

DREAM IT. DESIGN IT. DO IT.

heart of glass

Focusing its redesign on a new wall of windows has transformed this family home in Melbourne's south

WORDS JESSICA BELLEF PHOTOGRAPHY RYAN LINNEGAR

kitchen

This side of the space is light while the opposite wall is the start of the dark cabinetry running the length of the home.

Joinery by Nexus Designs, fabricated by Kürv Living. Benchtop, honed Carrara marble. Brushed platinum tapware, Astra Walker.

cheat sheet

Who lives here A family of four with a 13-year-old daughter and a 10-year-old son, plus their groodle pooch.

Style of home A Victorian-era terrace in inner Melbourne, with a light-filled contemporary extension that's enhanced functionality, and a smart new look throughout.

🕒 The property was purchased in 2013. Building work started in 2015, and the last piece of furniture was delivered in 2017.



breakfast bar
Opening the 2.7m-high, timber-veneer doors reveals this hidden gem and other great storage spaces, such as a handy appliance unit and a walk-in pantry with soft-closing sliding door.



the moodboard

CLOCKWISE (from tapware) Icon + Lever 'a6700lh' brushed-platinum tapware, \$595, Astra Walker. Carrara C marble, POA, Signorino. ClassiCon 'Selene' brass pendant light by Sandra Lindner, POA, Anibou. Kaldewei 'Meisterstück Classic Duo' oval bath, \$7679, Bathe. B9 Cava 'Le Corbusier' bentwood armchair, \$305, Huset. B&B Italia 'Bend' sofa, from \$17,575, Space. PureGrain laminate in Terril, from \$113.52 per sq m, Laminex. AbsoluteMatte laminate in Polar White, from \$105.38 per sq m, Laminex.

Families change shape as their children grow, which happened predictably a few years ago to the four occupants of this home in Melbourne's south. "We love the area and have been here for a long time, but we simply outgrew our other house," says the owner.

As luck would have it, a charming terrace house soon became available nearby. Despite the property's tired state and an outdated 1980s extension with no redeeming features, the remaining heritage elements drew the locals in. "There was an integrity to the original rooms at the front of the house," says the owner. The home's orientation also appealed, as light is obviously critical in a terrace. Its rear elevation faced north, so there was definitely potential to open up the back and bring in a lot more natural light.

Emma Mitchell of EMArchitects was asked to design the extension, with a focus on harnessing that light. With the big picture locked in and construction by Matt Ritchie of MR Contracting underway, Sonia Simpfendorfer, from Melbourne-based interior-design firm Nexus Designs, was brought on board to reimagine the interior. "The clients wanted practicality and functionality – and for it to look fantastic," Sonia explains. "They knew themselves well and briefed their design team clearly."

dream it

Architect, interior designer and client were united in their vision to honour the property's original character. "Good heritage homes have a scale and solidity that is very valuable. The key is to introduce the natural light and functionality that suits how we like to live now," says Sonia. The family prioritised green space, briefing Emma to reduce the building footprint slightly so that more area could be given over to the garden.

To make way for the new open-plan kitchen and dining area at the back, the existing extension was to be demolished. "A higher ceiling in that space would then create a feeling of spaciousness without needing a big footprint," says Emma.

Black steel-framed windows were requested from the get-go by the homeowners, who also wanted skylights to bring in as much light as possible. And as is the case for any household with children, maximising storage was a priority.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: JESSICA BELLEF

day bed

Above the black leather built-in seat is one of the home's seamless skylights. The steel window frames were designed by architect Emma Mitchell as an integral part of the building's structure. Brick wall, painted Dulux Lexicon to match the white cabinetry and work with the concrete floor.

"This house is stunning but also feels simple and honest. Now that it's painted, the old brick wall in the kitchen has such a beautiful texture" SONIA SIMPFENDORFER, INTERIOR DESIGNER



wishlist

- + Open kitchen and dining area**
"With room for lots of guests," says the homeowner.
- + Black steel-framed windows**
A stylish way to capture light at the back of the house.
- + Custom joinery** For more storage throughout.

living

Half the room is a corridor, so furniture placement was crucial. The black square at left is a steel window box looking out to a light well. The rug was custom-coloured by Behruz Studio to match the concrete. Print by Georges Braque.



“I love how much storage we achieved, and the glimpses through to the next spaces that make you want to explore” SONIA

shelves

Light pours onto this semi-internal space and shelving via another well-placed skylight. Balloon dog, IMM Living.



design it

Sonia was asked to give the interior fit-out a fresh, clean look and improved functionality. “The clients were very clear that they were looking for simplicity – for fewer finishes, not more – and for visual and functional streamlining,” Sonia offers. “They weren’t distracted or tempted by trends or fashion; they just wanted the good stuff!” The designer says she developed a refined material and colour palette that “walks the line between timeless graphic crispness and the warmth and practicalities necessary for comfortable family living”.


Glimpses of the original brick walls indicate the transition from old to new, providing an enduring backdrop for Sonia’s work. “I like to identify the things that keep the value and beauty of a heritage house while being ruthless about what needs to be changed to make it actually work,” she says.

Neat joinery solutions and clever space planning throughout the home delivered on the clients’ request for optimised storage and an uncluttered look. Sonia also curated furniture and lighting schemes that dovetail beautifully into the updated section as well as the existing rooms. “The pieces were chosen in response to the scale of the spaces, as well as comfort and sculptural form,” she explains.

do it

Confidence and a clear vision underpin this striking home’s creation. Its nimble contractors and the homeowners’ sharp decision-making ensured a smooth renovation journey, despite a mid-term layout reshuffle on the second level and a tweak of the joinery design on the ground floor. “The clients were very decisive, which meant the build powered on,” says Sonia.

The outcome is an elegant expression of well-designed simplicity, with an overall feeling of calm. In the renovated spaces, uncomplicated forms are a fitting modern companion to the terrace’s original elements, such as the marble fireplace in the front bedroom and the brick walls. Now 12 metres of sleek joinery runs through the living and kitchen areas and hides masses of storage and a study nook, while the north-facing wall of glass framed in black steel overlooks the garden and separate garage with its office space and bathroom above.

Daily life has definitely improved for the owners and their children, and they are excited to see how the home evolves in coming years: “As the children grow, it’s impossible to predict exactly what they’ll need, but we are really happy here now.”  See more residential projects by EM Architects at emmamitchell.com.au. Inspired work by Nexus Designs can be viewed at nexusdesigns.com.au

ARTWORKS BY SARAH FAULKNER (SMALL WHITE-FRAMED), GRAEME ROWE (LARGE BLACK-FRAMED)



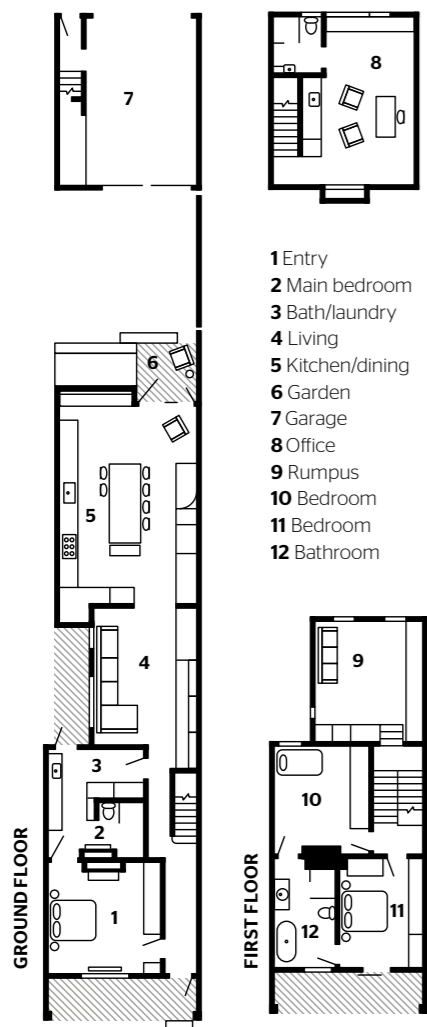
ensuite

Carrara marble also features here and space is maximised by the mirrored cabinet. American oak handles, Kurv Living.



bathroom

Light comes through the shutters and is bounced around the room. Kaldewei 'Classic Duo' bath, Bathe. Tapware, Astra Walker. Tiles, classic penny rounds.



- 1 Entry
- 2 Main bedroom
- 3 Bath/laundry
- 4 Living
- 5 Kitchen/dining
- 6 Garden
- 7 Garage
- 8 Office
- 9 Rumpus
- 10 Bedroom
- 11 Bedroom
- 12 Bathroom

good news

Natural light was a priority for the owners, who now have plenty of it flowing into their terrace through strategically placed skylights and bigger windows where possible.

lessons learnt

“Our clients were unwavering in their desire to keep things simple”

SONIA SIMPFENDORFER, INTERIOR DESIGNER

“They wanted a pared-back, timeless feeling so we kept the focus on the modest elegance of the spaces and respected the architect’s sensitivity to the building’s history. Maximising storage and practicality were also key. I like to find new ways to add plentiful storage without making rooms look complicated and this applies to all my projects, in homes of every era.”



main bedroom

A black Japan finish on the pre-existing floorboards has given this downstairs room a more contemporary look. Original Carrara marble mantel. Selene pendant, Anibou.