



Q U A L I T Y  
C O N T R O L

The owners of this 1930s home left all the *design decisions* to the architects – from the furnishings and art to the china and glassware.

THIS PAGE In the casual living room is a Paulistano leather armchair, 'Spar' floor light by Jamie McLellan, and black steel and marble coffee table designed and made by Robson Rak. OPPOSITE PAGE The entry was designed to be luxurious and functional. Geometric rug, credenza and pendant light all designed by Robson Rak. Photograph by Emmanuel T. Santos.



PHOTOGRAPHS SHARYN CAIRNS WORDS CARLI PHILIPS STYLING FIONA RICHARDSON



Google Robson Rak Architects and you will find endless websites linking to the critically acclaimed four-and-a-half hectare Merricks Farm House that Kathryn Robson and Chris Rak recently designed for clients as a weekend home just under an hour from Melbourne.

But that is not the husband-and-wife team's only claim to fame. This project is situated in the elegant inner-city enclave of Toorak rather than the rural terrain of Victoria's countryside, but the commitment to timeless architecture, quality craftsmanship and materials remains unchanged. Kathryn says the firm tries to avoid creating works that are "too trendy". "We're committed to longevity and work that will still be relevant in 10 years' time. We find that natural, earthy colours enable this. They're not now, they're not yesterday. They're forever."

It's an approach Robson Rak wholeheartedly employed in the modernisation of this large 1930s home during a 10-month renovation period. Breathing new life into the tired and dated structure, they transformed it into a "fresh, clean, classic yet contemporary home for a busy family of four".

The existing residence had a lot of character, so original cornices, architraves, external window shutters, doors and skirtings were retained. "We designed the interior to create a more sleek look to contrast with these details," says Kathryn.

The home's layout and room proportions were generous, so aside from a new laundry and butler's kitchen, no major structural changes were necessary. Initially engaged to redesign the bones of the building, Kathryn says, "This quickly evolved to include the interior design, decoration, and also the landscaping. The clients loved our vision for the hard interior design and wanted us to follow that through to the decoration – all the soft furnishings and art collection, the china and glassware. It was a full redesign of everything."

While there's no shortage of design classics, with pieces by MAP, Hans J. Wegner, and copper lights by Tom Dixon, the clients championed bespoke pieces. "They





THIS PAGE In the formal living room, 'Obi' coffee table is by Linteloo. The mirror, pendant light and wool/silk rug were all designed by Robson Rak. Brass and steel 'Base' lamp by Tom Dixon. Curtains in Chivasso 'Hot Madison' and Unique Fabrics 'Sabi' in Zinc. OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP The landscaping around the 1930s home was designed by Robson Rak. BOTTOM The casual living area is the heart of the home and has a custom-made sofa in Marco Fabrics 'Livorno'. Bluestone fireplace surround, shelf and dado. Photograph by Emmanuel T. Santos.



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT MAP dining table and Hans J. Wegner 'Wishbone' chairs in the casual dining area. Painted stainless-steel sculpture by Chris Rak. Bifold windows open up the kitchen to the outdoors to extend the sense of casual living. Banquette cushions in Marco Fabrics 'Torino' velvet in Slate. OPPOSITE PAGE An antique walnut table and upholstered chairs that the owners had previously suit the formal dining room. 'Produzione Privata' vases by Michele de Lucchi. Custom designed lightfitting by Robson Rak. Artwork *Mountain Devil Lizard Dreaming* by Kathleen Petyarre.



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really encouraged the idea of building furniture especially for the house,” says Chris. “If we could design a lightfitter that worked with this house instead of buying one off the shelf, then we did it. That was the approach we took.”

A part-time sculptor, Chris fashioned furniture and fittings sympathetic to the original period details of the house, including steel pendant lanterns and tables, fireplaces, sofas, credenzas, mirrors, geometric rugs and even art. “It was amazing – dream clients that were incredibly trusting of our vision,” says Chris.

The casual dining and living spaces were united by a new bluestone fireplace and dado with floating shelf. This helped to modernise the room as well as effectively link the two areas. “It was really important to the clients to have a large space where they could entertain informally. There is a separate, more formal room but that’s used infrequently compared to the area which links directly to the terrace.”

This spirit of relaxed living continues with bifold shutters above the kitchen sink opening directly out to the pergola. “People can sit outside and relax and still connect with the person cooking inside,” says Chris. The large kitchen counter with Lapalma bar stools invites casual gatherings as well.

With two teenage boys, the home was designed to be robust and low maintenance without sacrificing style. Materials such as American oak for the floorboards, stone benchtops, marble vanities and concrete pavers outside were selected for their aesthetic appeal as well as their durability and functionality.

The ‘perfect’ clients now have a perfect home to match. 🏡

For more go to [robsonrak.com.au](http://robsonrak.com.au).



THIS PAGE An antique Chinese stool provides a contrast to the sleek lines of a Kaldewei 'Classic' bath, and vanity in Elba marble. OPPOSITE PAGE In the main bedroom, Poliform 'Angie' bed and side tables. Ism Objects 'Kapeło' lamp by Chris Connell.



**SPEED READ**

The owners of this 1930s home in Melbourne engaged architects Robson Rak to modernise the interior. + So happy were they with the architects' vision for the interior design that they extended the brief to include all the decoration, right down to the china and glassware, and the landscaping. + The transformation has resulted in a "fresh, clean, classic yet contemporary home". + The only structural additions to the house were a laundry and butler's kitchen, and the existing generous proportions were reworked. + The clients championed bespoke, so much of the furniture and fittings were custom designed, resulting in a unique but very livable family home.