

RAW TALENT

Concrete, recycled timber and steel are the backbone of this new

home that *connects organically* with the natural environment.



Photographs DEREK SWALWELL · Words CARLI PHILIPS

These pages The facade is finished in white concrete and spotted gum. The dark-tiled swimming pool, framed in timber provides a link between the main house and the guest pavilion. Large sliding glass doors offer a seamless flow from indoors to out. Tait 'Volley' rocker and chair and 'Nano' table.

This page A large painting, *Dibiribi Country* by Sally Gabari, hangs above the custom-designed sideboard in the living room. Jordan 'Milo' modular sofa. 'Fortuny' lamp from Poliform. Opposite page Recycled tallowwood floor in the living/dining area. Dining table from Mark Tuckey is matched with Møller '71' chairs from Great Dane Furniture.



Dubbed the 'In-situ' house for its literal on-site construction and positioning, this house occupies a special place in the heart of its current owner who grew up in her family home on the exact site. A recent demolition and three-year re-build has made way for her adult life and the new, contemporary residence that she now occupies with her own young family. It may be a rectilinear house but it has come full circle.

Taking into account the owner's extensive art collection, architect Rob Kennon decided to not compete visually and chose an organic colour palette. However, this wasn't achieved by superficial design choices like simply "painting surfaces white", he says. "It really came down to the core materials we used that are not just neutral but natural," referring to the concrete, recycled timber, raw steel and furnishings such as linen and wool carpets that are used throughout.

Indeed, the aesthetics are overwhelmingly informed by materials "that literally form the supporting structure, finished exterior skin, internal ceilings, floors and walls," says Rob. "It's a very honest response to the way the building has been constructed. It's all one and the same thing. What you see is what you get."

Pouring the concrete in-situ was a direct response to the property's steep slope and six-metre fall from front to back on a mudstone hill. While the site was challenging, Rob used this to considerable advantage, creating a spotted gum deck that hinges off the living and kitchen area. Also at the rear of the block, a double-storey guest pavilion has been designed in the same style and materials as the main house, with a waxed concrete floor and bespoke joinery. Aboriginal artworks are arranged salon-style on a naturally lit, mint-hued wall. The dark-tiled swimming pool bridges the change in levels between the two buildings.

The client brief took more of a sensory approach rather than specific, strictly functional requirements, says Rob. "We discussed what the house was going to feel like, to touch, and how it was going to connect with the natural environment."

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This page A custom-designed pendant light by Rob Kennon hangs over the Stone Italiana 'Jalpur' bench in the kitchen. Black ceramic tiles make a dramatic splashback. Artwork by Noah Taylor. **Opposite page, clockwise from top left** Norm 'Raf' barstools from Great Dane Furniture in the guest studio. Kilim from Michael Love Interior Design. Aboriginal bird figures from Echo Island. Artworks are (top left) Tjawa Tjawa by Bai Bai Napangarti, (below) a print of a painting by Helicopter, and (right) Soakage Water of Kirimalunya by George Ward Tjungurrayi. On the deck, 'Valley' rocker and chair, 'Nano' table and 'Garden Tower' planters. Artwork, Sugarland 21 by Louise Bytner, and photograph, Poolside Gossip by Slim Aarons, in the master bedroom living area. Wall painted in Peaceful Dawn from Paint Place Group is the backdrop to a collection of Aboriginal artworks.



SPEED READ

» Architect Rob Kennon has designed a new home for this suburban Melbourne site where the owner grew up. » Organic materials such as concrete, steel and recycled timber were employed, along with furnishings in natural linen and wool. » The sloping site was initially a challenge but the resulting design, encompassing a main house and guest pavilion linked by the swimming pool, is inspired. » The owner's extensive Aboriginal art collection was allowed to shine against a neutral colour palette.



This page Bed is made with Bedouin Société linen. Artwork by Kate Tucker. Custom joinery in lined oak rift veneer. Opposite page Concrete bath and basins from Boyd Alternatives. Stone Italiana Joinery benchtop in Thyme. Nora 'Raft' stool from Great Dane Furniture.



To that end, there was a strong commitment to organic textures, local craftsmanship and artisanal manufacturers. Sections of recycled tallowwood from an old bridge in Brisbane are used as balustrading, while rounded, concrete basins and baths were handmade in Kyneton by Boyd Alternatives. Off-form concrete was made with off-white cement sourced from the foothills of the Flinders Ranges, and the joinery was custom designed in-house using lined oak rift veneer.

For both client and architect, the surrounding natural environment was "equally as important as the house". Says Rob, "If I go back there in five years I'd be very happy for the house to be engulfed by greenery." A concrete lattice crib retaining wall with planting pockets for greenery stretches the full width of the house, providing light to the lower-level spaces.

Accessible via a garden path that opens into a subtly lit entry with connections to a bamboo forest outside, "the house unfolds through a series of spaces that expand and contract with darkness and light", says Rob. "Circulation is via a classic, single-flight stair core, flanked by heavy concrete walls, acoustically and spatially connecting each level and eliminating the need for corridors."

A cellar and playroom are in the basement, while the quieter ground-floor entry level is occupied by the children's bedrooms. These "darker, more cavernous" spaces rise up into the sun-drenched first-floor living area – the "epicentre" of the house.

Reigning over the top floor is the parents' retreat with bedroom, bathroom and living area cocooned with soft, linen curtains. In turn, this is wrapped by an external perimeter garden that looks out, through the treetops, to the city. 15

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