This is the life

The owner is a bachelor who works in hospitality. He loves inviting people over and cooking them amazing meals in the wood-fired oven, which he does on a regular basis. His user-friendly, industrial-style kitchen gets quite a workout on those occasions. "It's important to create a balance between the rough and the more refined," says Nick. "But this isn't a precious home. It needs to be lived in."





FEATURE TREES & PLANTS

Silver birch (*Betula pendula*)
Creeping fig (*Ficus pumila*)
Cordyline (in bucket below)

This majestic Victorian terrace in a bayside suburb of Melbourne was initially renovated by the current owner 15 years ago. The three-bedroom home's light makeover included adding french doors to a patio and renovating an upstairs bathroom. While the upgrades helped with general liveability, a second round of work was always going to be required.

Fast forward to 2013 and cue architect Nick Harding, the principal of Ha Architecture Product & Environment, a practice focused on the 'interface between landscape and architecture'. "Our renovation started out simply with the kitchen, but gradually extended to other parts of the house," says Nick. The old kitchen, at the rear of the three-level house (two at the front and an extra level behind, due to the three-metre fall in the land), was adequate but far from engaging. "It was very basic, with timber floors, laminate joinery and plantation shutters," says Nick.

One of the starting points for the design was replacing the french doors and a number of others with a series of retractable steel doors featuring casement-style windows; these can be pulled right back to link with the new deck. Charcoal-stained timber cabinetry replaced the laminate and a highly polished concrete island bench was formed, its sides wrapped in steel and a timber chopping block cleverly inserted. "There are a few marks on the concrete," says Nick. "But it's fairly robust, given the regular workouts by our client, who's in hospitality." To create relief from the predominantly grey palette, Nick placed green tiles on the splashback and an Escher-esque 'carpet' of black and light-grey cement tiles on the floor. ▶

KITCHEN The retractable steel doors are a custom system Nick designed. They look great closed or pulled part way along the perimeter, where the fan-like folds echo the movement of the floor tiles. Their casement windows allow fresh air into the space without opening the doors. The island is a mild-steel box filled with poured concrete. Franke sink, Vola brass tapware and Ilve appliances. **Smart buy:** '25905 Cubic' cement floor tiles, $149/m², Bespoke Tile & Stone. **TERRACE** Space is precious on the 260m² block so this area outside the kitchen and TV room is a real luxury. Frencham Cypress boards line the built-in seat and are greying over time. In the corner is a lemon tree. Cushions, Hunting for George. **HALL** A peaceful spot between the front rooms and kitchen/dining area. Ha custom-made the bench. Cushion, Established by Design. 'Brass Can' wall light, Anna Charlesworth. The rusty bucket is a favourite piece.

Just when they thought this project was nearing completion, the owner started looking at other parts of the house. After considering the ground floor's two enclosed front rooms, Nick decided to break through the walls next to the double-sided fireplace in these rooms, creating sight lines from the new reading room to the terrace. The adjacent space is for watching TV.

Nick also created two new openings in the hall. "Victorian terraces are dark. It was important to open up these spaces while not impinging on the original features," he says, pointing to the wide skirting boards, ceiling rosettes and deep mouldings. Open shelving in steel, American oak and Arabescato marble adds another light touch to these rooms.

Last up was the cavernous basement space, which was turned into a luxurious bedroom suite with a generous walk-in wardrobe and bathroom. Floor-to-ceiling windows now link this space to the courtyard and garden, where there's a forest of silver birch trees screening the apartment block behind. "The owner wanted this room to be the main bedroom while we revamp the first-floor, but after that it will become guest accommodation," says Nick. "The bathroom is a contained wet area, but the vanity is an extension of the walk-in robe, which acts as the bedhead."

The success of this renovation can be seen in the way the spaces are tied together by the material palette and the new, seamless design. "It's a large house for a single person," says Nick, "but many rooms weren't used before and there was virtually no connection to the garden. Now, on warmer days, the doors are left open and you can smell the sea air coming through." ▶

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THE PALETTE

Dulux Vivid White
interior, throughout

Arabescato marble
living area cabinetry, ensuite

Porter's Paints Wood Wash in Silver Birch
kitchen ceiling

READING ROOM Crowning the space is a pendant light Ha designed in conjunction with Christopher Boots, along with one in the TV room. The fireplace is finished in Porter's Paints Liquid Copper & Patina Green, giving it an aged look sympatico with the original part of the house. 'Milo' sofas, Jardan. Paulistano armchairs. Rug, Loom Rugs. VIP floor lamp, Surrounding. **Designer buy:** Tom Dixon 'Flash' bronze-mirrored tables, $460 (rectangular) and $950, Dedece.

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.



Reno snapshot

Pivotal decision "The client deciding to also convert the basement the week we started construction," says Nick.

Unexpected blowout "The endless options for the kitchen cabinetry – it took a lot of time to sort through them all."

Where to save "Though not cheap, the Coco Flip pendant over the meals table is well-priced for such a well-made local product."

Words of wisdom "You need quality tradespeople to achieve a quality outcome."

Favourite room "The kitchen/dining area and its relationship to the deck and garden."

MAIN BEDROOM *this page and opposite, top right* Located on the basement level, this large space has unrestricted access to the lower courtyard and garden. Diesel by Moroso 'Longwave' chair and Molteni & C 'When' (bedside) tables, Hub Furniture. Belgian linen from Scout House. Velvet cushion, Established for Design. Serge Mouille side light. Wool rug, Loom Rugs. 'Brass Can' wall light, Anna Charlesworth. **ENSUITE** Arabescato marble makes a striking feature of the vanity splashback and bench. Ha custom-designed the mirror in mild steel with integrated LED lighting. Towel, cup and marble vessel, Established for Design. **COURTYARD** Tucked under the external staircase is a shaded area paved with honed bluestone. Table sourced by the owner with m.a.d. 'Scoop' chairs from Meizai. *For Where to Buy, see page 220.* **H&G**





THE LAYOUT



