

Architectural Excellence

IN THE SOUTH EAST AWARDS

2005



Robert Simeoni Architect - Woolamai House, Cape Woolamai

The Premier Award was for outstanding architectural design in relation to the Woolamai House project, undertaken for Robert Simeoni's high profile client, Bruno Grollo.

The Awards, created to highlight design excellence in Melbourne's south east, were presided over by three eminent judges - Professor Catherin Bull (Melbourne University), Professor Leon van Schaik (RMIT University) and architectural photographer, John Gollings.



Architect: Robert Simeoni

The winning entry, Woolamai House, was the first house constructed on Phillip Island, back in 1876. The handsome farmhouse with turret and associated farm buildings, occupies 20 acres of beachfront, overlooking San Remo and the Phillip Island bridge in one direction, and the Eastern Passage to Bass Strait in the other.

Retired Grocon giant, Bruno Grollo, noted for ambitious sky scrapers, bought the property

in poor condition in the 1980s as a family holiday house. Twenty five years later, he was ready to put his own inimitable stamp on it. Bruno wanted the farmhouse restored and a new, modern structure to be constructed adjacent to the existing building.

Robert Simeoni had worked on other houses for Bruno Grollo but this was a peach of a commission. "We documented the homestead fully, then, in consultation with Heritage Victoria, we pulled it apart and rebuilt it," Simeoni said. The architect describes Woolamai House as "an inward looking Victorian farmhouse", not ornate but having "an ecclesiastical feeling". The farmhouse has been modernised - with integrity and practicality.

Awards judge, Professor Leon van Schaik described why he decided on Woolamai House: "It tells such a good story about architectural excellence, how the best of the old is complemented by the best of the new. It is very much of our age, technically impressive - the roof deck [of the new structure] is the largest post-stressed slab in the southern hemisphere. So the message we wanted to reinforce is that in architecture, the best of the old and the best of the new live together very well".

**Robert Simeoni
Pty Ltd Architects
- recipient of
the inaugural
Chairman's
Premier Award
at the 2005
Architectural
Excellence in the
South East
Awards.**

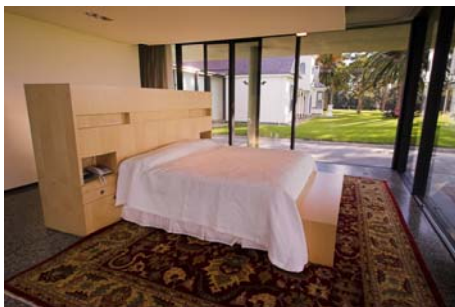
Architectural Excellence



Prior + Cheney Architects - Best Public Project - Beaconsfield Community Complex, Beaconsfield

The new wing is reached along a high ceilinged corridor, which can be blocked off by a wall-sized door. Taking this walk is to leap a century, from the 19th into the simplicity of the 21st.

The bedroom of the new wing, separated from the living space by a small courtyard, appears to project into the garden, offering the peace and privacy of the lawns, views of the sea and hills. Privacy in a glass case? Simeoni shows it's possible.



Bedroom of new wing, Woolamai House

The project took two years to complete, though Simeoni continues to be involved. "Bruno is respectful of the original concept and calls us in, for example, currently over the design of rugs." During our visit, he was overseeing removal of the huge screen doors that needed repair where the wire had torn. Like a proud father, he takes more and more photographs, recording where the winter morning light falls around his wonderful creation.

Robert Simeoni said 80 per cent of his work is domestic architecture, but he's done the full gamut including small industrial and commercial work, additions to churches, and he's just finished another beach house, in Southern NSW. High prices for land at seaside locations have encouraged more people to engage architects - and he's not complaining. As for Woolamai House, he's relieved to have brought it off. "To have a happy client and a happy Heritage Victoria is very satisfying."

The success of the inaugural Awards has imbued the organisers - South East Development (Melbourne) ACC - with a determination to make the *Architectural Excellence in the South East Awards* in 2006 an even bigger and better event.

The Awards are open to architect designed structures (including landscapes) completed in the south east region of Melbourne in the past three years; (the south east region comprises the municipalities of Bass Coast, Cardinia, Casey, Greater Dandenong, Frankston and Mornington Peninsula).

To register for updates on the 2006 Awards, please email: acc@sed.org.au or contact South East Development (Melbourne) ACC on 9793 6466.

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Category winners of the South East Development (Melbourne) ACC's *Architectural Excellence in the South East Awards* were:

Best Residential Building

John Wardle Architects
Vineyard Residence, Tuerong

Best Public Project

Prior + Cheney Architects
Beaconsfield Community Complex, Beaconsfield

Best Public Open Space

Tract Consultants Pty Ltd
Moonah Links golf development at Fingal,
Mornington Peninsula

Best Commercial or Industrial Building

Inarc Architects Pty Ltd
Planex Factory, Hallam

Best Building Conversion

NMBW Architecture Studio
Somers House, Somers

Best Building Conservation (Commercial)

Charles Steinic Design Group
Merricks General Store, Merricks

Best Building Conservation (Residential)

Robert Simeoni Pty Ltd Architects
Woolamai House, Cape Woolamai