Tree House (NSW)

Lisa Saville and Steven Isaacs

Commended: Residential Interior Design

Commended: Environmentally Sustainable Design

The aptly named Tree House in Sydney's Hunters Hill explores how design can form a frame to a natural and untouched setting through materials, palettes and structural features. White walls are timeless backdrops for leafy settings – they don't distract attention away from the scenery.

Designers Lisa Saville's and Steven Isaacs' will to work with nature is also found in the materials used – sustainable, recycled, low-toxic and cost-effective materials chosen for their minimal impact on the greater environment.

The finishes are non-hazardous and therefore create a child-friendly area. The glues and paints chosen have low-toxic emissions and a natural, food-grade oil was used to seal the floorboards.

Commended for Residential Interior Design, fluidity is achieved throughout the space. The living room's façade slides open and stacks onto a steel frame cantilevered out the side of the building, enabling a seamless integration of the indoor and outdoor. The roof appears to hover unsupported over the interior.

Expansive windows allow maximum penetration of light and highlight the connection between nature and the inside. The elevation of the building takes advantage of the natural breeze through the tree canopy.

As winner of the award for Environmentally Sustainable Design, the space is also very environmentally savvy – the roof harnesses rainwater for household needs.

Saville and Isaacs chose materials that minimise embodied energy – second-hand and recycled timbers internally and plantation timbers externally.

The house shows how boundaries between the natural setting and interior can be blurred – from open living spaces down to the environmentally friendly materials – creating harmony with nature.