

new **Home**

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MACEDON RANGES

**LITTLE
MARVEL**

A small
house big
on ideas





To dine for Kitchen is a serious affair

SPLIT COVER story personality

We check out a house that is small in size but big on ideas

Urban designer and architect Luke Middleton was immersed in a large commercial development in China when his mum asked him to design and build a house on a small block in South Yarra.

Well, Faye Officer is not your average mum, and Luke could hardly refuse. She runs a business designing her own clothing range and is frantically busy most of the time. She wanted a house with maximum space and minimum fuss. It had to be chic, easy to manage, well lit, warm and with a certain amount of glamor.

So, China project in the background and on a block measuring just 7.2m x 20m, Luke designed a striking, two-storey home of 14 squares in three distinct but dramatically linked parts.

The house is a mixture of architectural styles, industrial components and domestic finishes. You could say it has a divided personality. The exterior is almost Eastern in appearance.

There is no fence in front, just a path with white pebble patches and a magnolia grandiflora shielding the entrance and providing privacy. And the incorporation of aspects of feng shui means the front door opens at right angles to the footpath - to prevent energy from rushing out from the rear door through to the street.

Once inside, the small reception area reveals little. In fact, you face the laundry space, neatly tucked in

under the gangway staircase to the second storey. Take another step or two, however, and all is revealed and the distinctly different areas meld.

The modern, almost commercial section has metal doors without handles, and windows covered with slimline venetian blinds. The central, and narrowest section, represents a pathway, where dark-grey colorstone forms a textured bulkhead, creating a natural division between service and living areas. Windows here represent steel grates in the footpath, with fixed graded slats shielding and controlling the light. The third area features traditional domestic building materials such as timber doors and shades. Walls are thicker and a concrete floor is inlaid with rows of smooth black pebbles. This pebble theme carries through to the bathrooms, where each has a mosaic tile "path" on the walls.

There are no architraves, and skirtings are simple strips of mild metal, which will color with age.

The service area is built along one wall. Stained hardwood ply cabinets and an island bench, fitted with castors so it can be moved, denote the food-preparation area. Two stainless steel sinks with a smoked-mirror splashback Luke describes as a "visual enhancer" add another dimension to the feeling of spaciousness. A wall oven and three-burner gas cooktop sit alongside a pullout pantry and the refrigerator



Mission accomplished Living area has a touch of glamor

is hidden behind a stained-timber door. Black and chrome stools are from Space in Church St, Richmond.

Opposite the service area a comfortable living space with open fireplace has two inviting large sofas in a soft, brushed cotton. A dining table and chairs sit neatly behind this area. A colorstone bench runs along the fireplace wall to the rear courtyard, doubling as a storage unit, both inside and out. Double doors open to the north-facing courtyard and extend the living space for entertaining. Polished-concrete flooring inside is left raw outside, but the theme is carried through to the rear wall, where water plays over pebbles in a trough. A deep trench garden on the side wall grows gardenia, but espaliered lemons will eventually cover the wall.

A timber staircase leads to fully carpeted bedrooms. A generous solar-glass skylight above the stairwell casts pleasing shadows.

The two bedrooms upstairs share equal billing, and a pair of bathrooms. Four central swinging



A house for mum Luke Middleton

doors hung on piano hinges can be operated from both sides. One bathroom has a bath and shower, the other just a shower. Stainless-steel basins were specifically designed for the vanity areas and taps are fitted into the mirrors for maximum reflection. In the downstairs bathroom, a mirror on the

slanted wall space above the basin effectively corresponds with the mosaic "path". This room separates the small entrance and laundry area from a study cum consulting room cum gym cum extra bedroom.

Color and texture are carried throughout the house, sometimes in different materials. The bathrooms and front doors have rectangle windows at eye height, for easy viewing. Slimline blinds fasten over the glass panels to provide privacy when necessary.

The laundry sink in the service bench is covered with a stained-timber hatch that renders it almost invisible when not in use. And all furniture has been fitted with commercial castors, so it can be easily moved. The television is wall-mounted to conserve floor space and for direct viewing.

Faye loves this house and she plans to stay put for some time.

Brearily Middleton Architects and Urban Designers are on 9699 5288.

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Landmark The path keeps climbing