

HOME STRETCH

A Melbourne family pushed the boundaries of their imagination with a contemporary extension organically grafted onto their plum Edwardian property.

STORY *Stephen Crafti* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Lisbeth Grossmann*

EXTENSION Owen Sabato finds a comfy reading spot on the steps marking the junction between the old and new parts of his family home, where the flooring changes from blackbutt to polished concrete. Capral '900' sliding doors. Prostoria 'Match' sofa, Luke Furniture. Cushion, Megan Park. **BACKYARD** Crepe myrtles bloom in vivid shades of pink around the pool. To one side is the new extension, its outer envelope mixing the earthiness of recycled red brick with the cool, contemporary look of white brickwork. Potocco 'Vela' outdoor chairs, Cosh Living. ►

FEATURE TREES & PLANTS

.....
Crepe myrtles
(*Lagerstroemia indica*
'Biloxi' & 'Tuscarora')
Wollemi pine
Mat rush
(*Lomandra*
'Little Pal')

THE
PALETTE

Polished
concrete
flooring
(extension)

Dulux Whisper
White (main
bedroom)

Carrara marble
(ensuite)

This is the life

It's the multitude of small, customised touches that make everyday life so comfortable in this home. For the children, these include the timber ledge they can sit up at with a book or toy in the living area. Stephanie also nominates this desk-height joinery because it accommodates her sewing machine. "I love the level of detail here," she says. Stefano's favourite element is the inset niche in the shower, with a mirror for shaving.



located in a heritage area of inner Melbourne, this century-old house is surrounded by properties dating from the Edwardian era. "I think the same builder was responsible for at least eight of the neighbouring homes," says owner Stephanie Chan, current custodian of this striking old-meets-new dwelling along with her husband, Stefano Sabato, and their two children: Daphne, 10, and Owen, seven.

It was the period charm of the place that caught Stephanie's eye when she saw it advertised in 2008. Stefano, however, had to see it in person before he was smitten. "He was quite impulsive when he first inspected it, immediately putting up his hand," says Stephanie. The couple were drawn to the original details, large rooms and high ceilings, as well as the sizeable rear garden washed in northern light. With the right changes, the new parents realised, it would be an ideal family home. Sensibly though, they resisted the urge to renovate straightaway. "We thought we should live here for a while and get the feel of the place, rather than just rush ahead," says Stephanie.

In the meantime, they'd sometimes chat casually about their dreams with architect Clare Cousins, whose children attended the same childcare centre. In 2013, the couple asked her to take on the project. "We liked her work and felt the design process would be easier with someone we already had an acquaintance with," says Stephanie. "Clare also has children of a similar age and insight into how a family home should function."

"Stephanie and Stefano weren't exactly sure what they were looking for in the renovation, but I could see how passionate they both were for the period detail," says Clare. Her response was to bridge past and present by creating an unimpeded line of sight from front door to backyard, with a junction where the two styles would meet in harmony.

Unlike many period homes, this one was virtually intact, apart from a rudimentary kitchen tacked on the back. The position of the original dining room, now central to the expanded layout, suggested the design of the extension to Cousins, who then oriented the new kitchen and living wing to the garden. ►

KITCHEN This galley-style layout mixes concrete and stainless-steel elements with blackbutt veneer in natural and black-stained finishes. Miele cooktop and Electrolux fridge. Gessi tapware. Gubi '3D' stools, Surrounding. The chopping board was an engagement present. Platter, Marmoset Found. Classicon 'Selene' pendant light, Anibou. **LIVING ROOM** Daphne at the blackbutt desk/large shelf – handy for homework, Lego play and sewing. Floor cushion, Country Road. Vitra 'Potence' wall light, Space. Artwork by Sam Michelle. **Design classic:** Featherston 'B210' armchair, from \$4590, Grazia & Co.



Entering though the leadlight-framed front door, there's now a main bedroom suite and bathroom to one side; on the other is a study/guestroom, and the formal living and dining rooms. Beyond this point stands the two-storey extension, featuring an open kitchen and informal living area at ground level; above are the children's bedrooms and a shared bathroom.

Signalling the transition from old to new, the blackbutt timber flips from being on the floor to the ceiling. The new wing's floor level is slightly lower than the original home, which allows a generous ceiling height on the ground floor. Its concrete flooring extends through large glass sliding doors to the new terrace.

While the existing rooms have been lightly touched, with new fittings and fresh paintwork, the extension runs to warm, elegant minimalism. Although some of the original rooms have changed function, the house maintains its strong, appreciable link to the past, Stephanie says with satisfaction. "But of course, I'm really fond of all the contemporary features, too!" ▶

Clare Cousins Architects, North Melbourne, Victoria;
(03) 9329 2888 or clarecousins.com.au.



CONCRETE STEPS The family never expected the curved steps to be such a crowd-pleaser – in fact, it's not unusual for visitors to park themselves here. Stephanie and Stefano bought the secondhand cabinet for their first home and it looks great in this older part of the house. Planter (on shelf), Bridget Bodenham. 'Silo Trio' pendant light, Great Dane. **DINING/LIVING** *opposite, above and below* At this central point, the blackbutt flips from flooring and wall cladding to the ceiling. Clever use of glass creates multiple lines of sight to the garden and pool, while the doors slide open for fair-weather entertaining. 'Finnegan' dining table, Featherston 'Scape' dining chairs and 'Criss Cross' side table (next to grey chair), all Grazia & Co. Wire vessels (on dining table), Emma Davies. 'Braid Weave' rug, Armadillo & Co.

'WE USE THE CURVED STEPS AS A SEATING HUB. LOTS OF GROUP PHOTOS HAPPEN HERE, TOO.' *Stephanie Chan, owner*

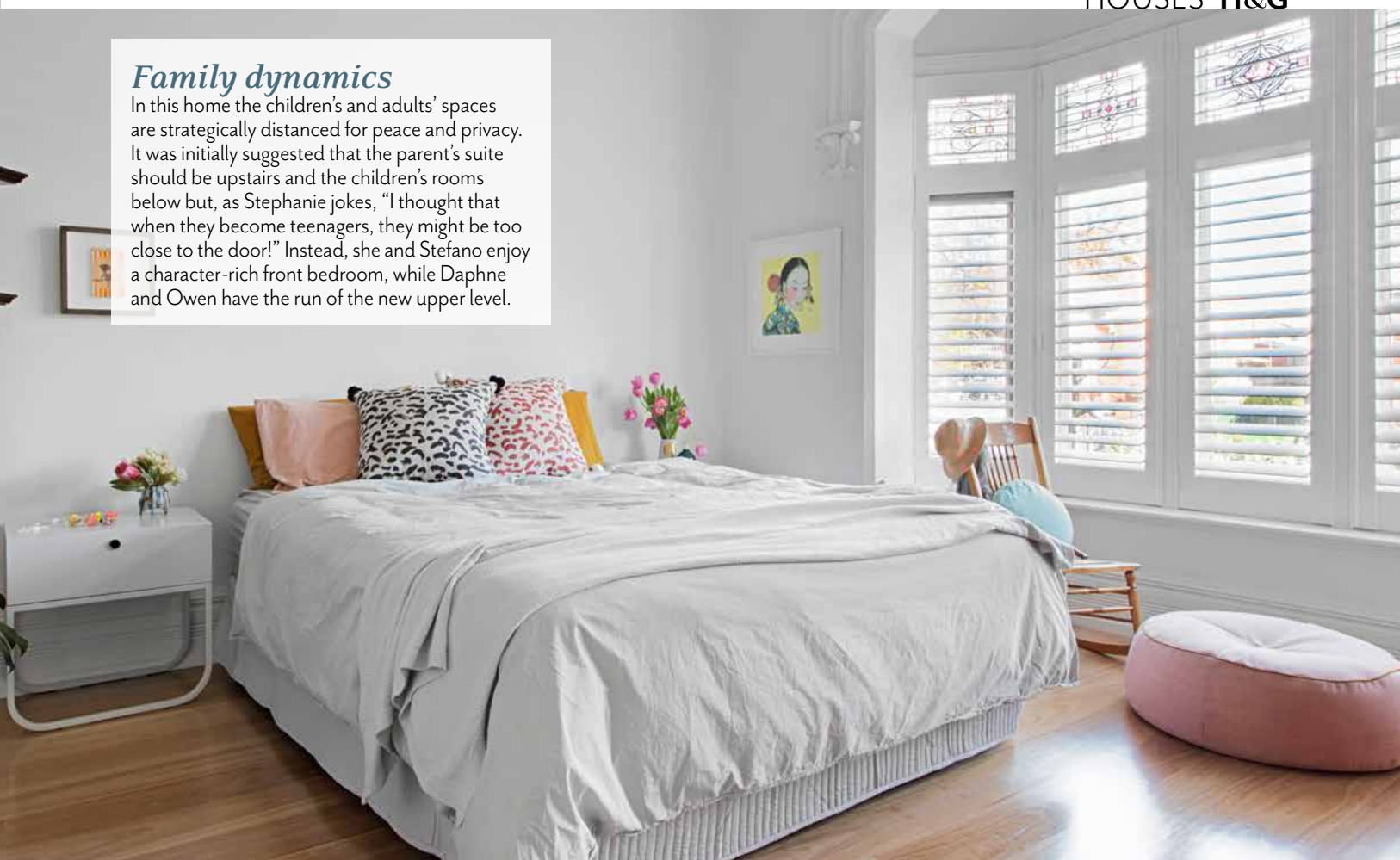


THE LAYOUT



Family dynamics

In this home the children's and adults' spaces are strategically distanced for peace and privacy. It was initially suggested that the parent's suite should be upstairs and the children's rooms below but, as Stephanie jokes, "I thought that when they become teenagers, they might be too close to the door!" Instead, she and Stefano enjoy a character-rich front bedroom, while Daphne and Owen have the run of the new upper level.

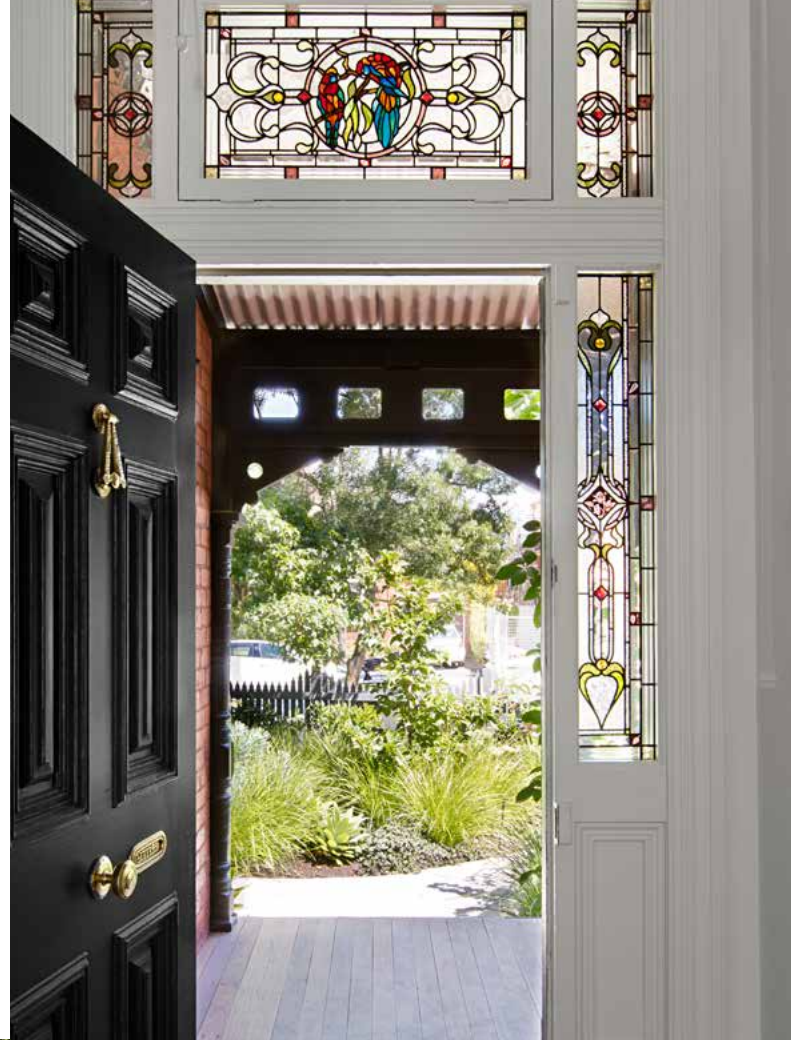


Styling by Beckie Littler (bedroom, ensuite).



'THE CHILDREN BEGGED FOR THE GREEN THEY SAW IN THE CARPET SAMPLES. THEY SAY IT'S LIKE LIVING ON A LAWN.' *Stephanie*

MAIN BEDROOM New leadlight panels, made by Adadaz Leadlights from antique fragments, grace this shuttered bay window. 'New York' bedside table, Grazia & Co. Quilt cover, sheets and floor cushion, all Jordan. Cushions, Bonnie and Neil. The antique kauri pine rocker was restored by Stephanie's father. Artworks by Ghostpatrol (left) and Zhong Chen. **UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR** Carpeted for softness, this space off the children's rooms has become an extension of their play area. The ledge at the end is a good spot for checking out the pool. **Smart buy:** 'Escape Twist' wool carpet in Esther, from \$105/m² (installed), Supertuft. **ENSUITE** An edited palette and luxe materials have created a calm five-star ambience. Wall and floor tiles, Signorino. Vanity in Carrara marble. Tapware and shower, Astra Walker. Custom shaving mirror (next to niche). Heated towel rail, Hydrotherm. Flos 'Mini Glo-ball' wall light, Euroluce. Bowl, Dinosaur Designs. Tantri Mustika 'High Arch' vase (with flower), Pinky's Store. Planters, Scout House (on vanity) and Pinky's Store. For similar towel, try Myer. ►



'AFTER SCHOOL THE KIDS LOVE TO PUT ON THEIR BATHERS AND JUMP IN THE POOL AS FAST AS THEY CAN.' *Stephanie*

SWIMMING POOL "While the kids are in the pool and I'm on snack-preparation duty, I can see them from the kitchen, which is perfect positioning," says Stephanie. Decorative brickwork conceals a clothes-drying court. Pool design and build by Aquarius Swimming Pools. **Smart buy:** 'Chillingham White' bricks, from \$2475/1000, Bowral Bricks. **ENTRANCE** More leadlight panels by Adadaz Leadlights surround the front door. Restored to its former shine, original door hardware pops against the Bristol Treacle-painted door. **FRONT YARD** A paved pathway wends through relaxed, loosely structured plantings, a soft contrast to the circa 1910 verandah. Landscaping by Eckersley Garden Architecture. **BACKYARD** Fine steel fencing maintains the blue views of the pool without compromising on safety. Along the upstairs windows of the extension, where the kids' rooms are located, a screen of perforated, fin-like blades provides extra privacy and sun-protection. *For Where to Buy, see page 188.* **H&G**