

**H&G**  
RENOVATION SPECIAL  
*heritage update*

**DINING** A painting by Minnie Pwerle presides over the space. The Sol Shapiro credenza is a piece Zorita's parents commissioned in the 1960s. Screenwood acoustic ceiling. Dining chairs, Bontempi. Pendant light, Space. Platter on table by Gunther Weiss. **FORMAL LIVING** Owners Alan and Zorita in their airy, art-filled home. Coffee table, Natuzzi. Print by Shinichi Maruyama. Seed Cloud pendant light, Ochre. The floor is limewashed oak. *For Where to Buy, see page 187.*







# *Frame of* REFERENCE

In bayside Melbourne, the transformation of a heritage property has provided a new home for not one, but two, art collections – and a dynamic, welcoming gathering space for family and friends.

STORY *Stephen Crafti* | STYLING *Julia Green* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Armelle Habib*

## THE PALETTE

*Dulux  
Vivid White*  
interior, throughout

*Limed oak*  
kitchen joinery

*Try this accent*

*Dulux  
Red Blooded*

**FAMILY/KITCHEN** Sculptural works are lit by natural light streaming from the courtyard. On the other side of the stairs, a sliding screen of ebony-stained timber battens separates the kitching and dining zones. The 4.2m-long island bench is in Corian and oak. Gessi Oxygene mixer tap. For similar stools, try Space.

**MEALS** Niches by the breakfast table were designed as display spaces for treasured ceramics. Painting by Sarah Amos. For *Where to Buy*, see page 187.



## *This is the life*

This home excels in its multiple roles as a comfortable home for a couple, an entertainer's dream and a personal gallery for merged art collections. Alan works from home, in an office at the front of the house; Zorita retreats to her detached studio above the garage. And when they put down their work, they meet in the idyllic back garden. "I love being surrounded by trees and being able to sit on the terrace," says Alan.



Alan Synman, a founding director of SJB Architects, had a longstanding affection for the bayside Melbourne suburb where he had been living since 2008, having first bought property there back in 1968. His partner, Zorita Sormann, was more familiar with the city's chic south-east. But when the couple decided to search for a new place together, Alan was quick to spot a listing just around the corner from his then-home, and realised its potential to create a happy abode to share.

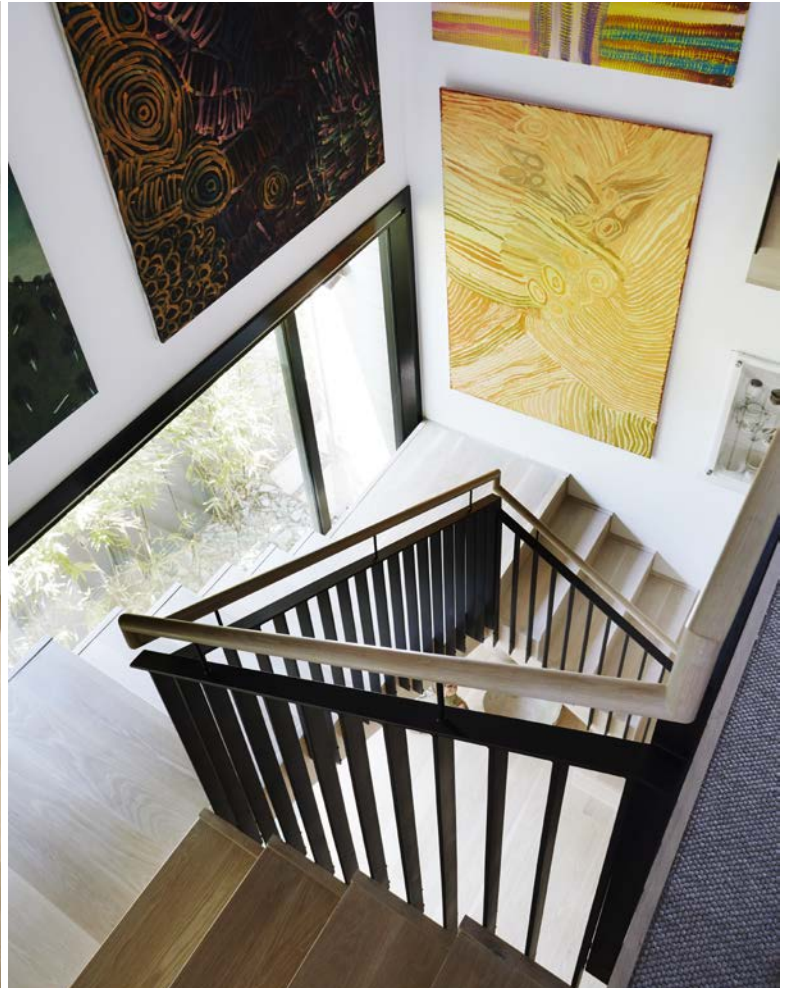
"We were both looking for a larger plot, with a garden. It was really a matter of who found the most appropriate place first," says Alan, who was drawn to the double-fronted Victorian-era house and the 500m<sup>2</sup> land size. Another attractive feature was the planning permits it came with, worth their weight in gold in a heritage-listed area.

"After having renovated four other homes in the area, I'm fully aware of the delicate and intricate planning process, particularly in heritage areas," says Alan.

While adept at dealing with renovations of this scale, Alan was officially retired from SJB and happy to hand over the core of the project to Foomann Architects and SJB Interiors, with Fido Projects appointed as builders. "I was still integral to the design process, as was Zorita."

The brief, unsurprisingly, was clear. Apart from having abundant natural light, the renovation also needed to house and showcase two substantial art collections, one primarily sculpture; the other, painting. "We also wanted a large dining area - the guest list for one of our family celebrations can have as many as 40 people," says Zorita. "I felt that the dining area should be pivotal to the design, as well as connected to the back garden."

Fortunately, the basics were already present. Along with the heritage-listed facade and ornate verandah, the front rooms were in relatively ►



◀ good condition. Fireplaces, skirting boards and ornate architraves were intact. They restored the facade, including tuckpointing the bricks, and opened up the front of the house; there's now a living room to one side of the passage and on the other, a study/office for Alan as well as a library/TV room. Customised glass and steel display cases, relocated from Alan's previous home, 'pierce' one wall, allowing natural light to reach across the central passage.

The main change has been the addition of a two-storey wing oriented to the north-east. On the ground floor, this accommodates a kitchen, butler's pantry and two dining areas: one casual, one more formal in ambience. A steel and timber staircase leads upstairs, where there are three bedrooms and two bathrooms. "I wanted a fairly traditional arrangement of bedrooms, even though children have long fled the nest," says Alan. A detached studio at the rear of the property, complete with billiard table, is a big lure when children and grandchildren visit.

"It's a family home," says Alan, "but it's also a great place when everyone leaves and we're here on our own."

► **Foomann Architects**, Melbourne, Victoria; 0408 546 470 or [foomann.com.au](http://foomann.com.au). **SJB Interiors**, Melbourne, Victoria; (03) 9686 2122 or [www.sjb.com.au](http://www.sjb.com.au). **Fido Projects**, Mount Eliza, Victoria; 0405 206 186 or [www.fidoprojects.com.au](http://www.fidoprojects.com.au). **Phillip Johnson Landscapes**, Monbulk, Victoria; (03) 9756 7233 or [www.phillipjohnson.com.au](http://www.phillipjohnson.com.au).





**MAIN BEDROOM** The owners' serene first-floor space enjoys access to a private terrace. Flat sheet, Major Minor. For similar throw, try the Chunky Tassel throw, Bed, Bath N' Table. Artwork by Matthew Johnson. Curtains in Lizzo Antilia fabric, Westbury Textiles.

**FORMAL LIVING** Architectural grace notes retained from the home's Victorian-era provenance merge seamlessly with contemporary furnishings. Addlook sofas, Living Interiors. Coffee table, Natuzzi. Rug, Loom Rugs. Artwork (left) by Trinh Vu.

**Designer buy:** Tom Dixon Base floor lamp, \$847, Dedece.

**STAIRWELL** Negotiating the stairs is a regular exercise in art appreciation, as one passes paintings by Minne Pwerle (left), Makini Napanangka and others at close range. The staircase treads are limed oak with black steel balustrading.

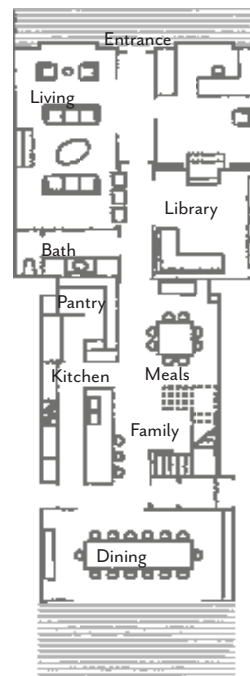
**LIBRARY** A wall of books creates an atmosphere of dignified calm. Domino ottoman, Natuzzi. Rug, Loom Rugs. Artwork by Jörg Schmeisser. *For Where to Buy, see page 187.*

*Consider the way  
ambient light  
plays on colours  
and artworks  
in a space*



## THE LAYOUT

### GROUND FLOOR



### FIRST FLOOR



*‘I like the way the new elements blend with the old home, and the interaction with the street through layered landscaping.’*

Alan Synman

**BATHROOM** The dark-toned vanity seems to be suspended in midair, while the pixellated patterning of glass mosaic wall tiles suggests movement. Tiles, The City Tiler. Nobili New Road mixer, Reece.

**Smart buy:** O vessel in Black, \$125, Reduxr.

**DINING** Jamie Sormann of Foomann Architects in this new space, which has a strong Japanese sensibility. “Working with Alan and Zorita allowed us to not just on the overall scheme but also the details, which transforms a projects into something quite special,” says Jamie, who worked alongside co-director Jo Foong.

**BACKYARD** The owners commissioned Phillip Johnson Landscapes, a former Chelsea Flower Show winner, to work on the rear garden. “As we neared completion, I could see the advantages of more extensive and more mature plantings,” says Alan. Ribbed-cedar cladding. Velletri outdoor table and chairs, Huset. *For Where to Buy, see page 187.* **H&G**



## FEATURE PLANTS

### BACKYARD

Coral bark maple  
(*Acer palmatum*  
‘Sango Kaku’)

Smoke tree  
(*Cotinus coggyria*  
‘Velvet Cloak’)

Silver bush  
(*Convolvulus*  
*cneorum*)

Before



## RENO SNAPSHOT

**LIFE-CHANGING INCLUSION** An acoustic ceiling treatment makes an enormous difference when entertaining large groups.

**UNEXPECTED BLOWOUT** “Landscaping was more expensive than anticipated,” says Alan.

**COST-CUTTING IDEA**

Lightweight construction and enduring, low-maintenance finishes.

**FAVOURITE ROOM**

“I particularly like the office/study,” says Alan.

**BIGGEST CHALLENGE**

The extension, designed like timber cabinetry, called for expert carpentry.

**WORDS OF WISDOM**

Include an allowance to hang artworks in the builder’s contract.

