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kitchen & bathroom Guest Editor Mardi Doherty Living design

ISSUE SEVEN OF THE COLLECTABLES

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Luminous

PRISMATIC HOUSE

MELANIE BEYNON ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

WURUNDJERI WOI-WURRUNG AND BUNURONG COUNTRY / PRAHRAN, VIC

TEXT STEPHEN CRAFTI

PHOTOGRAPHY TOM BLACHFORD

Designing a house destined to be filled with art, there is the safe road of white, but there is also the option for a definitive statement of colour.







PREVIOUS

Bespoke wallpaper by Kate Rohde lead the eye through the purple on pink junction between old and new.

OPPOSITE

A two-toned marble and quartz island bench, is as luminous as Kate Rohde's chandelier over the dining table.

ABOVE

Curves are amplified through colour shifts.

Designed by Melanie Beynon, an architect and interior designer, it was conceived for a client with not just a 'passion' but an 'obsession', as she says, for art.

The Victorian house had been in the family for several years before the decision was made to renovate and extend. From the outset, the brief given to Beynon and her team was succinct – the design had to be tailor-made for the art rather than the house. The design informed the placement of art and sculpture, with work by some of Australia's most significant artists: Kate Rohde, Patricia Piccinini, Petrina Hicks, Joseph McGlennon, Chloe Tizzard, Tamara Dean, and Christian Thompson, just to name a few. "I wasn't looking for a gallery-like space, with pristine white walls. I was after something that captured the work I collect and my aesthetic," says the owner, who is proud to say that her taste in art is 'deliciously disturbing'.

As the house faced some planning issues, including the need to create off-street parking

and, more importantly, an impending high-rise development that would impinge on aspect, Beynon opted for a more internalised approach. Rather than having large picture windows to a back garden, the preference was for a series of skylights in the home, across what is now two levels with a roof terrace. Two modest-sized courtyards either side of the home's central passage also allow for soft northern and western light. And at the junction between the original part of the house and the new, there's now a Moorish-style arched alcove that adds to the 'journey'.

For Beynon, opportunities such as this one are few and far between. Most prefer a safe option (read 'resale') and tend to prefer a more neutral palette of both finishes and colours. Here, there was the opportunity to go to the max. Hence, the kitchen, with its two-toned marble and quartz island bench, is as luminous as Kate Rohde's chandelier over the dining table and her 'Throne', that formed part of an exhibition of Hermès in 2023 in Sydney.



“The evolution of the design into full colour came about organically with the client. Meshing interior architecture with colour has created a joyful experience proving that it is not just light and form that makes architecture dynamic,” says Beynon.

The fluorescent urns, also by Rohde, further enliven the space, as does her customised wallpaper. While the front rooms are relatively sedate in tone, one being the main bedroom in soft pinks and the other, the home office, in powder blue, the art is powerful at every turn.

Even the few ‘breathing spaces’ such as the stairwell, with its curved walls and porthole-shape skylights, take you into another zone – the children’s wing is accessed through an Yves Klein blue passage. Given there was a need for privacy and to prevent overlooking in anticipation of the impending high-rise apartments on an adjacent block, Beynon included unusual glass blocks as part of the windows on the first level, allowing privacy but also creating diffused light.

Rather than dilute this design, every room has been designed for art. The architecture itself is as brave, with a cantilevered and irregular-shaped wing ‘stitched’ to the rear to allow for the children’s wing located on the first floor. This also creates a protective canopy for the rear garden, orientated to the west. “Everything has been fully customised to suit each room,” says Beynon, pointing out the handmade glass wall sconces in the ensuite of the main bedroom, designed by Leisa Wharington. And, like other spaces in the house, there’s a sculpture near the bathtub. Moreover, rather than plants filling the courtyards – as is the norm – there is a bronze sculpture by Jason Waterhouse complemented by three bronze flying foxes circling by Natalie Ryan.

For many, this visual overload may cause some ‘pushback’. For this writer, it was an experience that will linger for years to come!

melaniebeynon.com.au

ABOVE
Rose onyx is combined with pale lilac for an elegant feminine mood.

OPPOSITE
Pink and green onyx combine in the ensuite as a calm respite from the bold colours of the house, while bespoke sconce wall lights designed by Leisa Wharington continue the wow factor.





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OPPOSITE
An Yves Klein blue
passage connects to the
children's wing.

ABOVE
The natural blue of Azul
Macaubas quartzite is
paired with an abundance
of mid blue cabinetry to
great effect.