

Beyond the fuchsia front door of this quaint 1893 house is an explosion of colour and art



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Open the fuchsia front door of this quaint 1893 Victorian house with its original cream wrought iron lacework and you are jolted by an explosion of colour, art and creative expression. Beyond the soft mauve grey facade in a tree-lined Prahran street, the home's lively interior celebrates colour to the max and has an art collection that leaves one speechless.

Each room, including the service areas, is layered with colour and art.



Lurid fluorocolours are highlighted in a resin chandelier and a three-seater lounge daubed The Throne, that was originally created for a Hermes exhibition. TOM BLACHFORD [HTTPS://TOMBLACHFORD.COM/](https://tomblachford.com/)

The wide central hallway, typical of the era, still retains its decorative plaster arch. Rather than being the usual milky cream colour, it's mulberry and set against deep rose walls. The home office is pale blue and the main bedroom the softest of pale pink.



The owner is clearly obsessed with art and sculpture. TOM BLACHFORD [HTTPS://TOMBLACHFORD.COM/](https://tomblachford.com/)

“You could say that I am clearly obsessed with art and sculpture, but I was certainly ready for a change,” says the owner, who was renting a house nearby during the renovation and who was, in her words, “bored with beige”.

The house, which she owned for 15 years before the reno, was rundown. Things had not been fixed or replaced. The owner and her architect, Melanie Beynon, knew a high-rise apartment was going to be built on an adjacent block fronting a major road.



A bland white kitchen in the midst of all this art would have been disappointing. Instead, there is deep salmon pink joinery and copper cupboards below the central island bench. TOM BLACHFORD [HTTPS://TOMBLACHFORD.COM/](https://tomblachford.com/)

“We had to create a more internalised design rather than thinking about large picture windows,” says Beynon, who used a series of skylights to allow for light to permeate the core (including the stairwell) as well as a large lozenge-shape skylight in the new living area at the rear.

The two courtyards inserted into the floor plan, separating the original home from the new open-plan living wing, also draw in light as much while featuring the outdoor sculptures.



Many other artworks cover each centimetre of wall space in every room. TOM BLACHFORD [HTTPS://TOMBLACHFORD.COM/](https://tomblachford.com/)

Calling the open-plan kitchen, dining and living area “brave” would be a discourtesy to the owner, Beynon, and artist Kate Rohde, one of Australia’s eminent artists.

Rohde’s lurid fluorocolours are highlighted in a resin chandelier and a three-seater lounge daubed *The Throne*, that was originally created for a Hermes exhibition. Her wallpaper appears across the rear wall and Deer Urns, fantastical in their expression, enliven the living space, as do the floor-to-ceiling photos by Joseph McGlennon, depicting exotic parrots as electrifying as Rohde’s work.



The home office is pale blue and the main bedroom the softest of pale pink. TOM BLACHFORD [HTTPS://TOMBLACHFORD.COM/](https://tomblachford.com/)

Many of the other artworks cover each centimetre of wall space in every room – including Tamara Dean, Chole Tizzard, Romina Ressia, Patricia Piccinini, Christian Thompson and Petrina Hicks.

To create the right balance between the art and the physical interior, Beynon pulled no punches. A bland white kitchen in the midst of all this art would have been disappointing. Instead, Beynon opted for deep salmon pink joinery and copper cupboards below the central island bench. The latter, finished in two types of onyx, pale pink and a mottled green, create a dialogue with Rohde’s works and the other artists.

“I certainly wasn’t just looking for a traditional extension. Each of the walls were designed and placed to accommodate the art rather than the other way around,” says the owner.

The home’s extension, a cantilevered form, is also out of the box. Its angular form (to allow for rear parking) is slightly evocative of the futuristic 1960s cartoon series, *The Jetsons*. And to bridge the link with the original house, Beynon designed a slightly Moorish-style dome.

It’s also a family home, and includes children’s bedrooms and a separate lounge on the first level, which itself is brimming with great art along a deep Yves Klein blue passage.

The home has a rooftop garden. But rather than going up just to enjoy Melbourne’s skyline, the owner opted to focus on a sculpture by Christopher Langton instead. In the courtyards below there are no delicate Japanese maples. Instead, there are bronze sculptures, one by artist Jason Waterhouse depicting a flame tree and the other by Natalie Ryan of three circling flying bats, waiting for their prey.

I’ve reviewed many great architectural feats, and sometimes feel like I’ve seen everything, but this Prahran house opened up an entirely new world, leaving me speechless, excited and, simply, in awe.

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