such a remote location, it was only ever likely to be viewed by a small handful of people.

"You spend so much time doing these things, it's nice to be able to share them with others," she says. "It's wonderful to be recognised for something like this."

Winners are always gridders but exactly who benefits the most from the variety of awards handed out for houses every year? Is it just those who design or build the houses, or is there a commensurate upside for those who commission, buy, live in and eventually sell the houses on?

"For architects, it's the peer recognition that's so valuable," the president of the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) NSW, Matthew Pullinger, says. "Winning an award is one of the greatest celebrations of the culture of design."

"But there's also value for the owner. They're the one benefiting from the qualities, like the balance of amenity and space and light, that won it the award. As well, the fact that real estate agents will always advertise it as award-winning, and the award is reported in the media, means there must be some commodity around it, although it's hard to put a notional dollar value on it."

The chief executive of the Real Estate Institute of NSW, Tim McKibbin, agrees an award adds value to a house that is instantly reflected in its price. "It's another form of marketing," he says. "That vindication by an independent



Kings of the castles ... (from left) Domenic Alvaro's futuristic design was highly commended in the Houses Awards; the interior and exterior of the house of the year winner by Virginia Kerridge. Photos: Marcel Aucar, Trevor Mein

AND THE WINNERS ARE ...

- ▶ The Houses Awards, organised by Architecture Media, which publishes *Houses* magazine, were held for the first time last night. The Australian house of the year category was won by Sydney's Virginia Kerridge for her house in country NSW. Sydney architect Domenic Alvaro won two high commendations for his futuristic small house in Surry Hills.
- ▶ The Australian Institute of Architects' NSW Awards were presented on July 1, with this year's Wilkinson award for residential buildings going to Marsh Cashman Koilloos Architects for a house at Darling Point (on our cover). State winners continue to the national awards in November.

- ▶ The Master Builders Association NSW awards are presented in September each year, with the national awards in October. Last year's NSW winner was Elvis Mardini of Mardini Constructions for a house at Freshwater.
- ▶ The Housing Industry Association NSW awards are in October each year, with the nationals in May. The NSW house of the year was won by RW Stidwill Constructions for a house on Scotland Island.
- ▶ The Think Brick Awards are in August every year, and last year's Horbury Hunt Award's residential winner was the recycled clay dry-pressed-brick Garden House at Bellevue Hill by the project team of Durbach Block Architects, GNC Quality, Ian Knox Bricklaying and Simpson Design Associates.

external body would increase a property's notoriety and attract more people to compete to purchase it, which would usually drive the price up."

While winning an award might be a great selling feature, it's impossible to say what dollar value it might add, the managing director of National Property Valuers, Max Nevermann, says.

"I would say it would help sell a property and might increase its value but there's never been that analysis done," he says. "For that, you'd need two identical properties on similar sites selling at the same time - and the beauty of an award-winning house is that it's generally one of a kind."

On the downside, the kind of house that wins awards usually costs a great deal more to design and build - from \$3000 a square metre, compared with

\$1100 a square metre to \$1200 a square metre for a project home, according to the general manager of valuers Herron Todd White, Michael McNamara. "So while you've spent extra to get an award-winning house, and you'll be operating at the premium end of the market, can you be sure you'll get that money back when you sell?" he says.

Most architects would argue the opposite: that a great, and eventually award-winning, design would add enormous value to any project.

Woods Bagot principal Domenic Alvaro last night won two high commendations in the Houses Awards after buying three car spaces on a corner in Surry Hills and building a five-storey house above it. This month, the property also won two awards in the NSW AIA awards.

"As soon as we won, we were told the value of that house had

immediately gone up," Alvaro says. "There's so much value an architect can add to a project with good design. I've never seen a client unhappy at the end of a valuation once the project is finished. Some will even show the design to a real estate agent first to check on its resale value before work begins."

THE GOOD, THE BAD

For some clients, the benefits can be a foregone conclusion. Margaret Mezzani, 50, a company secretary, engaged builder Elvis Mardini of Mardini Constructions to turn one large old house, built in the early 1900s in Artarmon, into two modern four-bedroom, four-bathroom houses while retaining and restoring many of their historical features.

When he was awarded the title of master builder of the year late last year, she immediately decided that,

instead of renting them out, she would capitalise on his name by selling one - if not both - on completion this month. She wasn't keen to reveal how much she spent on the project.

"He did such beautiful work, using many of the old craftsmen's techniques, so precise and with such attention to detail - I knew they would be worth a lot more," she says. "With the award, people know the quality is there, they know it's going to last and there have been no short cuts. They'll have the confidence of knowing it's a quality product and will be willing to pay for that."

The other benefit of that award is that the number of inquiries to the title-holder tends to double overnight, the executive director of the Master Builders Association of NSW, Brian Seidler, says.



Stunning Hawkesbury Riverfront

6 Titles - 21 Hectares - Private Setting
Expressions of Interest



- Surrounded by crown land
- Just over an hour to the Sydney CBD
- Easy vehicle access to the river
- 21ha (approx 54 acres)
- 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 2 car garage
- 2 car shed

Open for Inspection
Saturday 23rd July 10.30am - 11.30am
996 West Portland Road,
Lower Portland, NSW



McGraths Hill 02 4587 8855
North Richmond 02 4571 2500

**DomainTV**

See more of Domenic Alvaro's award-winning five-storey house in property editor Stephen Nicholls's video.
Go to domain.com.au

HOUSES
JULY 16-17, 2011

award winner

LILYFIELD CREATION IS 'GOBSMACKING'



Every time Chris Commens walks into his award-winning Lilyfield house, he's taken aback by its grandeur, style and sheer audacity. Built on a wedge-shaped former industrial site on a main road, what was once considered an unbuildable block, it turned out a stunning three-storey, three-bedroom house that, in 2003, won the prestigious Royal Australian Institute of Architects' merit award. "They carved out an enormous amount of sandstone to build it, and it's very dramatic," says Commens, 65, a dermatologist who bought the house in 2004 from architect Peter Tonkin who designed it with Ellen Woolley. "The roof elevation catches all the

northerly light and that cascades right through the house, and you can see horizons everywhere. It's a bit of a gobsmacker." The 190-square-metre vacant site was bought by Tonkin for \$174,000 in 1999. He then spent about \$720,000 to design and build the award-winning house that Commens (pictured) subsequently bought for \$1,115,000. Now, McGrath Inner West estimates it to be worth \$1.5 million to \$1.6 million. "The fact that it had won a prize didn't really influence us at all," Commens says. "But the things we loved about the house were the very reasons for which it won the award. Those were the features that made it so interesting."

And it's the same with the Housing Industry Association Awards, chief executive Graham Wolfe adds. "They bring the winning builders more recognition and the award pleases clients significantly because they realise that they're sitting in a better home that is highly regarded when it comes to be sold," Wolfe says. On the flip side, some architects have found they end up getting less work when they win a prestigious award, as clients fear they might be too expensive. Also, there can be the problem that when they've designed an award-winning house to suit the needs of the current owner, it might not be so attractive to later buyers. "Houses have to suit the next generation of people, too; they outlive us," says Camilla Block, of Durbach Block Architects, who was a

jury member on the Houses Awards, the new awards run by residential architecture magazine *Houses*. "There's a lot of debate at the moment about how flexible housing can be." Fellow judge and AIA national president Brian Zulaikha, the founding partner of multi-award-winning architectural practice Tonkin Zulaikha Greer, says that while fabulous architect-designed houses might still be the preserve of the wealthy, awards still have an aspirational – and educational – value. "For an architect, your reputation is enhanced and it gives people more confidence to give you bigger homes to design," he says. "In Virginia's case, when people come to her and say they want something special, they know she's an award winner and she can give them that."



DESIGN TAKES OFF

The Price O'Reilly house in Redfern won multiple awards for its architectural team of Ian Moore and Tina Engelen and its white aircraft-hanger-like design was considered a landmark in Sydney architecture. Its owner, Kim Landy, isn't so sure whether those prizes will lure buyers in the future. "If I ever sold this place, there would be only about four buyers," he says. "For a house twice the size of a normal terrace, you'd expect three bedrooms – yet you get only one and a loft space... It's effectively a gratuitous use of space." The 1995 house, built on a vacant site for \$350,000 (excluding consultants' fees), was commissioned by a photographer, Landy, now 55 and a retired financial planner, bought it in 1997 for \$730,000. Because of all its white space and the fame of winning the RAIANSW Chapter Merit Award, an interiors award in New Zealand and Britain's AR+D Award for emerging practices, it gets hired constantly for photo shoots at about \$1500 a pop. It's difficult to know whether the awards for the architects' firm which was bought out by Ian Moore Architects have added to the value of the house. Jane Schumann of Di Jones, who first sold it through Bickmore-Hutt, estimates the value would have more than doubled from '97. "It's the kind of house where you have to fit into the design," Landy says. "But I guess if you want something different, there are compromises you make."

Smart Buys

Toby Johnstone



NEWTOWN
4 PROSPECT ST
\$680,000+



With the median house price in Newtown up by 12 per cent in the past 12 months, getting your foot in the door can be tricky. This property on 118 sq m is in an ideal location, between the University of Sydney and Camperdown Memorial Park. It has a side courtyard and a sky-lit bathroom. With a nod from council you could put in a second level and capitalise on its inner ring location. **Inspect** Thu and Sat, 2-2.30pm. **Agent** BresicWhitney Estate Agents, 0405 227 723. **Auction** July 30. **More photos @ Domain.com.au**



BOTANY
1673 BOTANY RD
\$665,000+



For those who are not frequent flyers or plane enthusiasts, the proximity to the airport may be a turn off. However, on 215 sq m there is value here. Renovated last year, this stylish single-level house has blackbutt timber floors, built-ins in two of the bedrooms and a modern gas kitchen. There is room for the children to play in the large, level-lawn backyard or alternatively Sir Joseph Banks Park is just down the road. **Inspect** Sat, 10-10.30am. **Agent** McGrath Coogee, 0416 713 721. **Auction** July 30. **More photos @ Domain.com.au**



DARLINGTON
326 WILSON ST
\$680,000+



This dilapidated Victorian terrace 200 metres from the University of Sydney is good value for the right buyer. Listed for the first time in 30 years, this property on 76 sq m is in need of an immediate renovation but with the hub of King Street close it's sitting pretty. Investors note: the last property to sell on this street was 13 sq m smaller and fetched \$810,000, so if you can fix this one up cheaply you might make a quick buck. **Inspect** By appointment. **Agent** Tracy Yap Realty, 0415 812 688. **More photos @ Domain.com.au**



ASHBURY
53 CHEVIOT ST
\$700,000+



Built in 1994, this Californian bungalow is set on 301 sq m on a street with potential. Down the road a larger bungalow with four bedrooms sold for \$1,278,000 earlier in the year. This house has the bonus of a new kitchen and a large verandah, which steps down to a well-maintained lawn. A good option for a young family with both Croydon and Canterbury parks close by. **Inspect** Sat, 11-11.30am. **Agent** McGrath Leichhardt, 0415 901 279. **Auction** August 6. **More photos @ Domain.com.au**

Stunning Views, Luxury Finishes, 2 & 3 Bedrooms from \$369,000.
Watermark at the Entrance, the Very Best of Coastal Living.

16 SOLD!

watermark

first national REAL ESTATE
The Entrance 02 4384 8700 Les Rogan 0438 214 094 Philip Morris 0434 089 188

130-230pm Sat & Sun or by appointment, 1-9 Beach Street, The Entrance www.mywatermark.com.au

MERAL 1009