



# NATURAL *beauty*

An architecturally designed 1990s riverside home gets a contemporary, family-friendly refresh worthy of its green surrounds.

STORY *Judy Pascoe* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Jack Lovel*



**MAIN BEDROOM** Eucalyptus trees offer a wonderfully serene outlook. Moooi 'Bart' armchairs, Space. 'Bombola' coffee table, Fleur Studios. New Works 'Kizu' portable table lamp, and Ferm Living 'Torno' candles, Designstuff. Curtains, Warwick Fabrics. **ENTRY** Enkel 'D-Form' entry door handle, Auburn Woodturning. Kitchen island bench in Emerald Haze quartzite, CDK Stone. Kitchen joinery in Fika Mattwood in Torrens Oak, Nikpol. 'Diva' swivel stool, Grazia & Co. London Grey Limestone, RMS Traders, in the entry leads in to Arbre engineered flooring in Natural Luxe, Circa. 'Everest' carpet in Mirage, Victoria Carpets.

A captivating up-close connection with a stand of stately eucalypts informed the reimagining of this three-level home on the banks of the Yarra River in Melbourne. Designed in 1991 by architect Neil Clerehan, the house had stood the test of time but was in need of an update to facilitate contemporary family living.

The owners, a couple with two young children, were keen for the new work to complement the original design and engaged architects Bryant Alsop to helm the refurbishment. The brief was to transform the house into a family oasis, bringing warmth, materiality and texture inspired by the surrounding landscape. Bryant Alsop then invited interior design firm Studio Esar to specify the furniture, art and decorative objects.

“It’s not often that we are presented with such fabulous bones!” says Bryant Alsop director, Sarah Bryant. “The structure was sound and true, although the interior was dated and did not meet the needs of a young family.”

The original design was logical and well-planned with public and private zones carefully delineated, and that separation was maintained in the renovation. Most of the work centred around a refresh of the fixtures and finishes and an upgrade to the three bedrooms and four bathrooms, with minimal layout changes.

Working within the existing building footprint meant navigating design obstacles, such as solid concrete and block construction, but “a light touch” allowed the design team to achieve significant improvements within budget, said project architect Stephanie Reed-Marshall.

One important alteration was the reshaping of the entry level that houses the kitchen, dining and living areas to prioritise functionality and family connection. A complete reworking of the kitchen allowed the island bench to become the nexus of the open space, serving as a central hub and informal dining spot. Careful placement of mirrors brings the outdoors in while the green quartzite benchtop and splashback provides a continuous link with nature.

An existing fireplace in the living area was reimagined as a focal point complemented by new TV joinery, ►

**KITCHEN** Joinery in Fika Mattwood in Torrens Oak, Nikpol. Benchtops in Bianco Naturale stone, Smartstone. Island benchtop in Emerald Haze Quartzite, CDK Stone. Elysian kitchen mixer, ABI Interiors. ‘Diva’ swivel stools, Grazia & Co. Bosch appliances, E&S Trading. Nemo ‘Linescapes’ horizontal pendant light, Monduluce. *Pocket Rockets II*, *Ode to Migratory Shorebirds* artwork by Mandy Francis, Studio Gallery. Ceramics, owners’ existing.



### THIS IS THE LIFE

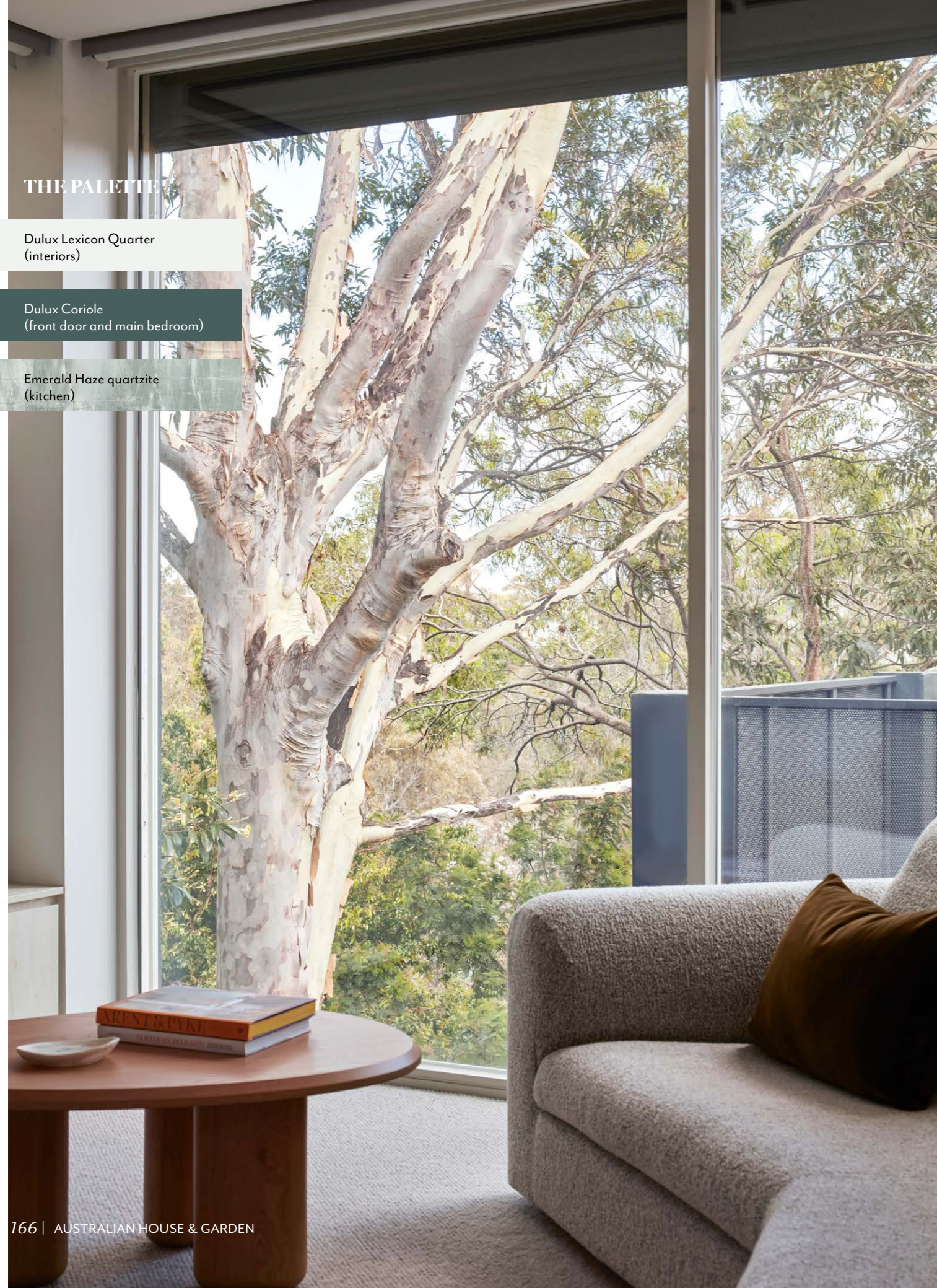
There is much to love about the home, but the owner pinpoints the kitchen island bench, “sneaky” fourth bedroom on the lowest level and mudroom joinery as standouts. “All add an ease to help the family function and [encourage everyone] to stay in the house.” With plans to add an outdoor spa to the downstairs entertaining area, the attraction of the home will only increase.

## THE PALETTE

Dulux Lexicon Quarter  
(interiors)

Dulux Coriole  
(front door and main bedroom)

Emerald Haze quartzite  
(kitchen)



**LIVING** ‘Thursday’ modular sofa and ottoman, ‘Leeroy’ armchairs, and BZippy vessels, all Jardan. ‘Pebble’ coffee tables, Made. ‘Mira’ footstool, Trit House. *Pocket Rockets II*, *Ode to Migratory Shorebirds* artwork by Mandy Francis, Studio Gallery. ‘Uno’ double bubble wall light by Mark Douglass. ‘Universal 850’ wood fireplace, Jetmaster. ‘Everest’ carpet in Mirage, Victoria Carpets.



abutting full-height glazing that affords views of the tree canopy. The verandah was updated with new decking and balustrade.

Attention was paid to the flooring, with new stone in the entry, timber floorboards in the kitchen and dining, and carpet in the living, bedrooms and stairwell, providing a fresh foundation for Silvia Roldan, principal designer of Studio Esar, to add a selection of low-key luxury pieces.

The main bedroom suite on the middle level was designed to be a refined haven with restful river views and a capacious walk-in robe and bathroom crafted from an unused balcony. On the same level the laundry, children’s bedrooms and bathroom were zhoozled.

On the lowest level an old services room was transformed into a guest bedroom while a storage area morphed into a kitchenette connecting to an outside deck. A rumpus room offers breakout space for children or adults for relaxing or playing.

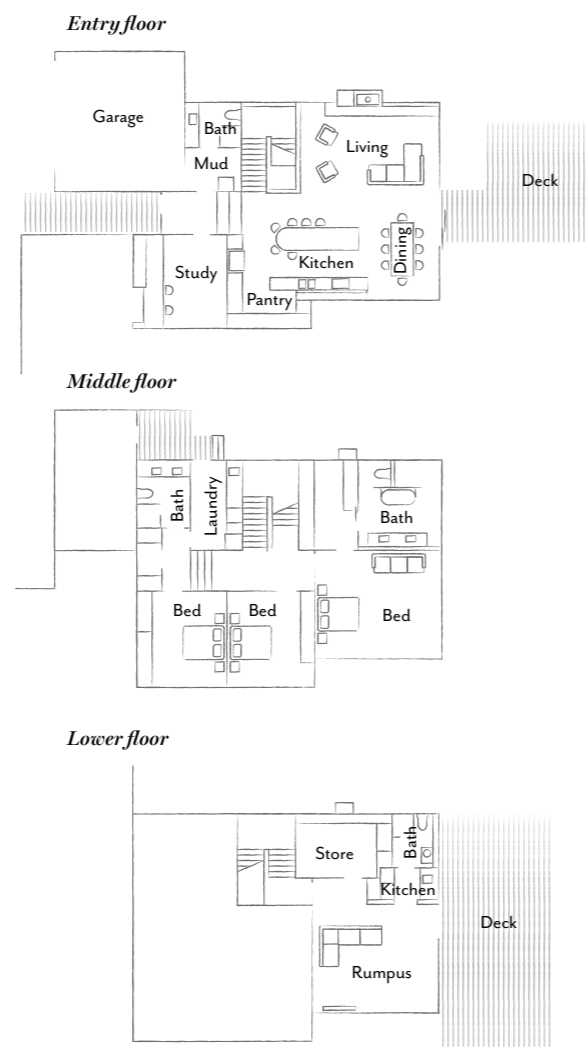
Throughout, the material and colour palette reflect the natural surrounds. “The finishes selection by Bryant Alsop allowed us to reference some key colour themes and flow

these effortlessly though the house,” says Silvia. “Greens, browns, ochre and deep plum tune in to the external landscape and echo the ambience of the eucalypts. We focused on local designers and materials, curating a selection of boucles, linens, velvets, travertine and oak, always drawing inspiration from the landscape.” The choices resonated with the owners who say they especially love the textures and the colours that mimic those from nature.

The project highlights the art of transformation within the confines of an existing, solidly built home. While the architect concedes it was a challenge working within the shell it was also rewarding to breathe new life into the home to suit the family’s needs.

“The careful balance of innovation and preservation makes this project special,” says Sarah. “Through small yet thoughtful interventions the once cold and impersonal post-modern spaces have been transformed into warm and inviting areas, enhancing the aesthetic appeal as well as fostering a greater sense of connection.” ▶

**Bryant Alsop:** [bryantalsop.com.au](http://bryantalsop.com.au). **Studio Esar:** [studioesar.com.au](http://studioesar.com.au). **Clancy Constructions:** [clancyconstructions.com.au](http://clancyconstructions.com.au).

**THE LAYOUT**

**BEDROOM** 'Pillow' upholstered bed, and 'Siesta' side table by Christopher Blank, Zenn Design. Bed linen, Abode Living. Ferm Living 'Tolano' candle in Sand, Designstuff. **ENSUITE** 'Eclipse' square cement tiles and 'Concave' border tiles in Black, Academy Tiles. Caroma 'Urbane II' back-to-wall bath, E&S Trading. 'S-Line' undermount counter basin, Rogerseller. Alano basin mixer and Elysian wall mixer and bath spout, ABI Interiors.



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**THE SOURCE**

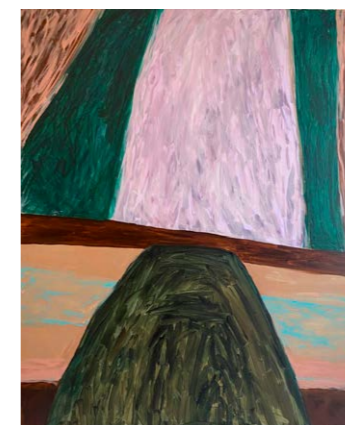
*Bring the enchanting colours of nature indoors with soft greens and pinks, earthy browns and ochre.*



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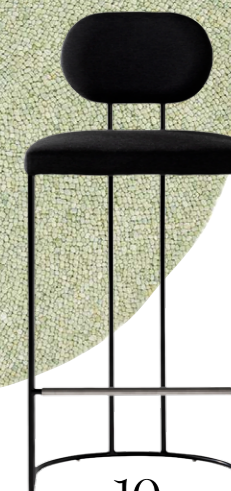
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Produced by Andrea Healy.

1 'Torno' candles in Pale Yellow, \$79/three, Arrival Hall. 2 French flax linen pillowcases in Clay, \$74.90/two, I Love Linen. 3 Velvet Mountain artwork by Amber Hearn, \$4800, Curatorial+Co. 4 'Salsa' rug in Jamaica, POA, Halcyon Lake. 5 Atlas 'Orbit' coffee table in Rouge Marble/Natural Travertine, \$2920, GlobeWest. 6 The Home Collective 'Medina' marble and glass table lamp, \$164, Temple & Webster. 7 'Leeroy' three-seater sofa, from \$7087, Jordan. 8 'Enes' quilted bedcover in Taupe, \$495, Saardé. 9 'Kartio' tumblers in Clear, \$49.95/two, littala. 10 'Sedis' stool, up to \$1500, Stylecraft. **H&G**