



IVORY TOWER

Offering a stylish, serene sanctuary from the world, this modern Melbourne home turns inwards, focusing attention on its significant design features.

PHOTOGRAPHS JASON BUSCH WORDS JACINTA LE PLASTRIER



THIS PAGE A sculptural circular staircase is one of the focal points of the home, lit with a Bocci '14 Series Custom' chandelier from Hub. OPPOSITE PAGE The formal sitting room is simply furnished with B&B Italia sofas from Space, and a painting by George Tjungurrayi over the fireplace.

The Australian sun is just too intense," says Melbourne architect Robert Mills, explaining his 'shelter principle', which is one of his design trademarks. "It's essential that windows are sheltered from the summer sun. It would be great if more Australian buildings had sun screening. The plate glass windows used here and overseas just don't suit our climate."

In the case of this newly built Melbourne home which Robert designed and has been short-listed for three major awards this year, he says, "Wherever you are in this house, you are protected from the sun." He cites the outdoor area beside the pool which is designed to be an external living room, and is sheltered by an overhanging horizontal 'blade'. "Covered outdoor rooms are such a great solution," says Robert, who has also added eaves and shutters to the upstairs windows of the house.

Despite a relatively small site – 586 square metres – the architect has achieved a feeling of spaciousness by blurring the distinctions between inside and out, and by pushing the home's boundaries to the eastern and southern extremities. On the ground floor is the pool terrace, with a space behind housing a large informal living area and kitchen, with a concealed 'chef's kitchen'. A formal sitting room is sited diagonally behind the kitchen; both spaces look out to the rear terrace. Tall, glazed windows on either side of the living area amplify the space and provide views. "All the external courtyards are on view from the living room," says Robert. "The kitchen is placed in front of a window, but as the cabinetry is on legs it appears to float above the ground so you can see the courtyard beyond. Sitting inside, you can look under the island and wall benches and see outside."

Robert is enthusiastic about the design of the kitchen. "I like to visualise how the kitchen would appear when you are having a party. If the kitchen looks sophisticated and is made of beautiful materials and has a bit of bling to it, it works – as opposed to a conventional design which exposes the hardware and utilities such as the refrigerator.



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Painting by Conchita Carambano adds colour to the casual sitting area; Molteni&C 'Turner' sofa, 'Domino' ottoman, and Moroso 'Take a Line for a Walk' chair by Alfredo Häberli from Hub. Moroso 'Fjord' bar stools by Patricia Urquiola at the kitchen bench. Catellani & Smith 'PostKrisi' pendant light from Hub in the sitting room. OPPOSITE PAGE Dining area has a view to the side courtyard. Lowe Furniture 'Atticus' table with chrome base. Potocco 'Miura' chairs in black leather from Hub. TossB 'Sphere' pendant lights.



"WHEREVER YOU ARE IN THIS HOUSE, YOU ARE PROTECTED FROM THE SUN... COVERED OUTDOOR ROOMS ARE SUCH A GREAT SOLUTION."



THIS PAGE The poolside terrace has been designed as an outdoor living room. Gandia Blasco 'Saler' setting from Parterre. Flooring is Bianco Perla Satin tiles from Artedomus. OPPOSITE PAGE Shutters on the upstairs windows provide sun protection.



"THIS HOUSE IS VERY URBAN, IT'S DESIGNED FOR SOMEONE WHO LIKES TO DRESS WELL, NOT CASUALLY. IT'S A FAMILY HOME AND IT HAS A WARM FEELING, BUT IT'S VERY STYLISED."

SPEED READ

This new home by Melbourne architect Robert Mills combines luxury with a sense of sanctuary and comfort. + The architect believes protection from the sun is paramount, so he has glazed, screened and shuttered all windows and provided covered outdoor spaces. + The seamless flow between inside and out is enhanced by the use of the same or similar materials throughout, and views to terraces and courtyards from all points of the living area.

"Here, the kitchen faces the living room and is made of the same materials, timber and stone with chrome legs and accessories. But while it is beautiful, it's also much used – as a bar at night, a juice bar in the morning, and there's a commercial coffee machine that's in use all day and night."

The seamless flow of the house from room to room and inside to outside is enhanced by the repetition of materials. "The outdoor area is furnished in the same way as the interior with comfortable chairs and heating – if you glazed it, it would be another living room," says Robert. "That's how we succeed in linking all these spaces – by using the same or similar materials inside and out. This is critical and allows the eye to flow."

Robert says he creates flexible designs, allowing owners "to dress their own houses, so the architecture becomes a backdrop to the pieces they like". He says the female owner of this home is very stylish, and it's her aesthetic that is central to the look and feel of the home. "This house is very urban, it's designed for someone who likes to dress well, not casually. It's a family home and it has a warm feeling to it, but it's very stylised."

The home is a pure example of Robert Mills's signature style, designed with aplomb and an emphasis on luxury mixed with comfort. "People want to arrive home and feel as if they are in an enclosed, safe and really comfortable sanctuary, but at the same time they want to be inspired," he says. ■

THESE PAGES The main bedroom has a Molteni&C 'Twing' bed and padded headboard. Patricia Urquiola 'Smock' swivel chair in leather. Walls throughout are painted in Porter's Paints Eggshell Acrylic in White Sand.