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NATURE-INSPIRED
CONTEMPORARY DESIGN





NATURAL BEAUTY

Lush vegetation and panoramic views
of the valley below were the inspiration
for this home's renovation

Words Lauren Clarke **Photos** Jack Lovel



Inspiration for the colour scheme was taken from the surrounding lush vegetation



“There are no trend-based pieces here — just long-lasting furniture that will stand the test of time and hopefully become heirloom pieces for generations to come”

— Silvia Roldan

Renovation doesn't have to mean changing the footprint of the house. Sometimes, a family's needs can change and a new purpose for different spaces within the dwelling is required. Updates need to be made; design alterations need to be considered.

This was the case with the Hawthorn home, a structure that had a great existing framework. “Nestled on the banks of the Yarra River is a 1990s house designed by renowned Melbourne architect Neil Clerehan,” explains Sarah Bryant, director at Bryant Alsop. “Enveloped by lush vegetation, the site offers panoramic vistas of the Yarra and the picturesque Richmond/Abbotsford landscape beyond. The house appears unassuming from the front, with a single-storey street facade, while inside, the house cascades across three levels to the garden and riverbank below.”

Yet the interior was dated and did not meet the needs of the young family who now call the property home, although the structure was sound and true. “Not often are we presented with such fabulous ‘bones’,” Sarah shares. That helped determine the scope of the renovation and also made for a more cost-effective transformation.

A journey through this dwelling begins in the entryway, where a skylight overhead shines a welcome spotlight. Journey down the stairs, tiled in London Grey limestone, and an engineered timber floor warms the space and offers a connection to nature.

Nature was, in fact, a great source of inspiration when it came to the home's design, not only for the architect but the interior designer, too. “For the furniture, decor and art, the client wanted the surrounding landscape colours to play a big part in the palette inside,” reveals Silvia Roldan, principal interior designer at Studio Esar. “So many of the colours chosen — browns, deep plums, greens — were referenced from the many eucalyptus trees that surround the site.”

This is evident in the kitchen, located on the upper level of the home. Here, a sense of light prevails, with floor-to-ceiling glazing heralding sunlight near the dining table and natural green tones, reminiscent of the verdant hues in the yard beyond, colouring the stone island benchtop and the under-island seating. “This island became the nexus of the space, serving as a central hub and informal dining area,” continues Sarah. Ample cabinetry is provided with a mix of closed and

Floor-to-ceiling glazing ensures ample natural light and creates a connection to nature



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display storage solutions on offer. An elegant over-island pendant is a nod to the simple yet stylish aesthetic of the home.

In the living room, plush carpet underscores the beauty of the tree canopies found nearby via floor-to-ceiling glazing. In this space, an existing fireplace was repurposed as a central feature, complemented by a new TV joinery unit.

Natural tones continue in the laundry on the middle level of the home, with finger tiles complemented by timber cabinetry and a practical hanging rail over the sink that makes use of every inch of space. Also on this floor, an unused balcony was converted into a spacious walk-in closet and an ensuite adjoining the main bedroom, where a dramatic panelled feature wall is the backdrop for the bedhead. Myriad textures come to play in this space, with carpet, wall, bedside and linen all offering different finishes. "This area has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving from a cold and cramped space into a tranquil, spacious retreat perfectly suited for the busy owners," Sarah says. "The dark panelling on the bedhead wall adds a touch of sophistication and warmth, while the functional and light-filled walk-in robe ensures practicality meets aesthetics."

A skylight in the entrance welcomes the visitor to the home, with stone tiles leading to warm timber flooring





Green is a bold feature colour in the kitchen, but here it harmoniously sings to the surrounding vista

ed's fave

THE FEATURE
WALL IN THE
BEDROOM THAT
DRAWS THE EYE
AND CREATES A
SENSE OF DRAMA





However, it's the ensuite that truly captivates with its playful yet moody ambience. Complete with an in-built planter in front of a full-width window, offering serene views of the surrounding trees, it creates a truly immersive and relaxing experience. The kids' bathroom was also redone with a playful tone. An exciting tile combination and generous storage ensure it's a space that is practical and purposeful.

Downstairs on the lower level, an old services room was transformed into a guest bedroom, while a storage area was converted into a kitchenette, connecting to an existing deck. "This level was reimagined as a rumpus room, providing a cosy retreat for both kids and parents," Sarah says.

There were environmental considerations during the renovation. "We removed gas from the property by replacing the ducted heating system, hot water system (HWS) and cooking appliances, making the house gas-free," says Sarah. "This not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions, but also contributes to indoor air quality and safety." Energy efficiency was enhanced by insulating the existing roof and installing new double-glazed windows. "These measures help to minimise heat loss and heat gain and reduce the need for excessive heating and cooling, thus lowering energy consumption and associated emissions," Sarah adds.

Sustainability was also relevant during the interior design, with all furniture selected with local suppliers and designers in mind. "There are no trend-based pieces here," Silvia says. "Just long-lasting furniture that will stand the test of time and hopefully become heirloom pieces for generations to come." **HD** bryantalsop.com.au; studioesar.com.au



Playful tiles and a deep bath make this a bathroom to covet