

PHOTOGRAPHY Armelle Habib/Living Inside

STYLING Simone Haag

WORDS Rachel Christie



take the plunge

Interior designer Liz Hall dived in head first when it came to transforming her now utterly amazing Aussie home



LIVING ROOM

The architecture, including the ceiling oculus here and the new pavilion with pool in the garden (left), is the star of the show.

Sofa, Minotti at Dedece. **Table**, Hugh Lane. **La Pipe chair** (just seen), Friends & Founders at Fred International. **Artwork**, Jasper Knight at James Makin Gallery

home profile

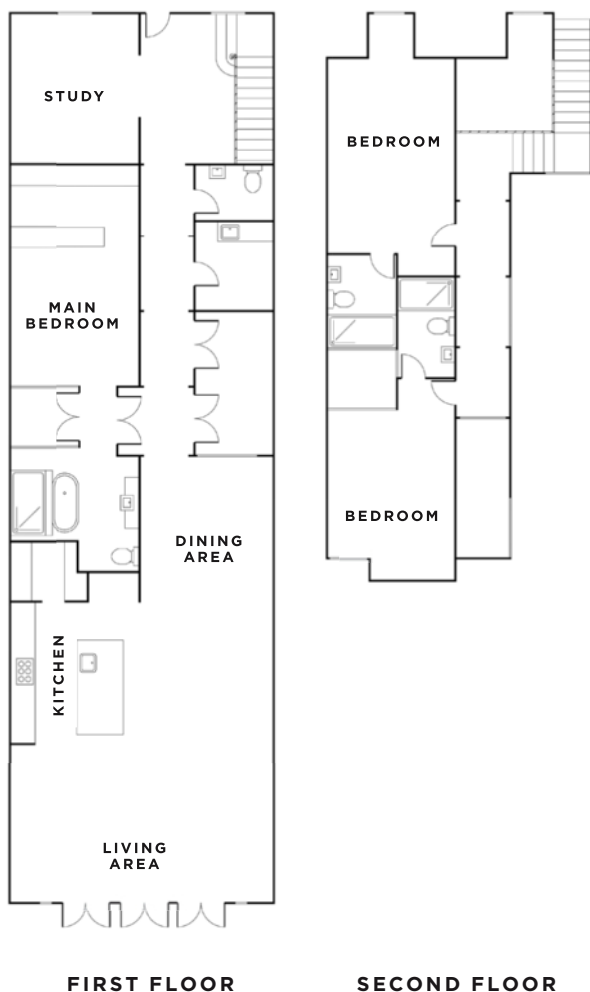
THE OWNERS

Interior designer Liz Hall and her husband Gavin Wright, a thoracic surgeon, and their dog Monty.

THE PROPERTY

A completely revamped three-bedroom Victorian home with all the main living areas downstairs, including the main bedroom with en-suite bathroom, study, open-plan dining, kitchen and living space. Upstairs there are two further bedrooms, each with an en suite. There's also a two-storey modern pavilion in the garden with a garage, a room for indoor cycling, a kitchenette, steam room, bathroom and an outdoor terrace with plunge pool.

the blueprint



FIRST FLOOR

SECOND FLOOR

Seeking their forever home, Liz Hall and Gavin Wright couldn't believe their luck when they found a Victorian property in need of TLC in their dream area of Richmond, East Melbourne. Brimming with ideas and with help from Nicholas Murray Architects, the couple knew they could transform this tired home into a contemporary sanctuary. Aside from the 1800s facade, the house was beyond repair and required a whole new interior. 'We wanted something we could make our own and this was perfect,' says Liz Hall, director at Studio Apercu. 'Before we moved here, we had an industrial warehouse in the next suburb over, called Fitzroy, which is a grungy, hipster area but we wanted a garden and a dog. Richmond is a sleepy place that's full of trees and Victorian homes, while still being close to the city.'

Liz wasn't always an interior designer. In fact, her previous career was in law but she packed it in to retrain. As the house was derelict and was being completely reworked, Liz was thrown into the deep end, adopting a hands-on role that included attending site meetings, sourcing materials and selecting finishes and fixtures. 'I told our architect Nicholas that we wanted something completely different,' says Liz. 'I was looking for a classic design with a modern twist, a blend of old and new. I love Parisian Haussmann-style apartments with their parquet flooring and classic detailing. That was my inspiration – I wanted a feeling of height and space.'

A rear courtyard separates the house from a new and totally amazing double-storey pavilion, a space dedicated to hanging out with friends and also for fitness (it has a plunge pool). The couple were reluctant to install a pool because of the maintenance, but Nicholas designed it with self-cleaning technology. 'The plunge pool was very much Nick. He convinced us and came up with the idea of including it over the garage at the back; we love being able to see the colour of the pool from the living room. We found green Sukabumi stone tiles often seen in Balinese swimming pools – it's just such a beautiful colour. The whole set-up has seen some heavy use over the last few months,' says Liz, referring to Melbourne's Covid lockdown.

In terms of the interiors, Liz was after something more European as opposed to Melbourne's typically dark Victorian-era look. A palette of cool blues and greys is warmed up with floors in hand-laid French oak parquet. Nicholas applied subtle decorative elements to the new spaces by way of slim cornices, panelled doors and marble fireplaces. To bring in extra light, he added steel-framed windows, a series of colonnaded arches and a central oculus with a perimeter frame that links back to the balustrade edging on the staircase.

Longevity was a priority for Liz and Gavin. 'The reason we made all the living space downstairs is we don't plan on moving again. We didn't want to have any rooms that we would need to access upstairs when we get old and can't get up the stairs any more,' says Liz. 'We'd always had our eye on this suburb – an oasis in the middle of the city. It's absolutely beautiful and this is the perfect forever home for us.'

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studioapercu.com.au; nma.net.au; simonehaag.com.au



ENTRANCE HALL

'I wanted something that was minimalist; it's not overtly fancy, but it's just got a beautiful sculptural essence to it,' says Liz.

Henry Wilson **table lamp**; Be-lieve **credenza** by Mingardo, both Hub. Bone **chair** 01 by Loic Bard, Radnor. Apparatus Triad 9 **pendant light**, Criteria Collection



KITCHEN

French oak parquet flooring not only provides textural interest, but also brings warmth to the cool colour scheme.

Bar stools, J.M. Szymanski.
Yellow sculptures by Basil Papoutsidis at James Makin Gallery. Span pendant light, Living Edge



STUDY

An arched opening adds a sense of grandeur and helps lead your eye through to the space.

Vintage reupholstered **armchair** (left), Don Cameron. Vintage **chair** (right), Fornasetti. Neverending Glory Prague Estate **pendant**, Lasvit. **Fireplace surround**, Richard Ellis Design



LIVING ROOM

The brief for this space was to create a seamless blend of vintage and modern elements.

Vintage **bar cart**, Smith Street Bazaar. Serge Mouille swing arm **wall lamp**, 1stDibs



EN SUITE
Tree-print wallpaper delivers
a calm, meditative feel.

Wet System **wallpaper**,
Wall&decò. Triangolo **chair**,
Frama. Etruscan **bath**, The
Albion Bath Company



MAIN BEDROOM

An internal courtyard helps bring light into this space.

Artwork, Robert Malherbe at James Makin Gallery. Arctic Pear **chandelier**; Scorpion **wall light**, both Ochre

home truths

PIECE YOU'D LOVE TO OWN?

Art, art and more art! I'm always seeing paintings, drawings and sculptures that I'd love to have, but there's never enough room for them.

BEST COLOUR COMBO?

Navy blue and black.

DESIGN INSPIRATION?

Fine art and fashion.

FAVOURITE ROOM?

The entrance. It's an open, light and simply furnished space. I love the sculptural nature of the stair balustrade and the Apparatus Triad 9 pendant is my favourite light fitting in the house.

DREAM HOUSE/LOCATION?

A Haussmannian apartment in Paris.



GARDEN

Generous planting around the seating softens the sleek lines.

Lerod **chairs** by Alexander Lotersztain at Stylecraft.
Custom **table** in terrazzo from The Plutonic Furniture Co