

H&G
RENOVATION SPECIAL
1970s townhouse tweak



RETROfits

Less is more was the name of the game with this 1970s Melbourne townhouse reno. It's now a refreshed family home that honours its architectural era.

STORY STEPHEN CRAFTI / STYLING RUTH WELSBY / PHOTOGRAPHY EVE WILSON



FEATURE PLANTS

Japanese maple
Star jasmine
(*Trachelospermum jasminoides*)
Frangipani
Boston ivy
(*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*)
Creeping fig
(*Ficus pumila*)

FRONT GARDEN / Boston ivy and other creepers drape over the facade of this architect-designed townhouse.
STAIRWELL / Owners Jamie Sormann and Alice Maloney with their son Henry. The artwork is an original wood-block print by Sadao Watanabe.
FOR WHERE TO BUY, SEE PAGE 194.



Architect Jamie Sormann and his partner Alice Maloney conducted a thorough search of Melbourne's inner suburbs before coming across the two-bedroom townhouse they now call home.

Designed in the 1970s by Morris and Pirrotta, the architecture of the concrete-block house particularly resonated: as a student Jamie had worked with Michael Morris. The structure was in good nick and the location – within walking distance to the city and Jamie's office – was perfect. The interior, however, needed a few tweaks to bring it into the 21st century.

Jamie and Alice were up for the job. "I was looking for a small project, a place we could put our stamp on without having to do a major overhaul," says Jamie. "When we

moved in, the interior was predominantly brown with beige carpets. There were orange pine lining boards on the walls and upstairs ceiling too."

The layout is spread over two floors, both of which are split level. While there was good flow overall, the lower level was divided by a partition wall into two pint-sized spaces, the kitchen and dining room. "The south-facing kitchen was far too dark and there wasn't sufficient space in the dining area to accommodate a good-sized table," says architect Jo Foong, Jamie's co-director at Foomann Architects, who worked closely on the project.

Jamie and Jo's solution was to remove the partition to create a more generous open-plan kitchen/dining space. A new L-shaped kitchen was installed to optimise ►

KITCHEN/DINING / this page and opposite right Storage is tucked into every available space. Joinery by Woodman Cabinets & Joinery (throughout). Vintage Danish Deluxe dining chairs. Rug, Armadillo&Co. **Smart buy:** Philips Aquafit ceiling light (used as wall light), \$40, Bunnings. **STAIRWELL /** Reducing the depth of the nib wall opened up the stairs as a seating option. Large-format bluestone pavers replaced the dated beige carpet. **FOR WHERE TO BUY, SEE PAGE 194.**



'It's a relatively small space, so I was mindful of making each gesture appear generous.' Jamie Sormann, owner/architect

This is the life

The north-facing front garden was previously overgrown and under-utilised. Today, the family uses the area as if it was another room, says Jamie. To strengthen the garden's connection to the indoors, the front porch was elevated to align with the living area and the same bluestone tiles used inside and out. A Japanese maple, underplanted with star jasmine, shades a slatted cedar bench that provides extra seating for large gatherings.

THE PALETTE

**Dulux
Fair Bianca**
half strength,
throughout

Try these accents

**Resene
Jet Stream**

**Murobond Paint
Monet**

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.

◀ floor space, with the dining table doubling as an additional prep area when required.

Given the size of the home, a mere 80m², maximising storage was essential. In the living room, thin-profile steel shelves were mounted at ceiling height to retain useable space at ground level, an idea also employed in Henry's bedroom. There is additional storage in a new crawl space under the house. "The living room floor was elevated about 1.5m above the ground, so we poured a concrete paving slab in this sub-floor space to create a clean area for storage," says Jamie. "Having a whole level dedicated to storage allows us to live in a reasonably uncluttered environment," says Alice. "Without it, we'd be constantly stepping on toys or tripping over the pram."

In the bathroom, the existing shower cubicle was converted into a laundry area and a new walk-in shower installed. In keeping with the home's 1970s sensibilities, terrazzo tiles were laid from floor to ceiling. "With projects such as this, it's often about taking things away and rationalising spaces so they can be used in multiple ways," says Jamie.

The most significant impact came from one of the smallest alterations. By reducing the length of a nib wall enclosing the staircase, Jamie created more breathing space in the living room and improved sightlines through the house. "It's a relatively small space, so I was mindful of making each gesture appear generous," says Jamie.

Today, the home is a beautiful blend of hallmark '70s design and 21st-century practicality – and the family couldn't be happier. ▶

Foomann Architects, Melbourne, Victoria;
www.foomann.com.au.

LIVING / The original Cassina Tentazione sofa previously belonged to Jamie's mother, who received it as a wedding gift. The exposed beams are made from refurbished oregon. Vintage chair, Modern Times. Stool, Arteeneta. Floor lamp, ECC Lighting+Furniture. Coffee table designed by Foomann Architects, made by Kyran Starceovich. Rug, Armadillo&Co. Artworks by Susan Purdy (left) and Simon MacEwan & Finn Robertson. **FOR WHERE TO BUY, SEE PAGE 194.**

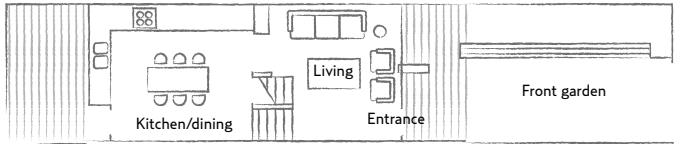


Get the look



THE LAYOUT

GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



HENRY'S ROOM / Henry's room, at the rear of the house, features a floor-to-ceiling window that is externally shaded by a curtain of ivy. Cot, Stokke. Custom-designed shelves, Foomann Architects. Artwork by Fideli Sundqvist. Ravine carpet in Pewter, Hycraft Carpets.

BATHROOM/LAUNDRY / By rethinking the layout, Jamie and Jo were able to create a more functional multi-use space. Tapware, Brewers. Custom shower screen.

Smart buy: DF Arabescato Bianco terrazzo tiles, \$95m², Defazio Tiles & Stone.

MAIN BEDROOM / Painting the house white throughout brightened the interior, which feels more spacious. Bedlinen, I Love Linen. Painting by Ruth Howard. HD2 wall light, ISM Objects. The bedside table is a hand-me-down. Planter, Wingnut&Co. **FOR WHERE TO BUY, SEE PAGE 194.** **H&G**



Before

Reno snapshot

Total cost About \$150,000.
Goal Simplifying the interior of this 1970s modernist townhouse for a lighter, more generous and contemporary feel.
Solution Consolidating the kitchen and dining downstairs and bathroom and laundry upstairs was critical. These multipurpose spaces now have improved functionality and capacity, and are more enjoyable to be in and use.
Words of wisdom "I wish I'd had a better grasp of the cost and complication of dealing with construction waste before starting," says Jamie. "But by doing what work I could myself and sourcing factory seconds and reclaimed materials, we kept overall costs down."

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