

split level SUCCESS

After three years of planning, the dilapidated house on this inner-city block was demolished to make way for a striking two-storey testament to stylish contemporary living. >



as seen in ...

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THIS PAGE: Visitors are greeted with an unexpected outlook over the garden through huge picture windows as soon as they enter the home. The stairs lead to the main bedroom to the right and the children's room to the left – neatly separated by the landing.

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: The light-filled entrance hall features a glass front door and basalt flooring which also runs up the wall.

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM: Artfully arranged artefacts, reflecting the colour scheme used throughout the home, sit on a wooden credenza underneath the floating staircase.

OPENING PAGES: Impressive as they may appear, the three ironbark beams were added for aesthetic rather than structural purposes. The parents' retreat can be accessed directly from outside and becomes an indoor/outdoor room close to the pool.





The property was purchased sight-unseen, after being advertised as just a single-line real estate classified. One challenge for the owners – including Jock Merrigan, director of design and construct builder Urban Habitats – was the steep land, which leads down to a creek at the boundary. The solution was to level off an area overlooking the creek, creating stunning views from the split-level home.

The house boasts four bedrooms, a parents' retreat, a large open-plan living and dining area and a delightful garden and pool area. Architect Rolf Proske offered some advice in the design stages, and the home is built in an L-shape, with the upstairs master suite atop the downstairs parents' retreat, while the longer part of the house comprises three bedrooms upstairs and the open-plan, split-level kitchen, dining and living area downstairs. The centrepiece of this communal living space is a dramatic fireplace, surrounded by floor-to-ceiling basalt. "The product is very clever as it is both a combustion and open fire; the door opens outwards and also slides up like a window," says Jock. An innovative wood storage space adjoining the fireplace is both attractive and practical.

The teak cabinetry in the kitchen flows through to the bookcase and cupboards in the parents' retreat, and the upstairs bedroom. The carpeted rooms are charcoal in colour, which contrasts beautifully with the lighter tones of the teak, while sheer, silver organza curtains blend with the anodised finishes of the large windows. The kitchen, with island bench and teak veneer detail, features cupboards that curve around the walls and add a sense of drama as they stretch to the full height of the ceiling.

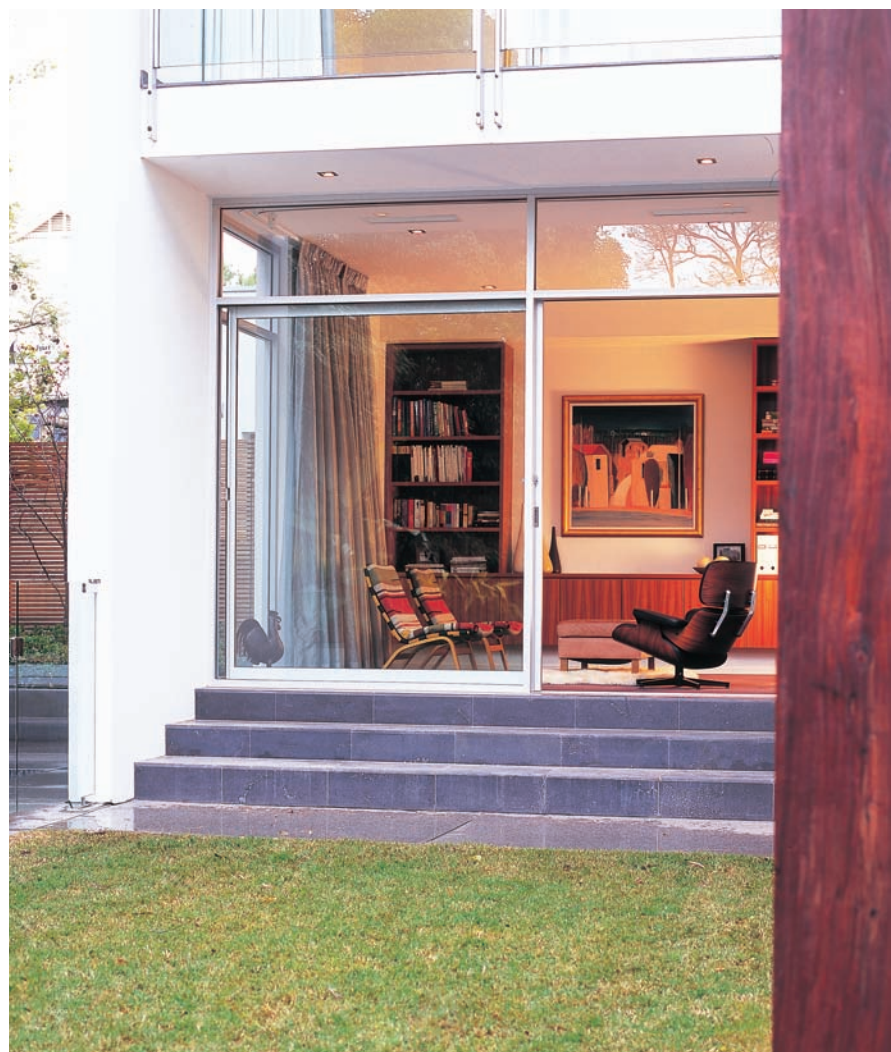
The innovative nature of the house saw a range of building materials used, including basalt cladding along the front and inside the entrance. This stands in stark contrast to the white columns, extensive glass, natural timbers,

THIS PAGE: Alpine stringy bark flooring was sourced for its rich tones, which are reflected in the dining table and the teak veneer of the kitchen's island bench and overhead cupboards.





The centrepiece of this communal living space is the dramatic fireplace, surrounded by floor-to-ceiling basalt.




polished concrete and panelling on some of the rear columns instead of render. "We sourced our basalt product from Orange in New South Wales. It is quite a unique, textured stone," says Jock.

Stringybark used for the internal floorboards was sourced from alpine Victoria, while ironbark beams that compose a concourse of sorts at the rear of the home were once part of the Melbourne wharves. These beams exist for purely aesthetic purposes – another dimension was needed to break up the height of the 7.5-metre sheer wall.

The polished concrete walkway adjacent to the living space and around the nearby pool was a gamble. "We didn't know what the grinding process would reveal," says Jock. "That's where it's good to be able to play around. Being able to express my own ideas in my own house has been a really enjoyable part of the process."

From the large front door and entrance hall, to the series of bi-fold doors across the expansive living and dining area, glass plays an important role in the home and has brought natural light into every space. A large window at the top of the stairs not only welcomes light inside, but as

visitors walk up the stairs, a magnificent view of the garden emerges.

The garden is more spacious than initially planned; the owners expected to terrace the backyard to compensate for the block's steep gradient, which would have meant less space. However, landscaper Peter Stubbs suggested putting in a circular retaining wall and back filling it, creating an idyllic location for entertaining and space for children to play. 

THIS PAGE: Steps down to the living and dining area separate these areas from the kitchen. The coffee table was made by the owners from a pane of glass left over from the installation of the impressive windows overlooking the garden.

OPPOSITE PAGE LEFT: At the end of a long driveway, the imposing entrance gives away little of the interior and functional outdoor areas behind the front door.

OPPOSITE PAGE RIGHT: The teak veneer of the kitchen is replicated in the parents' retreat, giving this room, with its pre-loved, re-upholstered chairs, a particularly Danish feel.

