

HOME / MELBOURNE

Hidden Eden



Secret Garden House was born from a poetic start. Co-owned by an avid gardener who enjoys tending to her wildflowers, ornamental trees and grasses, ‘the project surrenders a place our client enjoyed and was quite particular about to create an independent home for her son,’ says Rachel Nolan, principal of architecture firm Kennedy Nolan. Driven by the sentimentality of this gesture, the design team harnessed an empathetic approach to deliver an authentic, recessive home that is ‘more garden than house’.

Inspired by the European feel of the sprawling garden and set against a neighbouring Italianate mansion in Caulfield, Secret Garden House embraces an enduring design sensibility. The site’s heritage overlay dictated a tiled roof, but Kennedy Nolan’s thoughtful selection of accompanying materials — fawn-toned brickwork and russet trims — maintains a graphic, contemporary expression. ‘The house needed to be fairly quiet,’ says Nolan, ‘but its comfortable, easy palette makes the building feel like it’s been there a long time — almost as though it’s a found place.’

Approached through the clients’ L-shaped garden, Secret Garden House is concealed by an elusive entry wall. A carefully detailed russet gate with a scooped top profile sits in dialogue with an arched brick opening, the negative space forming a perfect circle — a portal of sorts. ‘It presents an invitation to disappear into the garden and suggests there’s something special to be discovered,’ Nolan says.

Beyond the gate, stepping stones direct movement through a private garden to a semicircular paved deck anchored to the indoor living areas. Here, the home’s western orientation

is celebrated with full-height glazing that draws in views to the garden, welcomes afternoon sun and embraces the striking hues of sunset skies — a point of reference for Kennedy Nolan in developing the home’s internal material palette.

Sun-drenched shades of terracotta, umber, russet and ochre meld and mingle, forging a warm, earthy atmosphere that subtly shifts from room to room, while the seamless integration of joinery delineates spaces and inspires a tidy, calm quality of living. The home’s architectural materials sail into the interior, elevating the cohesiveness of the building. As Nolan explains, ‘Materials are expressed and understood to give perpetuity.’

The designers skilfully framed a series of tailored vistas that ensure light and landscape are ever present. A circular picture window creates an aperture that brings northern light into the study, while an adjacent timber-strapped window, almost hidden in the garden’s pencil pines, invites light to permeate the home’s beautiful, deep living space. ‘We were driven by an ambition to capture seasonal change and texture,’ says project architect Marnie Morieson. ‘It’s all about celebrating the poetry of domestic space.’

The result is a highly responsive home that melds with and relates to the landscape. ‘There’s no hierarchy,’ avers Nolan. ‘The house and garden feel balanced and settled in, enabling the built form to drop to the background.’ Indeed, Secret Garden House holds a gentle presence that continues the garden’s legacy as a place of experimentation and pleasure. Elusive in scale, the house is a compelling proposition for intergenerational living — a meaningful gift from the clients to their son.

Text
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Realised by architecture firm Kennedy Nolan, this tranquil Melbourne residence was designed in the main home’s garden as a parents’ gift to their son

Facing page
At the entryway, the detailed russet gate and arched brick opening invites visitors into the garden beyond



The home is designed to be 'more garden than house', and the semicircular paved deck, complete with antique French cane chairs, connects to the indoor living area through custom full-height windows

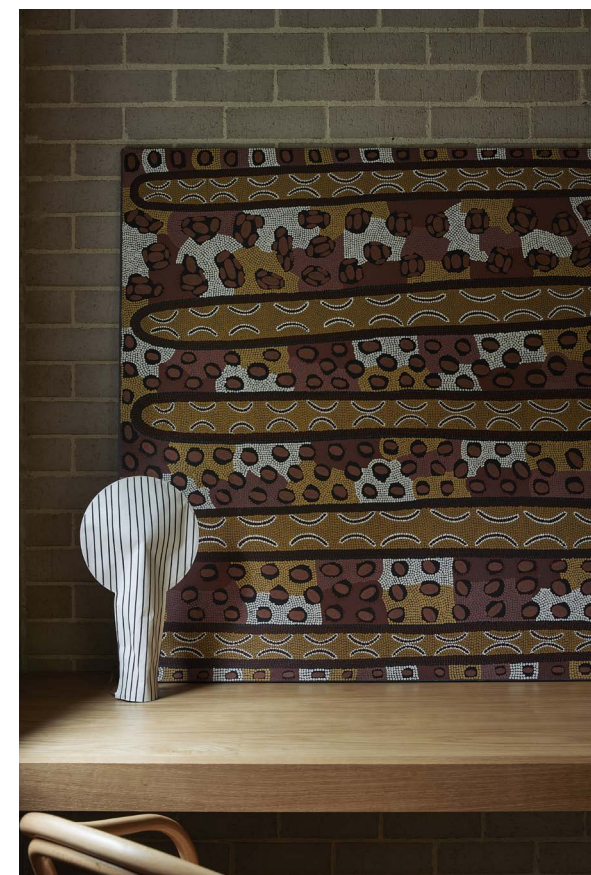






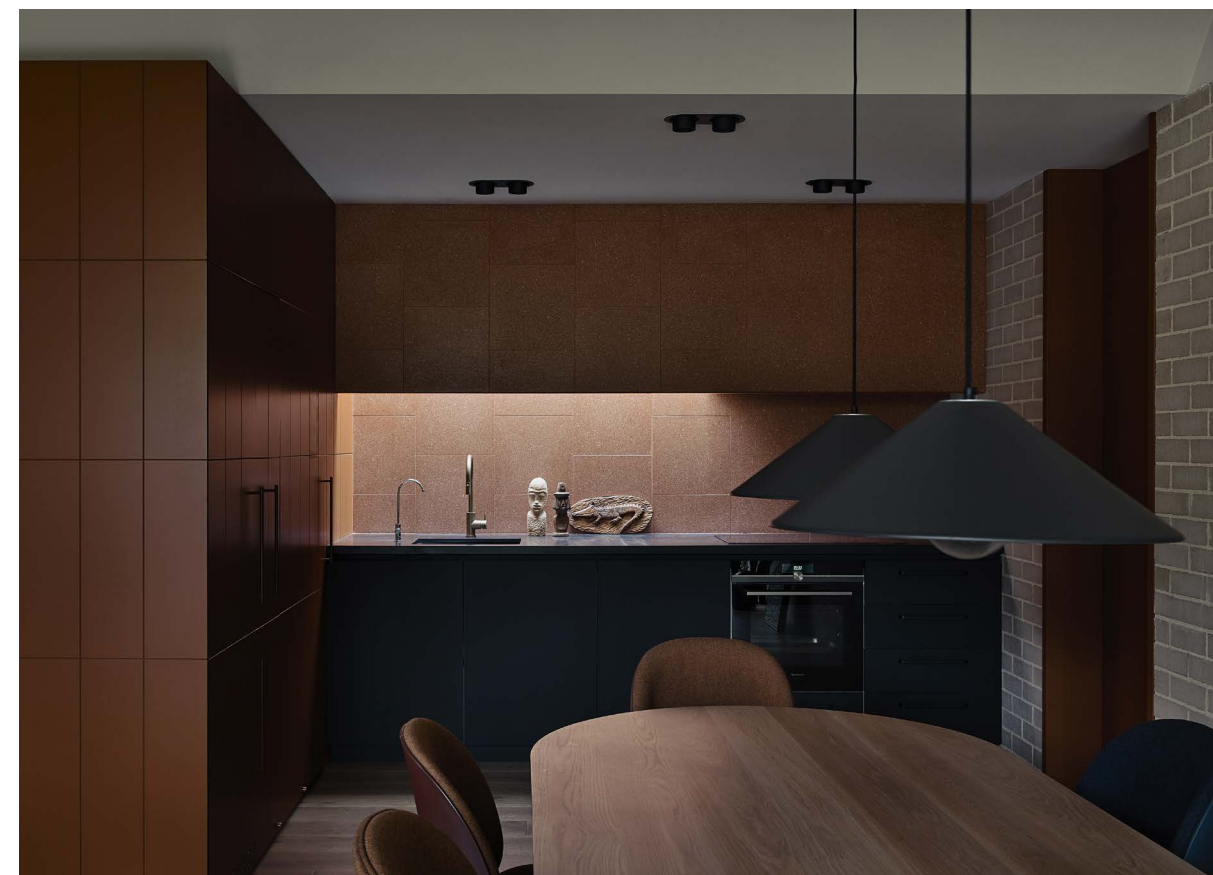
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In the main living area, a timber-strapped window draws light into the space, revealing the textures of Bruno Mathsson's Pernilla lounge chair, the Muuto Connect sofa, a John Bastiras Design Studio coffee table and a handmade rug from Loom



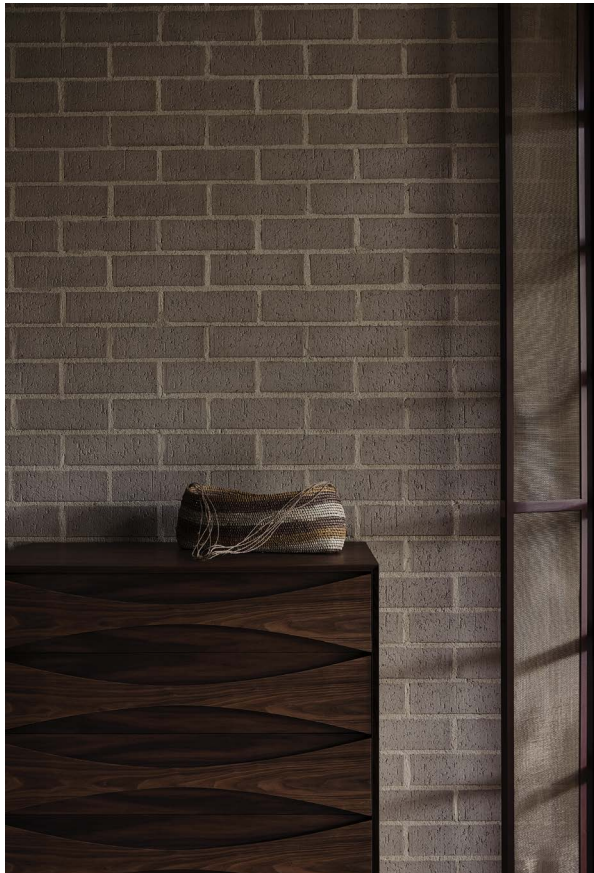
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Adjacent to the living area, the study connects to the surrounding landscape via a portal window, while the room is outfitted with a Thonet armchair, Ligne Roset table lamp and an artwork from Perth gallery Holmes à Court



Facing page
A dining table by John Bastiras Design Studio is paired with various Gubi Beetle chairs (both from In Good Company) and pendants by Enzo Mari for Artemide overhead. Below the Eames coat rack and bag by Margaret Rarru Garrawurra sits a graphic work by Helicopter Tjungurrayi from Warlayirti Art Centre

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The open kitchen is understated yet effective in black granite, terrazzo and painted joinery



Facing the western courtyard, the main bedroom is a tranquil respite with its carefully crafted combination of muted tones and furniture including an Arne Vodder dresser, De La Espada bedside tables by Ilse Crawford and a brass wall lamp by Workstead





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The main bathroom is a highlight for its swaths of terracotta terrazzo and the outdoor shower deck

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Brass tapware from Brodware's Yokato Collection and a Dioscuri wall light by Michele De Lucchi for Artemide add a touch of sophistication to the powder room and bathroom's rustic colour palette