

The Melbourne home of Leon, an architect, and Caroline, who runs her own ballet school, and their two children features a perfect blend of aesthetics: while Caroline loves vintage charm, Leon adores anything modern. Here, the family's sister dachshunds Jemma (left) and Bella appreciate the wraparound courtyard garden leading off from the master bedroom. An adobe-rendered exterior works as a muted backdrop, allowing the Art Nouveau doors – imported from France and purchased from Zacher Antiques in Albert Park, Victoria – to become a focal point outside the master bedroom. Layers of paint worn down over 50 or 60 years have created a marbled patina on the concrete. >

EQUAL & opposite

A clever edit of contemporary, mid-century and vintage elements spells out a brand new chapter for this made-over Victorian cottage

STORY KERRYN RAMSEY PHOTOGRAPHY SHANIA SHEGEDYN



From the outside, this adobe-rendered Victorian cottage exudes old-world charm. Inside, owners Leon, an architect, and his wife Caroline, principal of a ballet school, have brought about a new perspective, with sleek contemporary elements added to the traditional surrounds. It took a visionary approach to make the beguiling mix work. "Our tastes really clash," says Leon of the inner-city Melbourne home the couple shares with their sons, Isaac, 14, and Jacob, nine. "I'm somebody who would live happily in a corporate office but my wife would prefer a tumbledown mansion in the English countryside. But when we put all the elements together, everything works."

According to Leon and Caroline, when they first spotted this 90-year-old, double-fronted cottage three years ago, it deserved the tag of 'worst house in the best street'. Most other Victorian residences in the area were heritage-listed but this property was so derelict, and with so few features of merit, that it had never made the register.

Undeterred, the couple were prepared to remodel and revitalise the home. While Leon repositioned rooms, introduced cross-ventilation and added seamless storage, Caroline designed her French-inspired kitchen and scoured antique stores to find period fittings.

Although determined to recapture the essence of Victorian style, Caroline employed a bit of creative licence, sneaking in a few quality reproduction items alongside original pieces. Now, even Leon's

architect colleagues can't tell the difference. "When they come over, they can't figure out which is which," says Leon, who spent 12 months designing and overseeing the project. "The reproduction pieces are more ornate, often with a larger scale. They create a real air of romance."

Offsetting these traditional elements is an array of modern materials – glass, concrete and stainless steel – as well as classic mid-century and contemporary furniture. It's an adroit blend where, according to Leon, the colour scheme is key. Throughout the house, rich tones of taupe and cream bring warmth to the interior, while accents of forest green add subtle colour through furnishings and accessories.

As an architect, Leon is well-versed in designing open-plan areas for clients, but in his own three-bedroom home, he followed his wife's vision, allowing the kitchen to be concealed when necessary. "We designed it with a large sliding wall so that when we're having a dinner party, Caroline can close it off. It stops people popping into the kitchen to see what's cooking," says Leon, who explains it also functions as an inclusive, open-plan space when the wall is pushed back.

Despite the couple's fervour for designer furniture and antique treasures, they are far from precious in this elegant home. "The boys occasionally use our Le Corbusier armchair as a slippery slide!" laughs Leon. "We've realised there's no point having a classic chair that nobody's allowed to sit on it. It's nice to have beautiful things, but you really need to use them."

STUDY {above & opposite} Adhering to the home's timeless style, the study is adorned with furniture and pieces the couple have accrued over the years, including an antique side table, a quirky vase and an unusual carved timber coffee table shaped to look like a stack of giant vintage tomes; it's been in the family since Leon and Caroline were first married and stores their Christmas decorations. Leon's pride and joy is the upholstered cowhide Le Corbusier chaise, which he uses regularly. To avoid any sense of austerity, the colour scheme brings warmth to the room, with timber flooring a customised walnut stain, walls in Watty Porcelain and forest green as accents. The fireplace is an original, with an insert that looks as if it's been there for decades – but it's a reproduction, a great money-saving option. The final touch is a shag rug in 'Spider' is from Hali in Richmond, Victoria. >





we love...

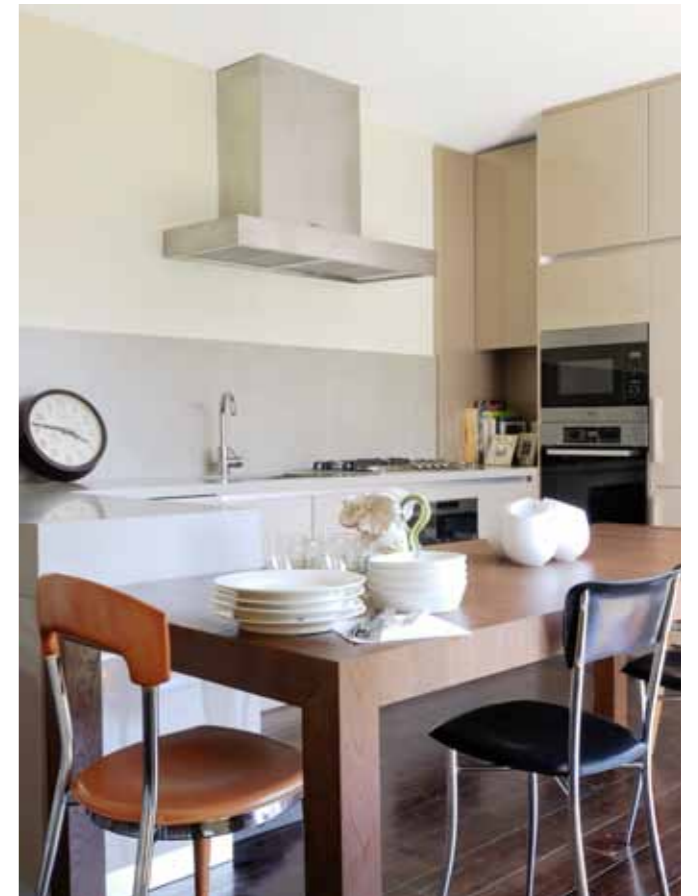
Sleek storage
 "We all have junk," shrugs Leon, who designed walls of storage, seen at the end of this hallway, to avoid clutter. Floor-to-ceiling units with handle-free doors and drawers finished in 'Bouari Gold Gloss' metallic vinyl wrap by Bonlex create a streamlined effect. The look has been mimicked in various rooms, from the kitchen and bathroom to the bedroom and living area. "This creates continuity throughout the house, making the storage units visually disappear," says Leon.



"There's no point HAVING A CLASSIC CHAIR THAT NOBODY'S ALLOWED TO SIT ON. IT'S NICE TO HAVE BEAUTIFUL THINGS, BUT YOU NEED TO USE THEM."

LIVING/DINING AREA {above} Making a strong statement in the living space is a collection of designer gems, including 'Barcelona' chairs by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, available from De De Ce, and {opposite} a set of three Series 7 chairs by Arne Jacobsen. A comfortable sofa is piled with soft green cushions (Caroline's favourite colour), all found at Hali. Soaring ceilings, timber floors with a rustic stain, and generous glass sliding doors bring an abundance of light and spaciousness into the living area, while walls of storage hide away entertainment consoles, the kids' paraphernalia and Leon's design tomes.

KITCHEN {right} Drawing inspiration from contemporary European designs, the kitchen includes a timber table from Ikea around which the family usually congregates for meals. The generous U-shaped layout of the kitchen is based on the 'French fort' philosophy - "There is only one way in and one way out, and that makes my wife the chief of the domain!" says Leon with a grin. "If you want something, you have to ask from the perimeter." Stacked on the table with dinner and soup plates is an 'elephant' jug bought at Emporium Botanica in Armadale, Victoria. >





"I'm somebody WHO COULD HAPPILY LIVE IN A CORPORATE OFFICE BUT MY WIFE WOULD PREFER A TUMBLEDOWN COTTAGE IN THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE"

MASTER BEDROOM {above & opposite} Leon saw the master bedroom as a "little hotel suite", incorporating an ensuite, floor-to-ceiling wardrobe, study and a gracious lounge area. Transformed into a decorative bedhead, a custom-made screen in metallic 'Asuka' wallpaper by Osborne & Little from Seneca Textiles adds grandeur and sophistication to the room (see details on page 93). A hand-painted dressing table from Grays and an antique side table are cleverly juxtaposed with a contemporary standing light. On the seagrass table outside sit Hermès teacups, saucers and plate in the 'Toucan' pattern, a gift from Leon to Caroline for her china collection.

BATHROOM {left} Sharp-edged fittings and fixtures in the main bathroom are softened by the diaphanous shower curtain, which adds a feminine *je ne sais quoi*. Further softening comes from the abundant neutral tones, with Soft Stone porcelain tiles (300mm x 600mm) in 'Autumn' from De Fazio Tiles and Stone against walls painted in Dulux 'Greige'. The cabinet unit in Corian 'Concrete' is custom-made to fit perfectly into this tight space, while the Caroma tapware set and wall-mounted sconce from Beacon Lighting prove that quality touches don't need to break the bank. >



Inside story

Who lives here? Architect Leon, 48, his wife, Caroline, principal of a ballet school, their sons, Isaac, 14, and Jacob, nine, and dachshunds Bella and Jemma.

What attracted you to the area? Leon: "The interior design stores, cafes and galleries nearby. The boys' schools are close, too, and my firm is next door!"

Did the renovation feel like work or pleasure? "This is what I do all the time for clients but I don't often have the luxury of doing it for myself. This was a great project, with plenty of input from my wife."

Most inspired reno idea? "Outside our home are bumper-to-bumper cars, so we built a wall as high as council would allow around the perimeter, and landscaped it completely green. You walk in and feel transported."

Where do your sons sit on the old versus new debate? "My eldest prefers older houses – anything rundown – so he was happy when we first moved in. My youngest is a budding architect; he likes anything shiny and modern."

Most treasured items? Leon: "Not only my 20th-century furniture classics but our miniatures, including Le Corbusier's 'LC2'." Caroline: "I've collected ballet items, ranging from the painting with diamantés by my friend Paquita, hung in our bedroom, and a ballerina music box from [Melbourne store and gallery] Kozminsky that Leon gave me."

Are you already looking for the next house to renovate? Leon: "The intention is to stay here forever – but you never know what might happen!"



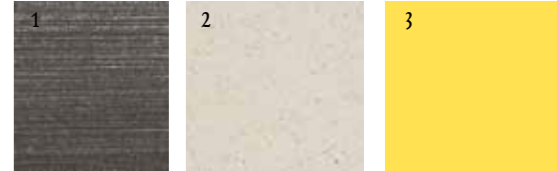
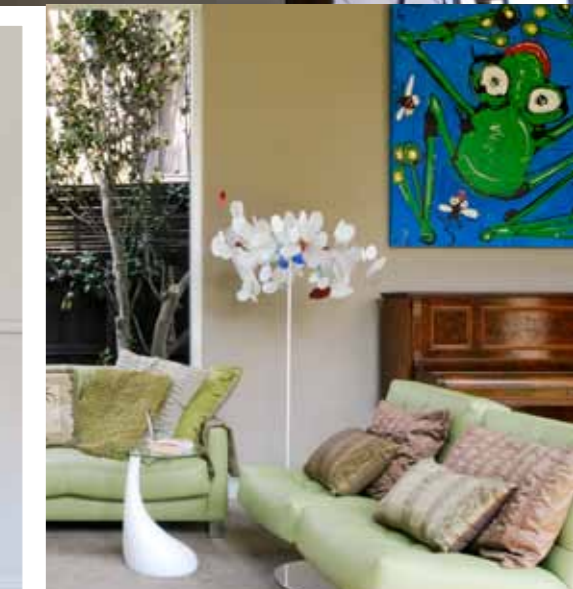
Leon's treasured items on the parquet dining table include (from left) Le Corbusier's 'LC2' chair, Royal Doulton bowls, some much-loved glassware, Henry Dean 'Cape Town' chair, and white vases, and a Fitz and Floyd 'Cape Town' tureen.

DINING/LIVING ROOM {left}
The glass sliding doors bring an alfresco ambience and efficient cross-ventilation. "Breezes from the garden fill the room," says Leon. "It's like having lunch in an undercover terrace."

KITCHEN {right} A concealed sliding wall (it can't be seen as it was rolled away for our photo shoot) can easily slide across the kitchen to provide privacy for Caroline when entertaining. "It's an unusual design concept but you have to cater for the client," says Leon with a smile.



Our tastes REALLY CLASH ... BUT WHEN WE PUT ALL THE ELEMENTS TOGETHER, IT REALLY WORKS



best buy
Try a replica of Achille and Pier Castiglioni's 'Kugel' coffee table to mimic this stylish piece.
Price: \$195.
Find it: Matt Blatt, 1300 628 825.

STUDY {above} A collection of personal, vintage and contemporary items makes a whimsical statement. The huge mirror serves to amplify and make the most of the light flooding in through the French doors at the other end of the room.

LIVING ROOM {above right} The 'Eyo-Yoi' standing light by Marc Pascal (visit marcascal.com) picks up on the colours and detail in the lively frog artwork painted by Caroline's friend, Melbourne-based artist Anthony Breslin (visit anthonybreslin.com).

colour & materials

- 1 Wrought iron paint Weathershield Gloss in 'Namadji', \$35.50/litre, Dulux.
 - 2 Kitchen benchtop DuPont Corian benchtop in 'Concrete', from \$943/sqm, CASF Australia.
 - 3 Bedroom wallpaper Osborne & Little 'Asuka' wallpaper, \$xxx/metre, Seneca, (03) 9529 2788, senecatextiles.com. *Stockists, page 222*
Due to the printing process, actual colours may vary.
- CONTACTS:** Leon Moulton Architecture & Interiors, (03) 9525 2044, leonmoulton.com.

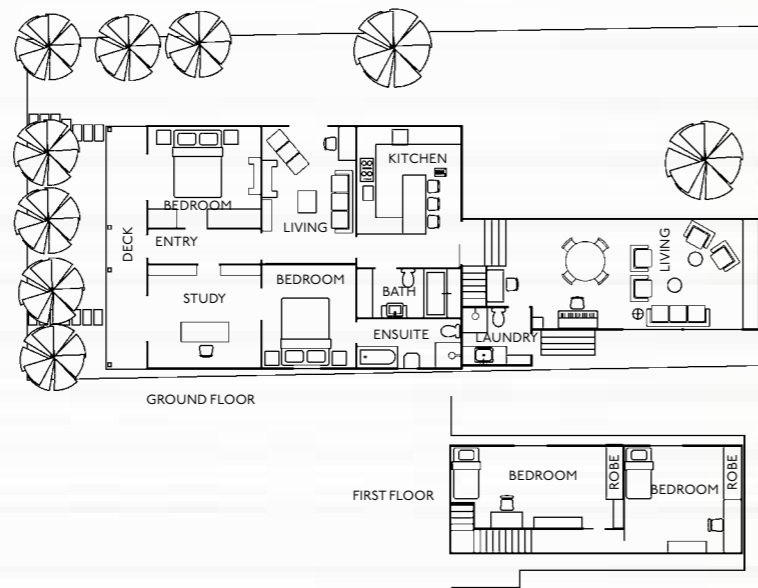


ILLUSTRATION WWW.KENZIEDSIGN.COM

