



# Las Palmas House. Contemporary mid-century modernism.

## Background

Inspired by mid-20th century modernist architecture out of Palm Springs in California, Las Palmas at Noosa Heads is a nod to the past with an eye on the future.

### AT A GLANCE

**Project:** Las Palmas House, Noosa, Qld

**Architect:** Tim Ditchfield Architects – Oskar Booth

**Builder:** GV Emanuel Constructions

#### Main concrete elements:

- Off-form and exposed concrete walls (internal and external)
- Polished concrete floors, concrete deck roof

**Photography:** Scott Burrows

## The Challenge

The owners of this stunning waterside home on Queensland's Sunshine Coast loved the clean, linear 'desert' architecture of 1960's Palm Springs – but they also wanted a home that would stand the test of time.

## Solution/Outcome

Oskar Booth of Tim Ditchfield Architects describes Las Palmas as a contemporary take on Palm Springs mid-century modernism, capturing its spirit without slavishly mimicking original examples like the iconic Kaufmann Desert House.

This particular style of architecture is famous for its use of raw and simple materials, offset with splashes of colour in furniture and other coatings.

It's a style that is very much about letting the palette of materials speak for itself, Booth says.

"In the 50's and 60's, exponents were exploring new, lightweight materials like steel roofs and members," he says.

"We've broken away from that pattern. We wanted this house to last for 120 years instead of the usual 40 or so that houses typically last in Australia."

With this in mind, the design team and the clients embraced concrete as the 'blank canvas' that would not only allow the other features and materials to 'pop' - true to the Palm Springs style - but would ensure Las Palmas created its own architectural legacy.

The home makes extensive use of exposed off-form concrete walls, polished concrete floors and concrete deck roofs over the main body of the house.

“The concrete deck roofs are just so robust and durable,” Booth says.

“You can get very flat roof falls with concrete that you just can’t achieve with other materials.”

Two types of off-form finish have been used on the walls.

The external walls facing the street feature a rough-sawn, Oregon timber board finish, providing texture and relief on what are otherwise relatively large expanses of concrete.



*“The concrete deck roofs are just so robust and durable”*

Oskar Booth, Tim Ditchfield Architects

On other exposed walls, particularly those inside the home, a smooth off-form finish has been used – albeit with the board lines and bolt holes clearly and deliberately expressed.

The standard grey concrete floors have been honed to expose the aggregate, a locally sourced river pebble. This exposed aggregate gives the floors a real ‘warmth’ and ties in nicely with the locally sourced stone used to clad the chimney.

Booth says the thermal mass of the concrete structural elements - combined with passive design features like the wider eaves - helps maintain a fairly constant internal temperature through summer and winter.

But in terms of sustainability outcomes, the benefit of using a durable material like concrete is that it ensures Las Palmas will stand the test of time.

And tide, for that matter. Las Palmas backs on to the Noosa River, and although it’s built well above the tidal flood level, should the worst ever happen, any damage would be largely superficial.

“It’s a pretty resilient house because there’s almost zero plasterboard on the ground floors. If it flooded it would be a case of replacing cabinetry and some carpet in the sunken living area, and that would be about it,” Booth says.

In fact, the overarching simplicity of the design and its concrete structural solution means superficial elements like cabinetry and fittings can be changed in the future to give the home a refresh, without the need for significant structural modifications that might otherwise compromise the integrity of the original architectural vision.

That’s one of the things that makes Las Palmas so special. It’s a house that can adapt over time without ever losing touch with its roots.

### BENEFITS OF USING CONCRETE:

- Strength and durability
- Aesthetics
- Sustainability
- Flood resilience