



In demand: Architect Vince Squillace shows off his \$12 million design at 19 Addison Road, Manly



An architect's perspective

Vince Squillace deliberately targeted the highest end of the residential property market and, by doing so, made his business recession-proof.

He has catered for the ultra consumers – buyers of residential property worth \$3 million or more – for 14 years, long enough to endure a few market cycles.

"We're not in the mass market by any stretch of the imagination," says Squillace, principal of Squillace Architects. "I, fortunately, have steered the business away from mass production so I've avoided the downturns.

"My business has been moulded around creating unique work characterised by high quality ... This end of the market is cycle-proof. In all markets and all cycles, there are always people out there willing to pay for good design."

Squillace typically designs smaller projects, either single luxury houses or apartment complexes of between three and 10 units, although he has designed blocks of up to 77 units.

Based in Sydney and with 15 staff, most of Squillace's work has been in his home city. He has also designed some Brisbane residences.

His recent works have included designs for projects at 92 and 110 Bower Street, Manly, for developer Savage Property Enterprises.

Designing properties for ultra consumers is a different experience, Squillace says. They "want to see real design and real quality. They don't want to see 'fake' design."

Real design means longevity and a unique quality. "They don't want to see an approach where the design has mirrored the latest trends in the five trendiest magazines of the month." Ultra consumers are not passive in how they approach the design

of an apartment or house they have bought for millions of dollars. But they value good design and rarely nitpick.

"In all cases, the buyers have wanted to meet with me before they exchanged [deeds]," Squillace says. "I think the buyers want to ... get inside my head and understand what's behind the design."

He spends up to three or four times longer designing a project intended for the ultra consumer market, which contributes to a project's expense.

More time also translates into bigger fees, which means fewer projects.

"Spending a lot of time on a project puts you in a position where only this type of project can afford you," Squillace says, adding he wouldn't have it any other way.

"Architecture is a labour of love. I don't want the business to be at the mass-production end where I'm administrative only. I like to roll my sleeves up and get into the design."