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LUXE REDUX

After changing lanes from the world of high-performance cars to high-end interiors, Melbourne designer Shavron Joel applies sleek simplicity to bring a 1950s home up to speed for contemporary life.

PHOTOGRAPHER: CARL CARTER PRODUCER/WRITER: ANNEMARIE KILBY



ORIENTAL PACE: Restoring a mid-century 1950s residence as a period look Contemporary home, designer Shavron Joel stripped the formal decor away of its busy old manservant and installed a simple, more-casual fireplace, above which a James Bevelman painting now hangs. **FOUR PAGES:** The room's offbeat, off-kilter length was counterbalanced with a patchwork of patterned rugs by Loom, and two "Tidy Time" modular sofas by BBK Italia, arranged in back-to-back configurations to create two distinct seating areas. Details, last page.

*"If you keep the soul but
add to the story, you can
create a 'comfort' that goes
beyond the mere physical"*



*The dark stylization of artist Andrew Dawe leaves between two
new physical artworks in the formal living room, and sets the tone
of other classics that enhance the entire house. A Miller paper and
back from Great Dane shows the sporty hallway space beyond.*

THIS SPACE: The warm wood tones of the kitchen were complemented with a custom-designed, blackened-steel display cabinet and long-boarded cabinets painted in Dulux's 'Candlewick'. A Pierre and Charles dining table – topped by a pendant light from Artemide – echoes the design of the building's ubiquitous new arches, concrete walls. A painting by artist Colin French is glimpsed next to the hallway arch that James took on paper by artist David Reed.



Much of the old and historical architecture has retained the location of the old rooms, but with a new function in the name of the former master bedroom. Here is the new first floor. The family dining area in the kitchen is divided from the second house area by a long glass wall along with part of Paul's new design.

"With some of our designs, Paul [Meyer] often had to come for evening work sessions in one of the Volkswagen Duetts, the Audi Matrix and the Ford Mustang—apart from a few magazine subscriptions of the house," he has learned, he said. "The first rule must be about simplicity is that it's really hard to do."

I share the same work and business design and former home complex. Meyer just is the balance between things in his smart, considered, methodical Melbourne office, along with an unpretentious, light and like to see people's products. She took easily in agreement with Meyer's philosophy, simultaneously adding the sense on the end of the line that manufacturers in the country really do see the potential in their product beyond their specific application. "I mean, it's about something being with me," she explains, putting down the hardware. "And I'm the only one who thinks you and industrial companies are never."



Joel has earned the right to opine over Mays' 'simplicity' and the mystique of industry – after all, she spent much of the 1990s in Detroit and the UK, designing instrumentation and luxury cars, some of the best Ford concept cars to feature on motor-show floors. Now, parked parked in the professional space of residential and retail design – marriage brought her back to home-town Melbourne in 1999 and a small, self-run practice – she probably no longer cares about speed and the digressive surface. "Don't be so sure," she says, pointing out that homes are becoming more like the cockpit of a car – protective bubbles in the service of speed (albeit faster culture and communications) built to buffer against outside aggression. "The design principles really don't differ, plus I still love all that go-for stuff. My dream project is a boat."

Joel pulls out the plans for a single-storey, "nondescript" 1950s house that, together with Goodika Architects, she reimagined into a two-storey Georgian-style home with an air of the 1920s. "If you keep the soul but add to the story and operating system, you can create a 'comfort' that goes beyond the mere physical," she says, underwriting Mays' "renovations" promise that if you apply new thinking to zootylog yearnings, you have the beginnings of a contractor love story. "I'm one of those designers who believes if the bones are good, you keep the house."

The project team and client (a business couple with three robust boys) briefly assessed a burial of said bones, but the retention of the essential structure was deemed desirable from the viewpoint of cost and historical continuity. The rest could be blown away for a better-planned, better-detailed structure that increased accommodation and optimized views and sun flow across the deep, north-facing block. Joel argued for the retention of two elegant arched windows that, having framed garden vistas in the pre-existing master bedroom (now kitchen), became the template for room openings and new structural support. Softening their gothic points into sensual ellipses, Joel squarized these arches into dramatic niches, at the end of which she cradled "big art" hanging – pulled from a private collection that waxes between the palette-applied expressions of Colais Perinack to the stylised realism of Andrew Browne.

Later, walking through her redesigned classicism – styled with profoundly tactile objects colour-drained so as not to distract from the art – Joel says her time in the "tough" car-centric city of Detroit prepared her for the equally tough world of top-end residential design. "I know a lot about technology, about the psychology of trends and what drives the ego. The impulses are no different when you do a home." She stands in the space of the new open-plan kitchen – a mix of historically familiar living board, warm Peppercorn stone and industrial blackened steel – and considers the small pleasures hidden in the utterly prosaic: the door handle that holds like a warm handshake, the clean design glaze that meets with just the right amount of resistance, the dull clink of a door that communicates solid weight. "No matter how costly the ride," she says, rounding out reference to design in general, "if the vehicle doesn't respond with substance, the user experience is compromised."

In spite of all this building's buried pleasure, the client brief simply articulated the provision of two ground-floor studies (an appropriation of pre-existing children's rooms) and a bar in the formal front room – the difficult touch of which was negotiated with two conversation-flipping back-to-back seating arrangements. "There was also the demand to stay on budget," she says, profiling one half of the client couple as a highly organized, confident businesswoman who knew not to open decision making to the "morning coffee connoisseur." "But I have an incredible design team that, sharing my passion for sensitive, well-executed detail, worked within these parameters."

Asked what makes a good designer, Joel waxes on about discipline, restraint, balance and unswerving self-belief – sentiments made succinct by the namesake of her former employer, Henry Ford: "If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right." **BY**



COVER STORY: *Joel Mays, from 'Thinking with the eyes', just made the most of the building's 1950s bones and by pairing, by nature, in beautiful Dulles, 'Stop.' The architect's already master bathroom, courtyard, terrace, was hand with certain in a lot of love from Raytheon House, and slender-making details. A 10-foot-long kitchen island and custom-designed entrance through the light grey. THIS PICTURE: Joel's office facade was retained by the master bathroom. THIS PICTURE: with the updated kitchen and terrace area (top left), new fireplace, and in the ground living area, the car, pool, too. 'Landscape' (top right) by John's Carlsson. (Dulles, last page.*