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TIM ROBARDS

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Neighbour*

Making it work

How this renovation reimagined the classic family home

RENOVATE

Taking it personally



Creating a house to meet the specific needs of its owners reveals a surprisingly flexible floorplan, writes Robyn Willis

For all intents and purposes, this house in Bardwell Park looks like a standard family home — albeit a beautifully renovated one. But look a little closer at the spaces designed by architect Mark Szczerbicki and you discover some small but significant differences.

The owners of this four-bedroom 1930s house were looking for multiple, but flexible, living spaces, not bedrooms.

“The brief was just for a couple and their two dalmatians,” says Mark. “There were no children to accommodate so we could focus on other things. It was less about the bedrooms and more about creating social spaces.”

Mark took the existing front four bedrooms and converted them into a master bedroom suite, a music room that doubles as a guest bedroom, a study and a TV room. At the rear, a new extension steps down a level into an open plan kitchen and dining area opening onto a deck and separate studio space.

THE PROJECT

Owners

A couple with two dalmatians

Architect

Mark Szczerbicki,
markszczerbicki.com

The problem

A standard family home that did not fully suit the needs of a couple looking to pursue their interests and display their collections

The site

A freestanding 1930s brick cottage in Bardwell Park

Design solution

To reassign the front bedrooms for living spaces while creating an open plan kitchen and dining space with a studio in the garden.

How long did it take?

Eight months



HOME TOP TIP
 STYLE
 When working with older houses, go for classic but simple finishes



MODERN classic

“The idea was for it to be a beautiful, uplifting space,” Mark says. “At night time it can be really intimate for the two of them or they can have a bigger party that spills onto the deck.”

Because the owners did not add another floor to their house, there

“IT WAS LESS ABOUT THE BEDROOMS AND MORE ABOUT CREATING SOCIAL SPACES AND ROOM FOR ACTIVITIES.”

was no need to prune a jacaranda tree that hangs over the neighbours’ fence. Instead, they used it as borrowed landscape.

“They love the huge jacaranda tree in their neighbours’ yard so much that they have a massive skylight in the dining area where

they can sit and watch the flowers fall,” says Mark. “They say it’s better than watching TV.”

One of the owners has an interest in music while the other is a keen ceramicist. While the music room allowed for one of the owner’s interests, Mark created a separate studio for the other.

“It faces north and it’s a simple pared back space — it’s very sunny and warm,” says Mark. “At the moment, there is just a potter’s wheel in there but it has provision for a kiln.”

Mark and the owners have tried to think ahead as much as possible. Although the house relies mostly on thermal mass to regulate the temperature, an old fireplace in the front of the house has been converted to gas while there is provision for another at the back, should the need arise.

Although it’s a very personal response to the owners’ needs, Mark says the floorplan is designed to be flexible.

“If they wanted to market the house as a four-bedroom family home, they could,” he says.

Pictures: Tom Ferguson

The new extension (above) has a vaulted ceiling for drama while the concrete slab keeps the space cool in summer and warm in winter. The separate studio (right) is small but has everything the owners require. It is proving a popular spot with all members of the family.

THE SOURCE

Builder Miso Building
 0414 292 949

Joinery New Age Kitchens,
 newagekitchens.com.au

Dining room tiles and pendants
 from Anchor Ceramics,
 anchorceramics.com

Kitchen pendant light, handmade
 from The Lighting Guild,
 thelightingguild.org

Round barstools from Thonet,
 thonet.com.au

