



POWERFUL AND INSPIRING

Resort gymnasium explores bush shed heritage

The use of reclaimed timber as an exposed structural element that exhibits strength, power and beauty is a major focal point of a new gymnasium at one of Australia's premier health and lifestyle retreats.

Gwinganna, an Aboriginal word meaning 'lookout', was opened in 2006 on Queensland's Gold Coast, high up on a plateau in a hidden region of the Tallebudgera Valley. The 170 ha setting is also of colonial significance, including unique buildings such as the first Tweed Head's Methodist Church and original Queenslander-style homes, taken there piece-by-piece by previous owners.

The retreat's gymnasium project began in 2005 with the conversion of an existing ironclad helicopter hangar. But a much larger (1500 m²) and more impressive facility designed by Pouné Parsanejad of Pouné Design now sits adjacent to the hangar. It is a purpose-built, state-of-the-art facility with views extending to the ocean.

The building has a large ground level-housing cardiovascular training machines, weight-training facilities and offices – which opens out to an extensive deck with a 25 m rainwater swimming pool. Internally, stairs leading to a central mezzanine floor take the participant to the upper-level private personal training zone and Australia's first Kinesis training area.

Parsanejad wanted to create a building that juxtaposed resort-style luxury with the understated flair of the Australian bush shed prototype. "The new building needed to have a scale befitting that of the large helicopter hangar, which it would closely embrace. The building, like the machines and activities it would house, needed to be powerful, yet inspiring and stimulating."

Reclaimed hardwood timbers sourced from local wharfs, bridges and old buildings are a key building and finishing material. "Not only [does] this resource add richness, beauty, warmth and power to the project, it allows it to be an example of innovative sustainable design, which is lacking in so many resorts and spas throughout the world," says Parsanejad.

Architect and engineer worked closely converting the salvaged ironbark (above F34) and remilled bridge girders to construct a series of colossal exposed trusses and columns that successfully accommodate the double-volume heights and expansive spans of the design concept. Timber elements are particularly effective over the two side areas around the mezzanine, where the considerable heights lend themselves to the use of massive trusses. The mezzanine roof was designed in steel framing because of the ceiling height limitation.

OPPOSITE PAGE LEFT Stairs of remilled bridge girders leading to a central mezzanine and Australia's first Kinesis training area

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP RIGHT The ceiling lining and floor are a salvaged ironbark and spotted gum blend, remilled and kiln dried

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM RIGHT The building skin features vertically laid corrugated steel and horizontal shiplapped spotted gum, recycled from split and wire-brushed floor joists

THIS PAGE Structural timber elements were designed to be exposed as architectural features

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The Gwinganna retreat gym and pool complex exhibits strength and power



Colossal and powerful – resort-style luxury within a ‘bush shed’ prototype

All structural elements were designed to be exposed as architectural features, set against a rich background of a ceiling lined with a salvaged iron-bark and spotted gum blend, remilled and kiln dried.

All ceiling treatment is mirrored on the floor, using the same timber in 130-mm-wide boards coated to catch the sunlight pouring in from the large windows. The timber floor flows smoothly to the expansive pool deck featuring spotted gum with a blue stone coping throughout.

The building skin uses a combination of vertically laid corrugated steel and horizontal shiplapped spotted gum, recycled from split and wire-brushed floor joists. The corrugated metal reminiscent of the Australian bush shed is warmed by the timber cladding that was inspired by the Queenslander homes found on the land. What results is an economically constructed building that, like its wool store ancestors, will be around for another 100 years or more.

Timber schedule

Trusses and exposed structure: ironbark salvaged and remilled from bridge girders (Western Queensland), resawn from 450 diam. Girders, wire brushed and ground finish.

Stair treads: remilled from bridge girders 450 diam. Ironbark dressed all round.

Ceilings and flooring: remilled, kiln dried, reclaimed ironbark and spotted gum blend. Ceiling lining in 80-mm-wide strips, flooring in 130-mm-wide boards.

Decking: spotted gum salvaged from 120 m x 50 mm floor joists split and wire brushed.

Handrails: ironbark salvaged and remilled from bridge girders, resawn from 450 diam. girders, wire brushed and ground finish.

Facade cladding: spotted gum salvaged from 120 m x 50 mm floor joists split and wire brushed and painted.

Gwinganna gymnasium won the Residential Class 2 (including resorts and apartments) category of the 2008 Australian Timber Design Awards announced in November. Stage 1 of the resort was featured in the Autumn 2008 issue of timberDESIGN.

PROJECT Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat – gymnasium, Tallebudgera Valley Qld
ARCHITECT/INTERIOR DESIGN Pouné Design
STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS Utech Engineers
BUILDER Peter Friske
HARDWOOD SUPPLIER Australian Salvage
WOOD PRODUCTS Ironbark, spotted gum and jarrah
PHOTOGRAPHY Brett Broadman, Paul Broben