



ORIGINAL THINKING

Contemporary design effects overlay the Arts and Crafts features of this Melbourne home to give it a stylish new edge.

Photographs DEREK SWALWELL Words CARLI PHILIPS



This page Black framed windows and a checkerboard tiled entrance smarten up the Arts and Crafts exterior. Opposite page In the sitting room a Bitzwell 'Rivage' chair from Stylecraft and Gubi 'Grasshopper' floor lamp from Cult sit on a Supertuff 'Escape Twist' carpet in Riot. Vintage rosewood tray table. Photograph on the mantelpiece is by Mark Strizic.

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This page In the living area are Cassina ‘Utrecht’ armchairs from Calit, a ‘Bosko’ sofa from Jordan and Tacchini ‘Gage’ coffee table from Stylecraft. Tom Dixon ‘Base’ wall light from De De Ce. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Thonet ‘B9 Le Corbusier’ dining chairs surround a Ross Gardam ‘Asymmetry’ table from Stylecraft. Green carpet, Supertuft ‘Escape Twist’ in Riot, provides a link with the outdoors. ‘Tornaux’ chair from Feelgood Designs invites relaxation beside the pool.



Bringing this traditional Arts and Crafts house into the 21st century without forsaking any of its original charm required a steady hand and a balanced vision. While it was internally reorganised and new finishes, materials and fixtures introduced, Rachel Nolan of Kennedy Nolan Architects was adamant that its essence not be compromised. “It was important to allow what was already there to sing. We didn’t want to match it but rather take our cues from it, which we ultimately do when working on all alterations and additions.”

Strong elements of craft such as leadlighting were preserved, while the home’s dramatic roof pitches and palette were abstracted to form a “contemporary interpretation of Arts and Crafts expressions,” says Patrick Kennedy. Transposing the concept, graphic new wall lights by Tom Dixon with a satin-finished brass shade have replaced traditional sconces, and paint has also played a big part, with existing plasterboard features such as the fireplace frame and original detailed ceiling both painted in a soft, opaque grey. The effect of block colour over ornate mouldings is contemporary but still lets the past shine through.

In an effort to maintain the elegant ceiling height typical of the era, close attention was paid to scale. “The steel-framed bays that face the garden are overscaled and reference the double-height stone mullion window bays which were characteristic of grander Arts and Crafts homes,” says Patrick. At the rear, the living space was treated with the same level of dignity, scale and detail as the original front rooms which have been carpeted in a green wool that reflects the garden.

It took a bit of convincing not to run timber floors right through the house and, while the more public areas such as the ground-floor living zones are in spotted gum, there is a transition to carpet in the bedrooms and sitting area. “Carpet makes these spaces more comfortable, softer and quieter,” says Rachel.





This page 'Madison' pendant light from Dunlin hangs over the kitchen island. 'Zebra' bar stools from Aero Designs. Flooring in spotted gum. Opposite page In the dining area, 'B9 Le Corbusier' chairs from Thonet surround a Ross Gardam 'Asymmetry' table from Stylecraft. Tom Dixon 'Base' wall light from De De Ce. Artwork is by William Breen.





This page, clockwise from left Discipline 'Pocket' chair in the study sits in front of custom joinery with 'O' series pulls in spotted gum by Interia. Honed Carrara marble in the bathroom. Custom steel window blades offer privacy and shade in the main bedroom as well as providing architectural form to the windows. Nya Nordiska linen and wool curtains. Opposite page Steel-framed doors open to the outside. 'Fermob' bistro chairs from Costwold Furniture.



As the site's terrain slopes away to the east quite dramatically, the floor was dropped but the roof level was maintained. This "internal level change provided a physical and psychological separation," says Patrick, creating a greater connection with the garden and at the same time differentiating the home's public spaces from its more private ones.

Landscape designer Katherine Rekaris was called on to maximise the link between the house and garden to allow the young family of four to enjoy the outdoors. "The landscape design was developed to support the overall architectural concept – to make a park-like setting which utilised the existing large trees and was thematically sympathetic to the Arts and Crafts architecture, while also screening views to neighbouring buildings and remaining open to the distant landscape," says Patrick.

The property is bordered by the Yarra River to the north and great care was taken to ensure that views did not simply focus on the immediate garden, but also embraced the more expansive, far-reaching sightlines. "A country house in a park-like setting," the lawn is surrounded by 'English green' as opposed to 'Indigenous green,' with plants and moss thriving in the dappled light of canopy trees.

Bound by close neighbours on one side and a three-storey block of flats on the other, addressing privacy and light concerns was not without challenges. "A new bay which accommodates the barbeque area was sited to form a barrier to the neighbouring apartment block, while the garage forms a well-mannered edge to the garden," says Patrick. Nature also played a part, with a beautiful maple tree providing good screening.

In the first-floor main bedroom, dramatic steel window blades are both functional and decorative. "The blades extend out to give the window form and provide privacy from the block of flats. They also protect sightlines, assist with shading and embrace the views to the Dandenongs," says Rachel. "The terrain was a constraint that became an opportunity." 15

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