

Stage set for sympathetic rebuild of family home

When Nathan and Louise Smith decided to renovate their "tired" family home, many assumed the Cremorne couple would work on the design themselves. The project engineer and interior designer were more than familiar with the process.

But with a young growing family, Louise said: "We know our limitations; we're not architects and we were never going to achieve something like this." They turned to architect David Boyle, who said the project presented a variety of challenges.

"The single-storey Federation house was located in a heritage conservation area, featured a range of tacked-on rooms at the rear, needed to expand to meet the family's needs, and accommodate a backyard jacaranda," Boyle said. Any plans also had to be sensitive to Nathan's attachment to the family home he'd lived in since birth.

Boyle's sculptural solution was to demolish all non-original and unsympathetic additions, including a brick garage next to the front verandah and the rear lean-to, while restoring roof-lines more in keeping with neighbouring homes. Four front bedrooms were retained,



Trisha Croaker

From the Drawing Board

with two new bathrooms and a laundry added into the existing structure, and the hall extended into an informal sitting room.

"New work included a living pavilion at the rear of the house opening

directly to the rear yard and creating a new central courtyard. This extends the landscape setting and provides light and ventilation to the new pavilion and existing house."

By lifting the living pavilion up two steps and curving it, he has simultaneously distinguished it from the existing house, levelled the new spaces with the garden for easier access, and added a dash of stage-like theatricality to the addition.

"The new pavilion has been sculpted to respond to a mature jacaranda within the rear yard. The project explores the relationship of house and garden to maximise the sense of space and opportunities for natural light, providing an open yet protected suburban environment."

Having moved in three months ago with their three children, all under four, Louise said the family absolutely "love the house and plan to be here forever".



A step up ... the living pavilion at the rear of the house is raised to create a sense of drama and allow easy access to the garden. Photos: Brigid Arnott



Opening doors ... Kooyong House by Matt Gibson Architecture + Design.

The importance of making an entrance

The average person, I've heard, takes eighteen minutes to decide to buy a house - less time than it takes to decide on a pair of shoes. What does this mean? It means our hearts rule our heads when it comes to our most valued possession.

When I moved after 22 years, from a house built in the 1850s, I was definitely downsizing to a low-maintenance townhouse or apartment with an open-plan studio-living space and terrace. What I bought was a four-bedroom rambling Victorian house with a huge garden in need of repair and restoration. I fell in love with it the moment I stepped through the door. I didn't have to rationalise the decision. It was an instant and resounding 'yes'.

Despite what you may think, first impressions are not superficial. It's like a Polaroid. Snap! Our brains register that first image and encounter. Electrodes light up, neural pathways are stimulated and memories ignited.

Whether you are selling your



Rikki Stubbs

The House Whisperer

house or want to make it as attractive as you can, first impressions count. The scented flowering pot at the front door is a statement of intent for an experience of your house. A house that is well cared for and inviting says, loudly and clearly, 'this is a home'. Not only a real estate asset, it gives you a wonderful experience each time you come home.

Weeds in the front yard speak volumes. In contrast, a beautiful front garden is one of the most thoughtful things you can do for you and your neighbours. Plants are a relatively inexpensive way of adding colour and a sculptural element.

If you can't afford to repaint, clean the front of the house. Give it a good hose, even a scrub. You'll be amazed

how much better it looks and the paint will last much longer. New guttering in a darker shade takes your eye off the ugly or faded roof tiles. Choosing the house numbers, letterbox and exterior lighting in one go gives a unified look. Revamping your front door with a rich colour gives an entrance presence.

First impressions at your home are the accumulation of hundreds of pieces of information plus a good dose of intuition. Don't discount them as cosmetic. Let your heart be your compass when choosing a house. You'll rarely get it wrong.

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