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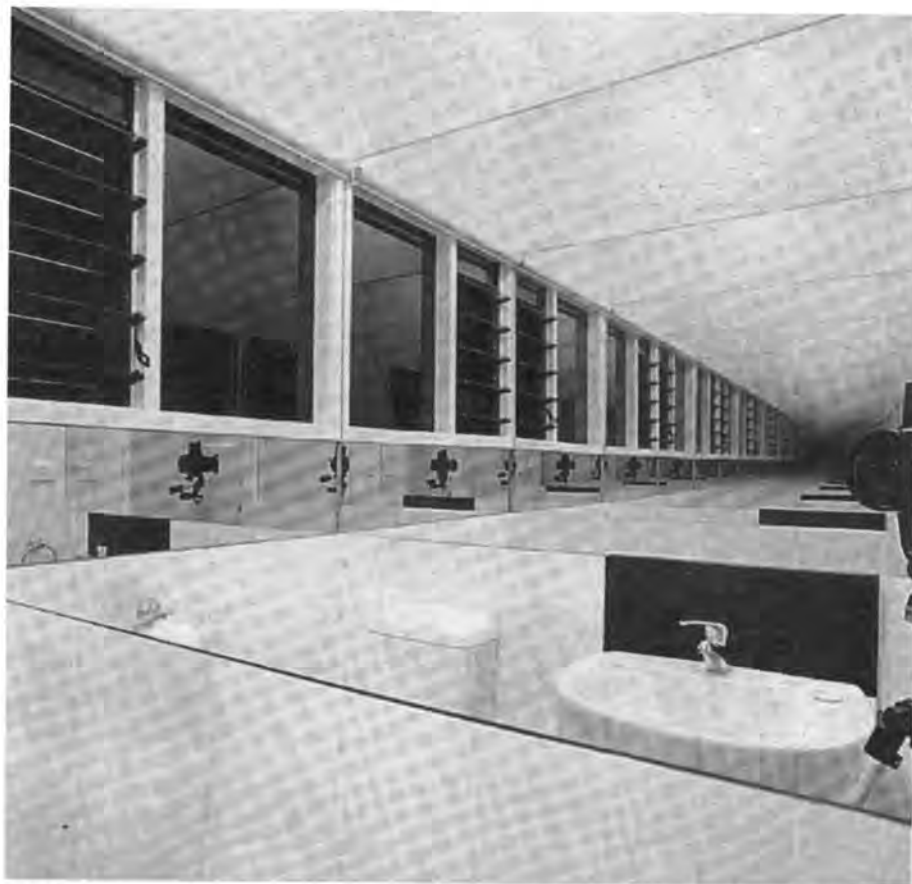
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[Left] The bathroom is a reflective space with this series of mirrors. [Right] Day beds surround the living room. [Below] The dining room appears skeletal with recycled timber rafters.

PICTURES: ERICA LAUTHIER

Starting over

>In their search for something special, this Jan Juc couple has turned their 1950s brick home into a lasting impression.

For a couple who thought they would never use an architect, this house at Jan Juc, near Torquay, was a brave move. With the potential for spectacular views of the ocean, building just another house seemed like an opportunity lost. And, while the 1950s brick home on the site was functional, it wasn't going to draw them away from the family home in Geelong.

"The house was quite comfortable. It had three bedrooms and it even had an ensuite bathroom. You could only see the view from standing on the roof. It's not something that you often do," says Judy Meagher, who lives in the house with her husband Michael. A second storey seemed the logical option.

"We weren't going to use an architect. However, it was going to be our last renovation or building and so we wanted something quite special," she says. So they bit the bullet and called architects Brearley Middleton.

With four adult children living away, but who often stayed, demolishing the existing three bedrooms and kitchen appeared excessive. When architect James Brearley inspected the house, demolition wasn't on his mind either.

"It wasn't large enough for what they wanted but the house really just needed new carpet and a fresh coat of paint.

"The kitchen and bathroom were in good condition," Brearley says. Originally it was suggested that the red brickwork be left alone as the original imprint on the site. But, since Michael and Judy were keen to make a fresh start, the walls were rendered.

The configuration of rooms on the ground floor are typical of a 1950s suburban house, the new second storey allowed for larger and more adventurous spaces.

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"We wanted to watch the sun rise and set. We weren't interested in looking at paintings on a wall or bowls of flowers," Judy says.

So, instead of designing the traditional shaped window that frames the view, Brearley Middleton used a ribbon of windows of different proportions around the whole house.

"The windows are a hybrid form that allow you to see the views from a number of angles," Brearley says.

An important influence on the design came from the American artist Gordon Matta-Clarke, renowned for inserting a

number of cuttings into a building. Like the strategic cuttings that Matta-Clarke applied, there are a series of planes that allow a cross-section of views throughout the house.

With fewer rooms on the upper level, a kitchen and deck, a dining and living room together with the main bedroom and ensuite bathroom, Brearley Middleton was keen to explore a number of different approaches to the interior. The living room, with its grape colored

ceiling, walls and carpet, appears to have been carved out of the volume. The walls, which are 700 millimetres wide in part, accommodate the day beds in the living room.

In contrast, the dining room appears quite skeletal, with its plywood walls and recycled timber rafters. "The framing is quite lightweight. The effect is similar to a lightweight skin that allows the structure to be exposed," Brearley says.

There is an emphasis on color in the kitchen and deck area. "We wanted to use contemporary materials that were





[Clockwise from above] The deck, beside the dining area, is lined with colorful cobalt and green tiles. Bright red vinyl flooring contrasts with green benchtops in the kitchen. The outdoor colors are repeated here. The "hybrid form" of windows allow a cross-section of views.
PICTURES: ERICA LAUTHIER



vibrant," Brearley says. Bright red vinyl flooring is contrasted with green laminated benchtops, while the deck area is lined with cobalt and green ceramic tiles. When it came to designing the new bathroom, a series of mirrors further emphasise Matta-Clarke's intriguing segmentations. "We designed mirrors in all the corners. It's a reflective space," he says.

While Brearley recalls a number of architects who influenced the design – Le Corbusier, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Adolf Loos – he is mindful of the Jan Juc area.

"We chose a skillion roof, which says as much about the houses in the area. This location is on the edge of suburbia. Even though it's overlooking the ocean, it's still a fairly urban area," he says.

While many architects tend to illuminate the interior and frame a new home with full-length glass windows, this house comes as a surprise. In contrast to the subdued living areas, it's the panoramic views that illuminate the internal spaces.

"We wanted to heighten the different

activities within a house and it required a number of treatments rather than one approach," Brearley says.

The garden, which was designed by Sinatra Murphy & Co. also went against the grain. Instead of a sporadic planting of natives, the site was covered in "shell grit" and planted with stripes of colorful coastal grasses.

As the number of people living in the house varies from two to 10, finding a place to sleep isn't difficult. If a bed cannot be found downstairs, there are the day beds that surround the living room.

For Brearley Middleton, while the views are captivating, it was the process of working with the clients that enriched the project.

"The design unravelled itself over a few months. For clients who had never used an architect before, they were both excited and challenged by the process itself." G

Brearley Architects and Urban Designers 9642 5115
Designer Luke Middleton, of the EME Group 9699 4688
or 0402 335 588

