

Interior designer Ali Ross will go to extreme lengths to procure a design piece that she has fallen in love with. To wit, two timber stools she bought in Amsterdam and carried as hand luggage in two separate trips back to London where she was living at the time. They now sit proudly in the c1889 home she shares with her husband Ben and sons Jasper and Felix.

It is typical of Ali's uncompromising approach to interior design and architecture that have been her passion since she was young. A year spent in Denmark and later Japan, as well as study at RMIT, cemented her interest and convinced her that this was her calling. With an aesthetic guided by the objective of delivering calm, light, comfortable and timeless spaces she strives, above all, for simplicity.

Becoming her own client gave her carte blanche to explore her ideas that are inspired by such luminaries as Rose Uniacke, Tadao Ando and John Pawson. In particular, London design

guru Ilse Crawford's Regency-era house in Somerset that effortlessly combines a contemporary mood within a classic setting informed the renovation of her own home.

In a plane-tree-lined cul-de-sac in Melbourne's inner south-east the imposing, historically significant home sits within a row of two-storey Italianate villas. In 1919 it had been converted into three flats, then restored back to a single home in the 70s. When Ali and her family bought it in early 2020 the house had been "truly loved and lived in by the previous owners for decades" but it required a major update. The peachy pink facade and tall green aluminium fence had to go and Ali's vision for the house was clear from the outset. "The house feels very grand on approach, but inside I wanted it to be restful, welcoming and unpretentious," she says.

Despite the rooms being "immensely proportioned" the footprint is relatively compact which appealed to the family. »



These pages, clockwise from left: The extension at the back of the house is simple and stylish with the zinc-clad planter boxes on the terrace above holding an array of trailing plants that soften the structure. Sliding glass doors from Vitreco, Goranne limestone pavers from Eco Outdoor. The kitchen has a glamorous swathe of Arabescato Carrara marble from Artedomus. Cabinetry by H+F Custom Joinery. Hay counter stools and Viop tapware from Cult. Vase on bench by Katrina Wells. On shelf, Robert Matherbe artwork from James Mabin Gallery. Black steel and glass doors separate the family and dining rooms. 1920s French iron console was a vintage find. Flax "facacia" table lamp from Living Edge. Fritz Hansen 'Swan' chair from 'atDay Zanotta'. Gino coffee table from Cult and a rug bought in Morocco. Ingo Maurer 'Zattal's 3' pendant light from Space.



This page The family room has a sofa from Moker650n on a rug brought in from Morocco. Vintage side table from Amsterdam. Zanatta 'Graz' coffee table from Cule, Ingo Mauer. Zettell's pendant light from Speca. Artwork by Annalisa Ferraris from James Main Gallery. Opposite page, clock face from top rooms can be closed off with steel and-glass door for privacy. Fringed cushion from Lucy Montgomery. Artwork by Robert Molesse. A butterfly chair from Angelica 20th Century offers a resting place in the garden. The pool house caddling is in charred timber. The flooring in the entry and stairwell is by Admonter.



« The entrance and stairway with its magnificent arched stained-glass windows "colour the space like an artwork."
 "With the doors open you can see through various rooms to the garden and experience the connection and intimacy that the floor plan allows," says Ali. "It's magical to sit in one room and see the soft light and movement of trees through the windows in another."

Restoring and refreshing the original house was achieved with sensitivity. Ali's sister-in-law, Katherine Stewart of Page Stewart architects, was engaged to collaborate on the project. An existing rear add-on was removed to make way for a full-width north-facing kitchen, dining and living space with linear skylights that connect to the terrace above, offering views of the original brick facade.

Ali's office and the formal sitting room are located at the front of the house and the family room links with the rear living and kitchen space. The transition from old to new is marked by three arched glazed openings with deep reveals and inky blue-black steel-framed doors that add a contemporary note.

The largest rooms on the first level were reconfigured to accommodate a spacious ensuite and walk-in robe adjacent to the main bedroom. The main bathroom was also enlarged and looks out to the north-facing terrace built over the ground-floor addition. A deep, zinc-clad planter box wraps around the perimeter of the terrace, planted with soft grey trailing foliage and providing complete privacy.

The architectural bones of the home were so good that Ali was mindful not to overcomplicate the interiors. Her restrained approach started with a single colour used throughout »

