

NEW
HOMES

RENOVATION

Futuristic and wildly original

A normal facade hides this incredible rear end, writes **Lou Sweeney**.

YOU can tell a renovation has been a success on a number of levels when the owners talk about how much they loved their architect, builder and just about everyone involved in the process.

Julie Todaro and Steve Andrews' double-fronted brick Edwardian in North Fitzroy presents to the street like a number in this stretch.

In fact, even when you open the front door, you don't get too much of an indication of the eye-popping work that's been done out the back.

With two small children, Marcus, nearly 3 and Olivia, almost 1, the original footprint of the Edwardian proved limiting. Enter architect Andrew Maynard and the beginning of that love affair.

"When we bought the house we always intended renovating," says Mr Andrews. "Originally the house pretty much ended at the wall where the dining room is with a lean-to and outhouse attached to the back."

For a young family in this funky part of town, that configuration was never going to cut it.



Funky and just a little bit futuristic: the main living space, above, and upstairs office, below.

PICTURES: ROGER CUMMINGS

"The first time we saw Andrew's drawings we fell in love with his ideas. We knew his work so had great confidence and gave him a very

open brief," says Ms Todaro.

A quick description of the front section is required to understand the brilliance of Mr Maynard's re-imagining of the rear.

Through the leadlight entry is the hallway and, on either side, bright bedrooms with fireplaces and more leadlights above the windows.

Under the mid-hall leadlight fretwork and there is the bright lounge room, leading to the main bedroom on the right with a smallish but smart new ensuite.

Another leadlight door leads to the dining room, where you first catch a glimpse of the back section.

A wide column with lines of sight and access on either side separates this room from the open-plan section at the back of the house.

Stepping down here is a bit like stepping into a brave new world of design. It's extraordinarily original but at the same time simple, functional and family oriented.

"We do a lot of entertaining," says Mr Andrews, "and we wanted this area to be a people room, for kids and friends, a space without a telly where we can all congregate."

The kitchen set to the right side is not the first thing you notice out

here, a mean feat considering its bold red colour scheme. "I wasn't sure about red but Andrew convinced us to go with it and it looks just great," says Ms Todaro.

Another natty feature is the bathroom. An opaque door set into the wall looks for all the world like a bit of useful cupboard space but you step up into the fine bathroom.

In front is the living area, where floor-to-ceiling windows rise up to the first level. It's here that things start to get really interesting.

The couple call the graphic mosaics on their windows "the stickers" but such an appellation doesn't really get across the stunning visual effect these features exude.

Rising like a cove of white trees across the rear window space, the stencils act as art, screen and almost a kind of futuristic garden. When the

The details

Brief: To modernise the rear section of the house incorporating more living space as well as adding an office and creating an indoor/outdoor area.

Architect: Andrew Maynard Architects, 9654 2523.

web: andrewmaynard.com.au

Builder: Sean Kiley, Renovation One, 9370 7978.

web: renovationone.com.au

Budget: \$300,000.

family finishes landscaping the rear yard it will be an amazing sight to see the green from outside filtering through the white trees within.

"This was another of Andrew's ideas to get around privacy and screening issues," says Ms Todaro. With the upstairs section overlooking some other houses, the council required privacy measures. The stencils are photos taken of the trees in the Edinburgh Gardens just around the corner, then transposed and cut onto the "stickers".

The cantilevered structure of the windows and upstairs allows a section of the downstairs space to completely open up. The windows all fold in to one another to create the quintessential indoor/outdoor space.

So many things here are just downright cool, but maybe none more so than the white fabricated steel stairs that lead to the floating-carpet-style level one.

Ho hum, stairs you might say. Have you ever walked over your kitchen bench to get upstairs? Didn't think so. The stairs start in the living area, with the middle tread the pale stone of the kitchen bench that runs back to meet them.

"I always really wanted to stand on the kitchen benchtop," says Mr Andrews.

Up those stairs the floating feel of the first-level office/studio continues with a shock of red carpet to match the kitchen and the canopy of the white "trees" mixing it with the rooftops of town outside.

"Andrew and Sean (Kiley, their builder) were just terrific," says Ms Todaro. When that relationship is so special, it's little wonder you get such a stunning result.

What we love



"I really like the fact you can stand on the benchtop. I think it looks great. It's different but it works," says Mr Andrews. He also loves the fact that the rear corner of the downstairs can be opened up to the outdoors.

"The sun goes over the house, so there's no real need to shut ourselves away from excessive heat or cold. There's so much natural light flowing through that I never have the lights on," says Ms Todaro. "The acoustics are great, too. I can be working upstairs and still see and hear everything that's going on with the kids downstairs."

The couple agree that having a family area without a TV is one of their favourite things. "The kids love the space down here. It's nice to have an extra living area where the TV doesn't dominate," says Mr Andrews.

