

HOME / MELBOURNE

True to Form



With its sharp yet modest facade and newly painted exterior, one would be forgiven for thinking that this South Yarra home is brand new; in fact, it dates back to 1972, when renowned Melbourne architect Wayne Gillespie built it as his own residence. For the current owners, the house had great appeal for its solidity and architectural merit, but it simply didn't flow or function well enough for contemporary living.

Local architecture and design collective studiofour was called on to replan the interiors, and the team adopted a holistic approach that focused on the kitchen in particular. Originally confined to a cramped corner, it has now been repositioned at the heart of the house. 'The way a family uses their kitchen today is very different from how kitchens were used back in the seventies,' says Annabelle Berryman, co-director of studiofour alongside Sarah Henry. 'Back then, kitchens were designed and used as service zones, but today more than ever they're a place for the entire family.'

Built into the kitchen's combined island and dining table is a slot for natural plantings, the bursts of greenery combining with significant visual connections to the outdoors. According to Henry, this move was central to the overall planning strategy. 'We believe we have a responsibility to make sure our projects fully explore opportunities to showcase the landscape. It's one of the most obvious ways to optimise wellbeing,' she says of the studio's core philosophy. In addition to the existing floor-to-ceiling windows, a new low-iron glass window with reflective properties was installed in the sitting room, overlooking the garden of birch trees and ivy-covered boundary walls.

The clients' brief was to preserve the home's heritage while improving the flow of light and fresh air and incorporating a green aspect. 'The clients' vision was a cost-effective renovation that would deliver all the benefits of a new home, but still achieve a high level of authenticity,' Berryman explains. Although the bones were solid, the interiors were lacklustre and dated. 'In order to give the house a clear, focused voice, we wanted to ensure that our design carried the language of the exterior though to the interiors,' she says.

Echoing the home's concrete facade is a new interior palette of cloudy grey colours in the carpet, with oak floorboards and slab basins in the bathrooms. Contrasting materials such as timber, plush rugs, *tadelakt* plaster and soft linens were selected for their tactility, warmth and patinaed qualities. Other carefully considered fittings include graphic lamps and pendants, such as Davide Groppi's Neuro suspension lamp and Hashi floor lamp, which reference the black detailing of the architecture, while round track lights nod to the existing spiral staircase.

With 110 square metres of floor area to work with, the designers sought to maximise space. The clever addition of a pocket sliding door between the kitchen and living room fosters a sense of interconnectedness and extends sight lines, while a new steel cantilevered window seat adds depth. Combined with refined furniture and thoughtful finishes, this home successfully delivers on its promise of calm and peace in an urban environment.

Text

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Melbourne-based studiofour updated this architectural gem to suit the owners' contemporary lifestyle and maximise the interiors' connection to nature. A new window in the sitting room now looks out to a wall of ivy, while the living room — outfitted with a plush Hudson sofa from Jordan, Around coffee table by Muuto and minimalist Potence wall lamp by Jean Prouvé for Vitra — is bathed in natural light



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The replanned layout places the kitchen in the heart of the home, its combined island and dining table featuring a slot for natural plantings that echo the bright, verdant views flanking the living and dining areas. Another focal point is the original spiral staircase, its floating form adding a sculptural touch



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Facing page
Hans Wegner's iconic Elbow chairs from Great Dane surround the island-table

This page
The palette of cloudy grey colours — intended to echo the home's facade — is seen here in the powder-coated steel splashback and stone worktop in the kitchen area



The designers' aim to carry the language of the exterior through to the interiors is realised throughout; in one of the bedrooms, forest green and white linens perfectly match the colours outside



In the bathroom, Davide Groppi's Neuro suspension lamp references the detailing of the home's architecture. The *tadelakt* plaster walls continue the home's grey colour scheme, which the designers say they applied to 'maximise the perception of the interior envelope'