

## The transformation of a dark Victorian



terrace into a light-filled dream

home is nothing short of breathtaking.

These pages, from left in this Victorian terrace in Sydney's eastern suburbs, the new south-facing rear extension and upstairs bedrooms are flooded with natural light thanks to the introduction of a wall of windows from Steel Windows Australia. "Double Bell" dining table from The Wood Room. At the front of the property, a high brick wall provides privacy from the street, while a new gate grants entry to the house via a pathway that passes through the garden.

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These pages, clockwise from left: Bi-fold doors from Steel Windows Australia open to create a seamless connection with the back garden. Double Ball dining table from The Wood Room. The elevated swimming pool appears to vanish into the garage wall, allowing the landscaping to dominate. In the living room, standout seating includes the Tacchini 'Roma' sofa from Stylecraft, 'Silvia' wicker chairs by Paolo Tizze from DePadova and Pame Chappa 'Sakana S107' leather armchair from SOBOGO. Tacchini 'Mia' coffee table from Stylecraft with studded velvet from Nicolette Johnson. Solid-bronze tripod side table from Becker Minty. 'Cainoa D2' wool rug from Rug Porter. 'Beta' American oak side table from Dirmitt Vangitis with moon jar by Kim Woochang from Fireworks Paddington.



There are certain elements of a house that you can't change when it comes to a renovation and it has nothing to do with the size of your budget. You can't change its location but, more importantly, you can't change its orientation.

There are of course a few exceptions to that. If you have a large site and you're prepared to knock down an existing structure and rebuild you can design your house to take advantage of a northerly aspect. But if you are hemmed in on one side and your house is in an area with strict heritage conditions then demolition of the existing building is virtually impossible. You have to make the most of what you have.

For this house, which faces south and couldn't be knocked down, Madeleine Blanchfield Architects decided the best solution was to use as much glass as possible to bring natural light flooding into the main living spaces of the building. The house is located in Woollahra in Sydney's eastern suburbs, and

when the clients originally bought the Victorian terrace, it had a 1970s concrete extension at the back, which was dark and heavy with low ceilings, according to Madeleine. The original fabric of the terrace house was also in a bad way. "It had been heavily messed with internally over the years and the outside was painted yellow and it had a high brick front wall," she says.

The brick wall, however, ended up being a blessing in disguise. Heritage restrictions in the suburb no longer allow such high walls at the front of terrace houses to be built, but the fact that it was already there meant the architects could create a private, north-facing courtyard. The front gate was moved so that the entry to the house is now via a path which passes through the garden.

It also meant the new extension at the back of the house could occupy the full width of the site. The 1970s extension was demolished, and the rear of the site was levelled, as the floor level of the old extension had been elevated from the



These pages, clockwise from left: 'Double Bee' dining table from The Wood Room with Charles Rennie Mackintosh dining chairs in Black from Fineworks Paddington and New Works 'Bukowski' chairs from District; 'Dough' platter by Faye Tanggood from District; Striped black Tasmanian magnetite and jade bowl from Becker Minty; Artizale 'Scandar' long pendant light from Est Lighting; Custom polished-concrete kitchen island bench; The Lovers print by Michèle Aboud is inspired by the Bathier sculpture by Mark Hovson and a tall black sculpture from Becker Minty; Moon jar by Kim Woochang from Fineworks Paddington; Carrara Italia marble benchtop and splashback from Skheme; Twin ovens from Meile; Small ceramic bowl from Verifact Studio; Vintage sculpture from 506070.



main house. The main living areas of the house now face the rear garden, which has a small swimming pool and a garage at the far end, with a studio-style apartment above it, which is currently used for guest accommodation.

In the main house there are four bedrooms – one in the attic and three on the upper level. The bedrooms either face the front street or the rear garden and the middle section of the upper level contains storage and bathrooms.

According to Madeleine, with a project such as this, there is a tendency to demarcate the two areas – the old and the new – in the design. "Often you take the heritage part, and you do that sympathetically and then you would do something quite contemporary on the back, but that just wasn't appropriate here," she explains. "It's all kind of mashed together and it feels seamless from one end of the house to the other. You don't get that jolt from old to new."

Madeleine describes the design of this project, completed at the end of 2021, as a more classic approach than the style of

others she has created. The colour palette is light and neutral with walls and kitchen and bathroom joinery all painted in white.

Throughout the house, pale, whitewashed timber floors have been used to lighten the interiors even further. Carrara marble from Skheme was selected for the kitchen and bathrooms, with the brass tapware bringing in warmth. Black steel-framed doors and windows are a graphic counterbalance to the softened interiors.

Each house, explains Madeleine, is a direct response to the needs of the client and how they plan to use the building.

"It's a funny relationship between architect and client, where you start to speak through each other," she adds. "I actually find it much easier to make decisions for someone else than myself. I get a huge satisfaction out of when we get to the end of a project and just seeing how much people appreciate what you've designed and love the final result." ■

[madeleinemadefield.com](http://madeleinemadefield.com)



## SPEED READ

» This house is in Woollahra in Sydney's eastern suburbs, which is an area with strict heritage controls. Architect Madeleine Blanchfield made a virtue of an ugly high brick front wall that was erected in the 1970s by creating a private north-facing garden – something that heritage guidelines wouldn't have allowed today. » The house was in a state of disrepair when the owners bought it, and it also had a bulky concrete extension at the rear. » This structure was demolished and the site levelled to make way for a new extension that merges seamlessly with the original part of the house, which has been restored. » The rear of the house faces south so the design incorporates large steel-framed windows to drag as much natural light into the living areas as possible.



This page: » The white bench door from Steel Windows Australia connects the new rear extension with the original heritage section. » Five Tuuwood 'Puffy' lounge chairs from District. » Opposite page: Artex. » Movers' armoire from Spore on natural jute braided rug from Ray Porter. » Solid birch tripod table from Becker Kinky. » Fingertable artwork above fireplace by Cosima Casoni and Tessera artwork alongside by Ivan De Mera, both from Piermark. » Ceramics on the mantelpiece from Vertifact Studio.