

{PROJECT}

BALMORAL HOUSE

{ARCHITECT}

MADELEINE BLANCHFIELD ARCHITECTS



BELLEVARDE

Welcome to Building with Belvedere: Insights.

In this edition, we hear about an outstanding house in Mosman.

A long, narrow block that abuts many properties presented the opportunity to create something new and quite special. Belvedere's Adam Howe collaborated closely with the owners and Madeleine Blanchfield Architects to produce a place the owners call their ultimate forever house.

We hear from the owners and Madeleine about their experience working with Adam and the Belvedere team on this exciting project.

We hope you enjoy their stories.

As always, we welcome any questions, feedback, or opportunities to discuss your next project.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John Fielding', written in a cursive, flowing style.

JOHN FIELDING
AND THE BELVEDERE TEAM





Having lived in so many houses over the years, we knew exactly what we wanted with this one. This would be our ultimate forever house.

We asked Madeleine Blanchfield to design a place with all the living spaces and the main bedroom on one level, a Japanese garden-courtyard, an entrance that made a statement, and to make sure we capitalised on the northerly sun and views.

It started with getting the right block. Many of the blocks in Mosman run east-west but we managed to find this property that runs ninety degrees to the others and faces due north. We get the sun and the privacy with water views and lots of greenery.

Bellevarde's Adam Howe built our previous house in Newport and we were so glad to have him in charge of this project. He is just the best builder. Amazing. He has the respect of all the contractors and staff as well as the architects. He knows exactly what he's doing. He's always calm and he's very practical. It takes a certain skill to interpret what the architect designs and turn it into something that can be made practically. Adam is all about good and functional solutions that are also beautiful. He's ever-mindful of the fact that you're going to be living here.

I like a minimalist design aesthetic. We chose to restrict the main materials to wood, marble and concrete, primarily in black and white. The pantry and much of the storage space is hidden away behind fine joinery. With such simplicity of form, there's more emphasis on the finish.

Bellevarde, together with Sam Harris from Square Peg Joinery, did a superb job.

Many of the parts are custom designed and made and Adam took charge of that process with his usual aplomb. The handle to open the door of the cupboard where the fridge is took over a month to get right, with different iterations finally leading to something that was elegant but would let you pull the heavy fridge door with enough leverage.

Again, in the bedroom, we wanted to ensure that many things would be out of sight. The phone charging area becomes a bedside table, the toothbrush power points are tucked away. We would decide on the functional things we wanted, Madeleine would design, and Adam implemented. It was a great synergy.

Adam's input is evident in a thousand beautiful and well-crafted details. The headrest in the bath is one of my favourites. It sounds like a simple thing but it took some thoughtful refinement and time to get the angle just right so it would be comfortable. Adam knows all the best tradespeople, like the talented stonemason who made the bath itself. The handles for the heavy bathroom drawers are another triumph. I wanted to be able to open them from the top instead of the bottom. In consultation with Adam, Sam, and the stonemason we devised an elegant recessed handle at just the right height.

The entire build was marked by this type of attention to detail from Bellevarde. We didn't face any major challenges, just refinements and making the seemingly small things perfect. The stairs, for

example, look effortless but required a lot of clever engineering and fine joinery to achieve that floating effect.

Bellevarde recommended Michael Bates who designed the succulents garden on the upper level and we're very happy with it. The lower garden lawn area was previously a little narrower and Michael suggested we increase the width. As avid golfers, we added a golf hut with a simulator, putting green, and a replica of the famous "road hole" bunker from St Andrews Old Course.

It's such fun to spend time here. We're delighted with this place and to have been involved, together with the architects, in such a rewarding collaboration with Bellevarde.











MADELEINE BLANCHFIELD

{Architect}

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I've known the site manager, Belvedere's Adam Howe, for a long time. He was the foreman on my first solo project 12 years ago. He hasn't changed a bit and that's a great thing. Adam is thorough and has an absolute can-do attitude. He never stresses out. He takes everything in his stride—just a great person to work with. One of Adam's strengths is he earns the client's respect and trust very quickly. We have some very sophisticated and clever clients and they need to know that they can have difficult conversations but also just that their builder has their best interest at heart. Adam gives them that confidence.

Being a long narrow site, there are as many as ten neighbours who adjoin the property on the perpendicular—so it's got more complexity in terms of the view sharing and approvals than most projects. In practical terms, there was a house on the site that wasn't particularly old. It had been designed by a very good architect but it just wasn't built well and it was structured around a tree that eventually died. We started out looking at doing some renovation work but the more we delved into it and started to understand the sort of condition of structure and infrastructure, it became apparent that a lot of rebuilding would need to happen. That gave us the opportunity to use the site in a more holistic way as we weren't working around the old tree. It let us maximise the views and the openness of it and we were able to pull in a lot of light with the addition of skylights and courtyards.

Aesthetically, the owners wanted to have a clean simple space and to incorporate some of their Japanese heritage in a subtle way. The internal courtyard with its true Japanese garden is one of the

standout features. It's not that you necessarily go into it but I think it's about what it does for the surrounding spaces. It gives you hints of what's coming before you actually arrive into that wonderful headland view. It was nice to have someone else come in and do something very special and quite unique that we probably wouldn't have done for another client.

The garden was very steep but together with Michael Bates we came up with a plan to create a more level lawn that ended up being a huge bonus to the client. What was previously unusable back garden became the location of the golf/sports shed. It was a quirky thing that started as a bath house and we went to town and designed this incredible structure that we absolutely loved but after some iterations and budgetary considerations, it became a golf hut. It's great that it did happen, albeit with a different purpose. It's a distinctive feature and it bookends the site to make it feel more contained and private. It absolutely draws the owners and their friends down to that end of the garden which is a place they might not go as much otherwise.

The level of, I think perfection is the only word I can use, in the detailing and the construction is remarkable. It oozes perfection. I remember going to the house-warming party and another architect said it was the best house he'd ever been in and that's not all design, it's in the execution—those flawless junctions and the thoughtfulness of where tiles meet in perfect alignment with the columns. It's that sort of thing that Belvedere do so well that gives it a sense of opulence not because of the materials but just that it's so beautifully executed.





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At Belvelarde, we have four principles that have served us well in ensuring we maintain standards across every job.

{First Principle}
FIND THE BEST PEOPLE

It is about searching until we find the people who share our love for building houses as well as they can be built.

That's what Belvelarde is—a team of us who just want to build extraordinary houses. It is an attitude that can't be driven or constrained by external factors. It's innate.

We employ apprentices to artisans and experienced site managers—the rest are tried and trusted contractors. Many of our people have been with us for over 20 years and a few for more than 40.

{Second Principle}
KEEP ON LEARNING

Everything we have learned in building some of this country's most complex and challenging houses is formalised in our 200-page Belvelarde Construction Manual.

It details step-by-step instructions on how best to perform every critical task.

It is on every site and is constantly reviewed and updated as our knowledge grows and as building techniques, materials, equipment, and technologies, evolve.

We visit completed builds and catalogue the best of each project to continually improve and refine our methods. We also keep a library of our favourite architecture and building publications to stay informed of the latest developments and learn from others.



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{Third Principle}
FORM A BUILDING TEAM

It takes three key players to create a great house: owner, architect and builder. That is why, on each site, we form the building team headed by our site manager who lives the project start to finish. The trio meets regularly to review, discuss, and guide every aspect of the project. This ensures everyone knows just where we are, where we are going next—and ensures that the team make the best decisions.

It is the best way to deliver an extraordinary house that only ever costs what it should cost, and brings great joy to all of us.

{Fourth Principle}
MAINTAIN THE HOUSE

This came from listening to owners. They asked us to take care of their houses as well as we built them. So we formed our own specialised Belvelarde Maintenance division. It benefits from access to all information about the build. Plus we can often call on the very tradespeople who built it.

Each new home has its own maintenance manager, who thoroughly understands the house and cares deeply about maintaining it to the highest standards.

According to owners and architects, we deliver the most efficient and skilled post completion care they have ever worked with—indeed several have asked us to take care of other properties we didn't build.

We welcome any questions, feedback or opportunities to discuss your prospective projects.

{Construction}	2018—2019
{Interviews}	Hamish Spencer
{Design}	Pidgeon Ward
{Photography}	Michael Nicholson
{Paper}	Colorplan, Knight Smooth
{Printing}	Adams Print

