



# CONVERSATION PIECE

Inventive ideas are the cornerstone of this new Melbourne home, a result of the collaboration between the architects, owners and design friends.

PHOTOGRAPHS DEREK SWALWELL STYLING KATE GASKIN WORDS JACINTA LE PLASTRIER





THIS PAGE The home opens to a central courtyard from the main living areas. 'Heta' dining table by Lowe Furniture with 'Fjord H' chairs by Patricia Urquiola for Moroso. The sofa in the foreground is 'Long Island' by Flexform. Leonard French's *Assault* painting is on the back wall. OPPOSITE PAGE The entrance lobby has been wallpapered with a customised image created from a photograph by Jacqui Henshaw. The flooring is honed concrete pavers.





This new Melbourne home occupies one half of a suburban block. The site formerly housed an apartment building and was carved up to allow two homes to be built. The other property is owned by architects Rob McBride and Debbie Ryan of McBride Charles Ryan, renowned for their inventive and quirky designs, including the well-known and awarded Klein Bottle house on Melbourne's Mornington Peninsula (*Belle*, Feb/Mar 2008). The architects designed both houses on the site, with reverse footprints and full-width front and rear facades, strikingly angled.

The story began when the two couples lived next door to each other. Further down the street a between-the-wars apartment block came up for sale and the families joined forces to buy it and redevelop the site. The owner of this home describes its creation as "a neighbourhood project". "The rest of the design input was from friends," he says. Landscape designer Rick Eckersley chose the elegant, textured plantings and former Melbourne furniture dealer and now artist Bill Luke sourced much of the furniture and art. The owners personalised the space with well-chosen pieces. They are keen art collectors and the wife is a food consultant/stylist and the house zings with decorative clout.

But it's also decidedly a family home, says the owner. While artworks include a Leonard French enamel work, *Assault 1984-85*, painted by the Australian artist after a visit to South Africa under apartheid, and furniture such as Patricia Urquiola's 'Lowland' sofa, the owner says, "We didn't want the children to feel that they couldn't touch anything, or make a mess. Even though this is a well-designed house with beautiful things in it, it is just a house."





THIS PAGE A screen by Sydney's Korban/Flaubert was chosen by the owners to separate the dining and sitting rooms. The design echoes the Islamic-like geometric pattern on the house's front facade. Catellani & Smith 'Stchu-Moon' light. 'Lowland' sofa by Patricia Urquiola for Moroso. Leonard French's *Assault* painting is at left (also opposite, top right). OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The owners had the dining table and chairs made for this space, both designed by Bill Luke. George Nelson's 'Coconut' chair and a glass-topped coffee table by Bill Luke. West African figures sit on Ebano veneer joinery from George Fethers & Co beneath a Bill Luke artwork *Listen*. Flooring is bamboo.




## MELBOURNE HOME

The home has three levels: a large basement with garage and work area and a top floor devoted to bedrooms and the children's playroom. On the main level are the guest bedroom/office, dining and sitting rooms and the large living room with well-designed kitchen and utility spaces. All open directly onto the sun-filled courtyard, sheathed in 'Island Stone' marble which has an organic patchwork of white and green. Custom-made cushions make the banquettes comfortable. At the back of the property, overlooking the pool, is a double-storey studio and sauna. The back garden is planted with a grid of Chinese star jasmine, clivia, Philippine lilies, gardenia and stephanotis, all providing a delicate summer evening scent.

Inside the home, the flooring is extra-wide bamboo boards, with the walls and ceilings in Dulux 'Vivid White'. A Corian kitchen bench is contrasted with Ebano veneer joinery, which is repeated in the bathrooms. A focal point of the dining and sitting rooms is the 'cellscreen' by Sydney's Korban/Flaubert, chosen to reflect the Islamic-inspired geometric pattern embedded in the home's facade.

Equally impressive is the leaf motif in the entry hall which was created from an original photograph, *Leaves*, by Jacqui Henshaw, and commissioned by Debbie Ryan. The photograph has been magnified and then reproduced onto wallpaper. The owners have softened the original pattern of blood-red autumn leaves, in keeping with the style of the home that is sleek but very liveable. 15

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THIS PAGE All the living areas open directly onto the sun-filled courtyard sheathed in 'Island Stone' marble. Customised cushions. Serralunga pots from Space. The plant is blue trumpet vine (*Thunbergia grandiflora*). OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Studio at the rear of the property overlooks the swimming pool. Floor lamp in the foreground is 'Half Moon' by Karboxx. 'Long Island' sofa by Flexform. Moroso 'Phoenix' coffee table and 'Bloomy' side table by Patricia Urquiola, and 'Fjord' footstool. The kitchen is in Ebano veneer and white Corian.









### **SPEED READ**

This new home shares the site with another, both by Melbourne architects McBride Charles Ryan. + The site formerly housed an apartment block and has been reconfigured to give both homes roughly the same space, with shared facades at front and rear. + Inside the home, white walls, bamboo floors and ebony-like veneers are dressed with contemporary artworks and furniture by the likes of Patricia Urquiola. + It's a family home designed to be both beautiful and enjoyed.



A photograph of a modern, two-story house with a swimming pool. The house features a mix of materials, including white walls, dark wood paneling, and a large glass window. A swimming pool is visible in the foreground, and there are various plants and trees around the property. The sky is blue with some clouds.

"WE DIDN'T WANT THE CHILDREN TO FEEL THEY COULDN'T TOUCH ANYTHING. EVEN THOUGH THIS IS A WELL-DESIGNED HOUSE WITH BEAUTIFUL THINGS IN IT, IT IS JUST A HOUSE."

THIS PAGE The home has an enviable indoor/outdoor flow, with the lap pool beside a high tiled wall. Plantings of Chinese star jasmine, Philippine lilies, clivia and stephanotis soften the hard surfaces. OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The ensuite bathroom is simply finished in Ebano veneer and white tiles. The angular facade provides interest. A Walter Knoll 'Oscar' armchair and footstool in the main bedroom and *Oh* artwork by Bill Luke.