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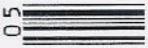
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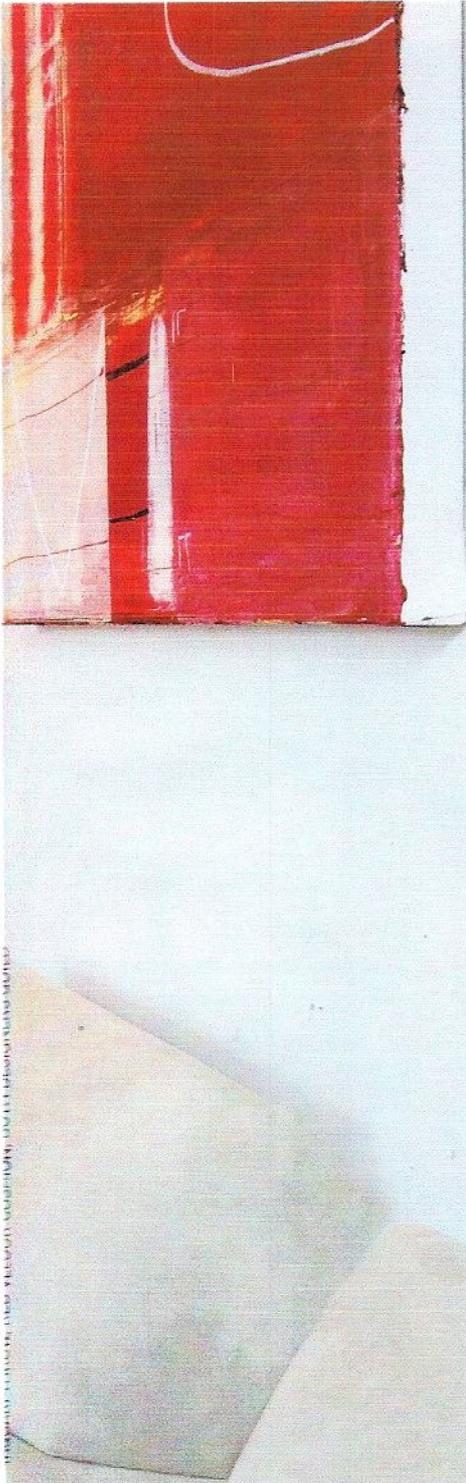
THIS PAGE Easy living: armchairs in pumice-coloured Macrosuede sit alongside a charcoal sofa, a wedding present from Amber's parents. Diptych artwork *Rouille Axe* by George Raftopoulos.



all in the detail

With an expert eye, one Melbourne couple creates a tranquil haven for their young family

PRODUCED BY WENDY BANNISTER PHOTOGRAPHY SHANIA SHEGEDYN STORY MARGIE SHEEDY

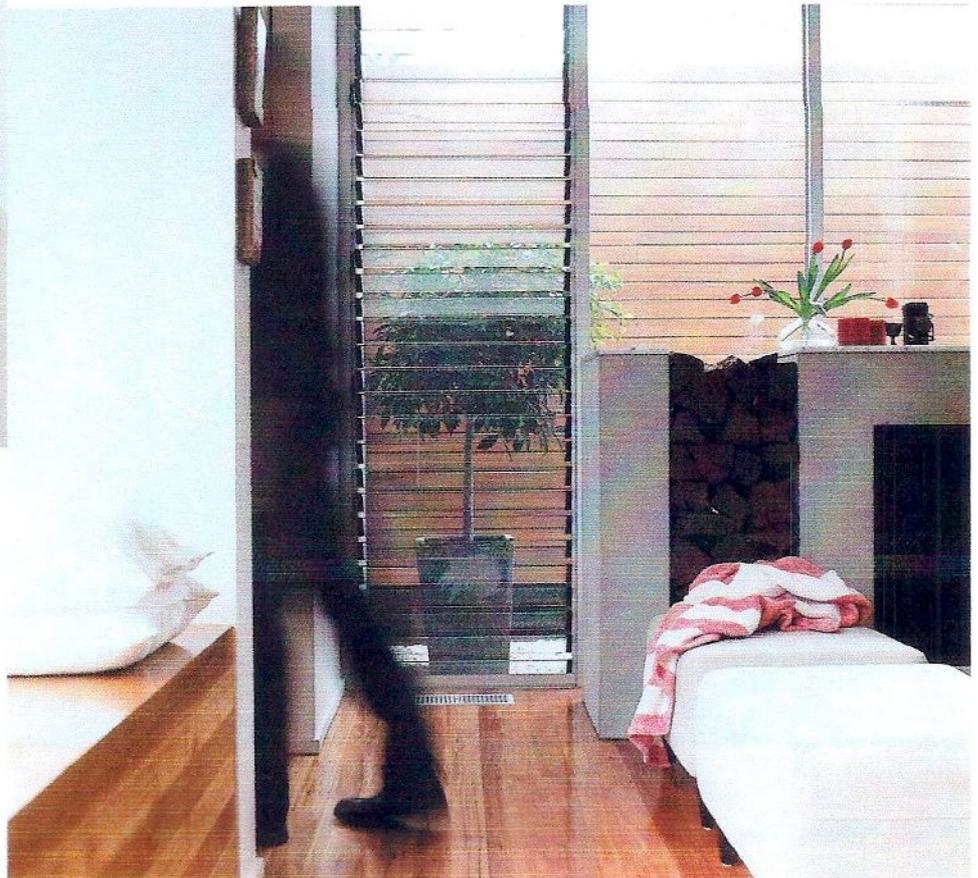


Something special. That's what Matthew Fitton and Amber Biese wanted to create for themselves and their young family when they bought their Victorian era house in Melbourne's inner-city.

The bones were there: the house has a northerly aspect, beautiful original cornices, a double arch in the hall and a marble fireplace.

Three years later, it is transformed into a peaceful and inviting haven, due largely to knocking out the back of the house and putting in a magnificent wet-edged pool straight out of a luxury-resort brochure.

"We spent more than \$400,000 on the house's renovation," admits Matthew who, along with Amber, does this sort of thing for a living through their property development business, Tin Shed Holdings. >



RIGHT Louvred windows are the most versatile energy-saving way of cooling the house. **TOP** The interiors are painted in Dulux Antique White USA. Artwork, as before.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES BRIDGES; STYLING: JESSICA HARRIS; INTERIORS: TINSHEDEHOLDINGS.COM



THIS PHOTO The shimmering resort-style pool is absolute luxury. **LEFT** The fiberglass table is rendered in the same render as the house. "It was like icing a big cake," says Amber.



TIN SHED HOLDINGS 0419 354 210 ARCHITECT TIM JACKSON, JACKSON CLEMENTS BURROWS (03) 9654 6227

< "But if you do things well, you'll get that back a couple of times when you sell."

Doing things well for them meant focusing on the details – take the stunning black-tiled pool.

"It was the first thing we thought of for the new house," Amber says. "We saw something similar at a resort in Bali we stayed in some years ago, and thought it'd be fantastic to have in a home."

"We wanted something that we would use more than just three months of the year," says Matthew. "So the pool had to be a visual feature. The surface is reflective and the trickle of water over the edge creates a beautifully peaceful ambience."

Architect Tim Jackson, of Jackson Clements Burrows, says the installation of the pool was possible because the house is on a sloping block. "When the back of the house was knocked out, we just rebuilt it on a platform so that the house was virtually one level, including the deck and pool."

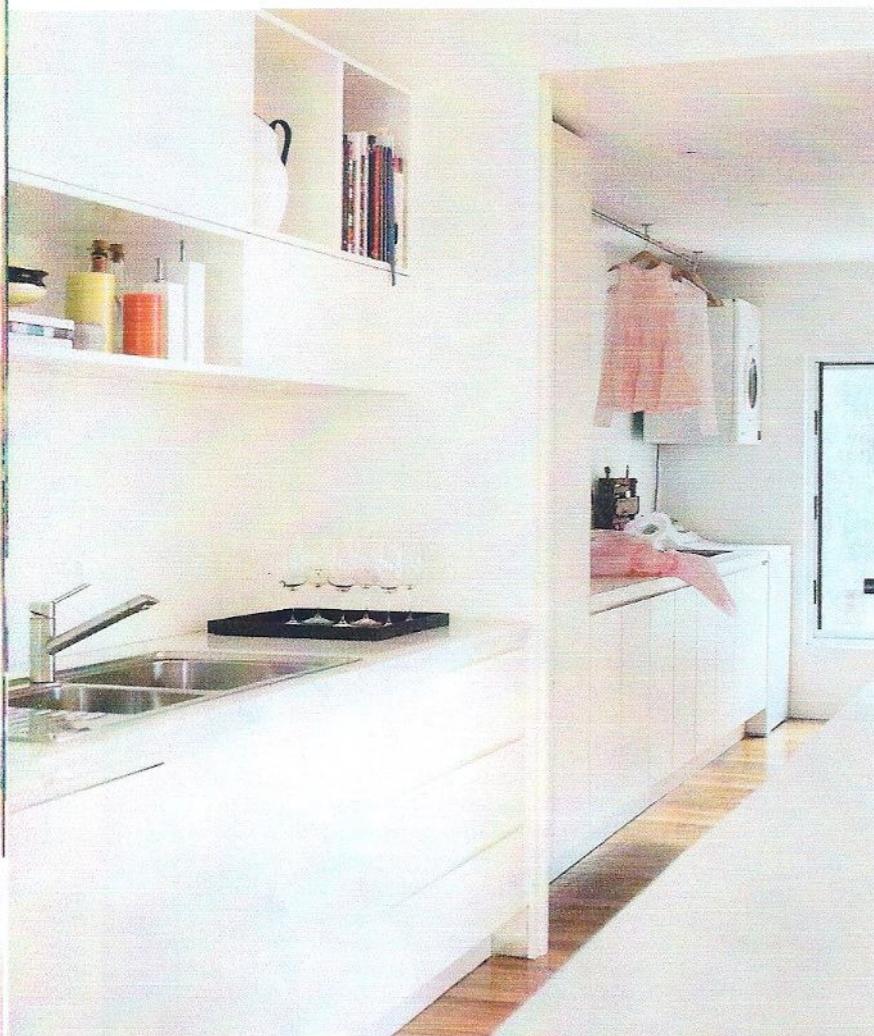
The result is a magical vista of glistening water, particularly at night when the pool lights are on.

There were, however, some safety fence requirements that the couple had to meet before council approved the pool's design.

"I wanted to get away from a traditional pool fence," says Amber. "So we decided to bring the pool out of the ground so that its bottom wall forms a pool fence. And a glass fence goes into the yard from the bottom of the stairs."

Adequate latches were also installed on the bi-fold glass doors. Does she worry about not having a traditional fence with three young children?

"Their safety was a consideration, which is why we have the latch on the bi-fold doors, and the kids go out into the backyard through a different door," she says. "Once they're in the yard, they >



< can't access the pool area because of the glass fence. And we never let the kids onto the deck unsupervised. That's the only time we open all the bi-fold doors, or when they're tucked in bed."

The family lived in the house for nine months during the back extension and pool's construction. They were literally able to watch it all happen.

"We used the existing kitchen while our new one was added," says Matthew, "and we could use one of the bathrooms. We moved out for only a few weeks while the builders finished the area."

The hardest part, according to Amber, was the fact that the children didn't have a backyard to play in. "It was like a bog out there for nine months."

To compensate, the kids got their own playroom. "It's great because they have their own space that we can see into from the open-plan area through a slot window at kiddy height," she says.

There was also the challenge of melding two architectural styles: the original Victorian features of lavish cornice work and marble fireplaces with the modern extension and bi-fold glass doors.

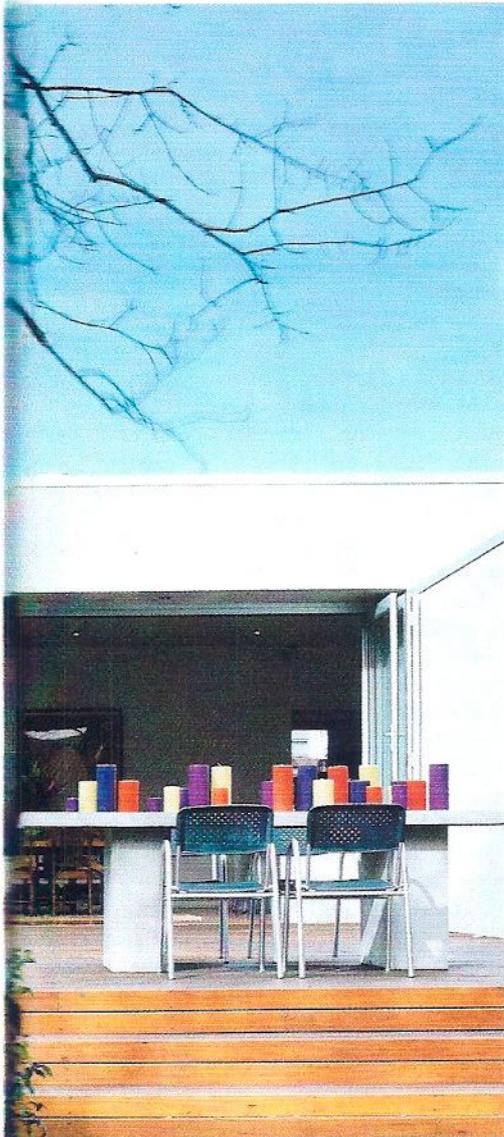
"A marble step creates a clean break that makes the two areas of the house quite distinct," says Amber. "At the front of the house, there's polished Baltic pine floorboards. Then you step down onto blackbutt boards that run in a different direction."

The whole house is painted in Dulux Antique White USA to give it uniformity. This allowed the couple to splash out with personal touches and artwork they've collected over the years.

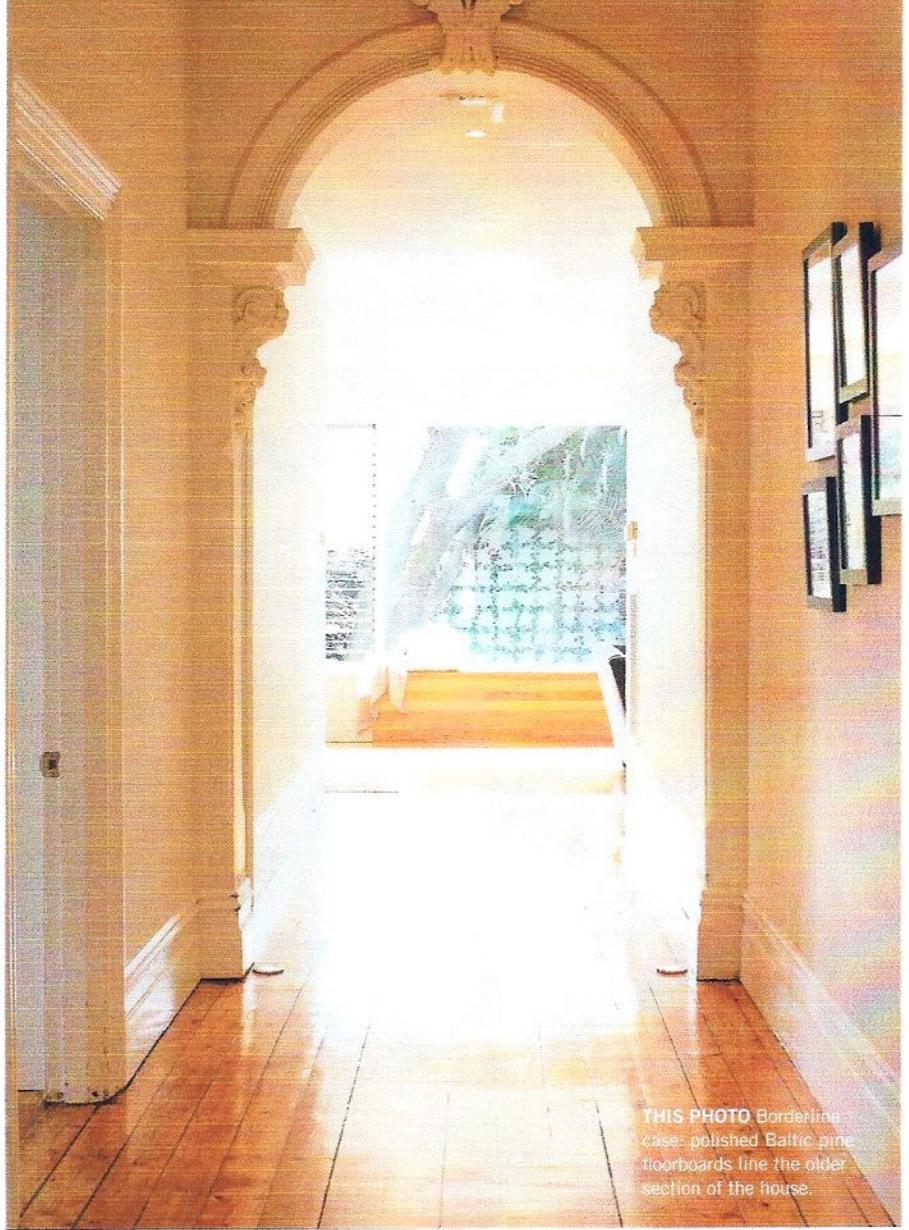
"It's all about creating the type of lifestyle features you want to be surrounded by," Matthew adds. "If you try to do this in your work and at home, you'll be happy." **hb**

RIGHT Cafe olé! A shiny lever-pull Gaggia coffee machine takes pride of place on the kitchen bench. Stainless-steel stools from Freedom Furniture. **TOP** White marble benchtops dominate the spacious kitchen and laundry.

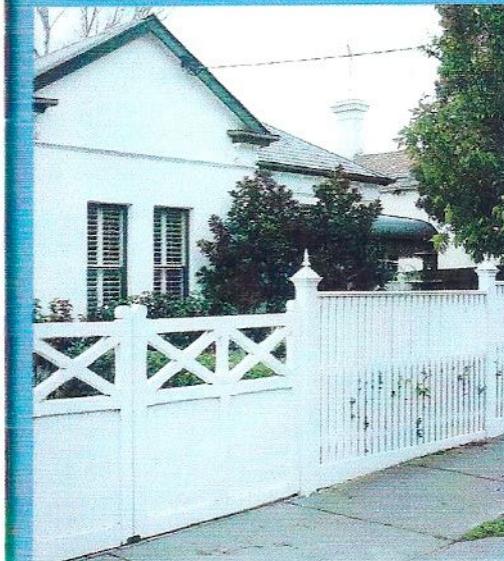




OUT OF THE BLUE (03) 9855 1950 VARIOUS CANDLES, ROOST HOMEWARE, BELIVISO CORNFLOWER NAPKINS, DESIGNERS GUILD



THIS PHOTO Borderline case: polished Baltic pine floorboards line the older section of the house.



TRUE CONFESSIONS

WHO LIVES HERE? Matthew Fitton, 37, and Amber Biesse, 35, who own property development company Tin Shed Holdings, their children Zachary, seven, India, four and the newest arrival, baby Flynn.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE SPOT IN THE HOUSE? For Amber, it's the open-plan living area and the long bench seat near the back glass doors. But Matthew loves his 12.5x2.5 meter cellar beneath the kitchen, which can house up to 5000 bottles of wine.

HOW HAVE YOU BROUGHT THE OUTDOORS INSIDE? "With the big glass bi-fold doors," says Matthew. "They're made up of three panels which pivot and run as a track. One door has special latching to keep in

line with safety regulations regarding the pool. We can unpin the doors for one-off occasions, such as parties on the deck. Or you can just sit inside and look out at the pool and the garden – very relaxing."

WHAT WOULD YOU REPEAT IN YOUR NEXT HOME? "We'd repeat the best things – the pool's proximity to the house and the entertaining area," says Matthew.

IS THERE ANY FEATURE OF YOUR RENOVATION THAT NEARLY DIDN'T HAPPEN? "The black tiles in the pool," admits Matthew. "At first, the pool builder, from Out of the Blue, said we were mad, because the black would look cold and uninviting. But because black is highly reflective, the water looks so clear, and now he loves it. It's like looking out onto a lake."



THIS PHOTO India's room is a pretty girl's space in shades of pink, with a mirror made from old pine skirting boards, then painted with limewash and Porter's Paints Persia.

it's about creating the lifestyle you want to be surrounded by

things we love



louvre windows
We love louvres because they're the most versatile form of cross-ventilation. Buy them from any window manufacturer, or your builder can organise installation. Stolar Joinery (03) 9547 6511, installed the Allair Louvres by Breezeway Australia, 1800 777 758. They cost about \$100 to \$150 more per window than conventional windows because of the mechanisms and they're more labour intensive to install. But Amber says they're worth it!



rendered outdoor table
It looks like a massive polished concrete table, but Amber and Matthew can move this rendered fibreglass table by themselves. The table cost \$1500 from Supply & Demand (03) 9428 6912, and then Amber rendered it. If you're applying render to fibreglass and terracotta, look for a modified render mix with acrylic in it, as it is less likely to crack, and prime the surface with an acrylic undercoat to make it even more resilient.