



beauty unboxed

At the back of this Melbourne home is a surprise element that proves different eras can live as one and offer the best of both


FRONT (left) The grand original facade only tells half of the design story within. **EXTERIOR** (below) A new timber extension with a picture window was grafted onto the brick structure. "It was very important to frame the north-facing garden's view and bring it back inside," says interior designer Amanda Martin. "We chose rough-sawn blackbutt cladding finished with a black wood oil by Woca to be in tune with the natural materials inside." The brick wall is painted Jaguar by Porter's Paints. Ligne Roset 'Grillage' outdoor chair, Domo.

cheat sheet

Who lives here Olivia and Rick, with their two adult daughters, Lily and Isla, and two cats, ragdoll Coco and Bengal Mia.

Style of home A double-fronted Victorian house with a contemporary 'box' added at the rear by Bluline Projects.

Location Elwood in Melbourne, land of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people.

 Building work began in July 2021 and was complete by February 2022.





HALL (left) The generous width of the corridor called for statement lights. George Nelson 'Apple Bubble' pendants from Living Edge were the natural choice. Messmate flooring, Timber & Rose. Artworks by Greg Olijnyk. **STUDY** (below left) Joinery designed by Studio Martin and created by Fenn Interiors features American oak veneer by Ventech. Desk, Dulux Natural White. Artwork by David Band. Sculptures by Greg Olijnyk. **KITCHEN** (below right and opposite) Laminex joinery in Dulux Natural White and AbsoluteMatte Black keeps the look crisp. Benchtop, Laminam Calce XL in Bianco from Signorino. Sink and mixer, Franke. Taburet stools, Life Interiors. Ligne Roset vessels, Domo. Throw, Tekla.

"The black-metal door in the hallway is the threshold between the old and new sections. Rather than blending everything, we defined the transition"

AMANDA MARTIN, INTERIOR DESIGNER



 good news

This house has reclaimed Messmate timber flooring and 5-star WELS-rated Meir tapware. Double-glazed windows, doors and skylights maximise north-facing sun, heat retention and soundproofing. Electric roller blinds make life easier.



When a home is all heritage through and through, the way forward with a renovation is usually clear – because it’s always nice to preserve old bones and beautiful features where possible.

But what about a home that is heritage up-front but non-original and lacklustre at the rear? How is a home like that best reimaged to honour its past and fully embrace its future?

This was the challenge facing sister duo Lauren and Amanda Martin from Studio Martin. An architect and interior designer respectively, they were contacted by a couple with two daughters who were almost ready to fly the coop. The family’s home in Melbourne’s Elwood was a double-fronted Victorian charmer with heritage features aplenty in its hall, music room, library and all three bedrooms. However the back section of the residence was a different story altogether. The kitchen, dining, living, laundry and bathroom all lacked flow, light and general amenity. What’s more, there was no meaningful link to the garden.

“The clients wanted to retain the Victorian heritage architecture of the home and update the non-original rear section,” says Lauren. “All this was to be a modest solution.” “They wanted the new area to have an open-plan kitchen, dining, living and study zone that opens onto the backyard. With the original back area, the garden wasn’t utilised at all.”

Often, when there’s a pre-existing incongruity between eras within a home, the new extension is tailored to ‘meet’ the old one and blur the design boundaries as much as possible. It’s a pursuit of seamlessness – or at least the illusion of it. However, Lauren and Amanda didn’t go down this standard path. Instead, they thought outside the box. And this led them, ironically, to focus on delivering a box-structured addition.

“Our solution was to remove the existing lean-to and replace it with a new black timber box with large sliding doors, abutting the original brick facade,” says Lauren. “The kitchen, living, dining and study were replanned and a little more floor space was gained, but the main focus was on delivering a higher ceiling and larger windows looking onto the backyard.”

It took nine months to finalise the design, and then it was go-time, with the renovation being executed from mid-2021 until early 2022 by Bluline Projects. The Victorian zone at the front remained intact and faithfully preserved; a coat of paint and new pendant lights in the hall were really all that was required to refresh the area. Then, further down the hall, a black metal-framed glass door was installed. “This is the threshold between the old and new sections of the home,” says Amanda. “It provides a distinct move into the new contemporary section at the rear. From the front door, you’re able to see through the

house to the green garden beyond. Rather than blending everything, we defined the transition.”

Gone is the dated, dark and impractical lean-to, replaced with the sleek box form. Amanda and Lauren dramatically reinvented the entire space, increasing the space, light, flow and functionality. With full-height joinery and finger-pull handles concealing appliances, the mostly white kitchen (with touches of oak and black) is minimalistic, however Amanda says it also ‘borrows’ greenery from the garden. Both the bench seat near the kitchen and the separate study area enjoy abundant sunlight and, of course, those garden views. All the new joinery was designed by Studio Martin and created by Fenn Interiors.

The bathroom renovation, which was a last-minute addition to the program, focused on keeping the existing footprint,

implementing clean lines and maximising light. “We chose concrete-look tiles, black fittings and a full-width glass skylight over the shower zone, which connects to the forever-changing sky and floods the space with ample light,” says Lauren.

For owners Olivia and Rick, this old-meets-new design approach is a perfect match. “We love it,” says Olivia. “We have much more space and storage. Our main areas are linked to the garden, and it’s so light and bright. We love the connection to the back garden, and walking from the old heritage section with its quirks into the modern extension is a dream.”

In this home, there’s beauty in a duality that’s both innovative and simple. There’s the old part and the new; the nostalgic and the contemporary, and it all works harmoniously. **10**

Studio Martin is at studiomartin.com.au and [@studiomartin_](https://www.instagram.com/studiomartin_)



lessons learnt

“THINGS CAN CHANGE
FAST SO ADAPTING IS KEY”

LAUREN MARTIN, ARCHITECT

“Once the project was underway, the clients added scope to redo the bathroom. There was limited time to design and specify fittings and materials, and they all had to be in stock!” In such moments, creativity, pragmatism and quick thinking are absolutely vital.

