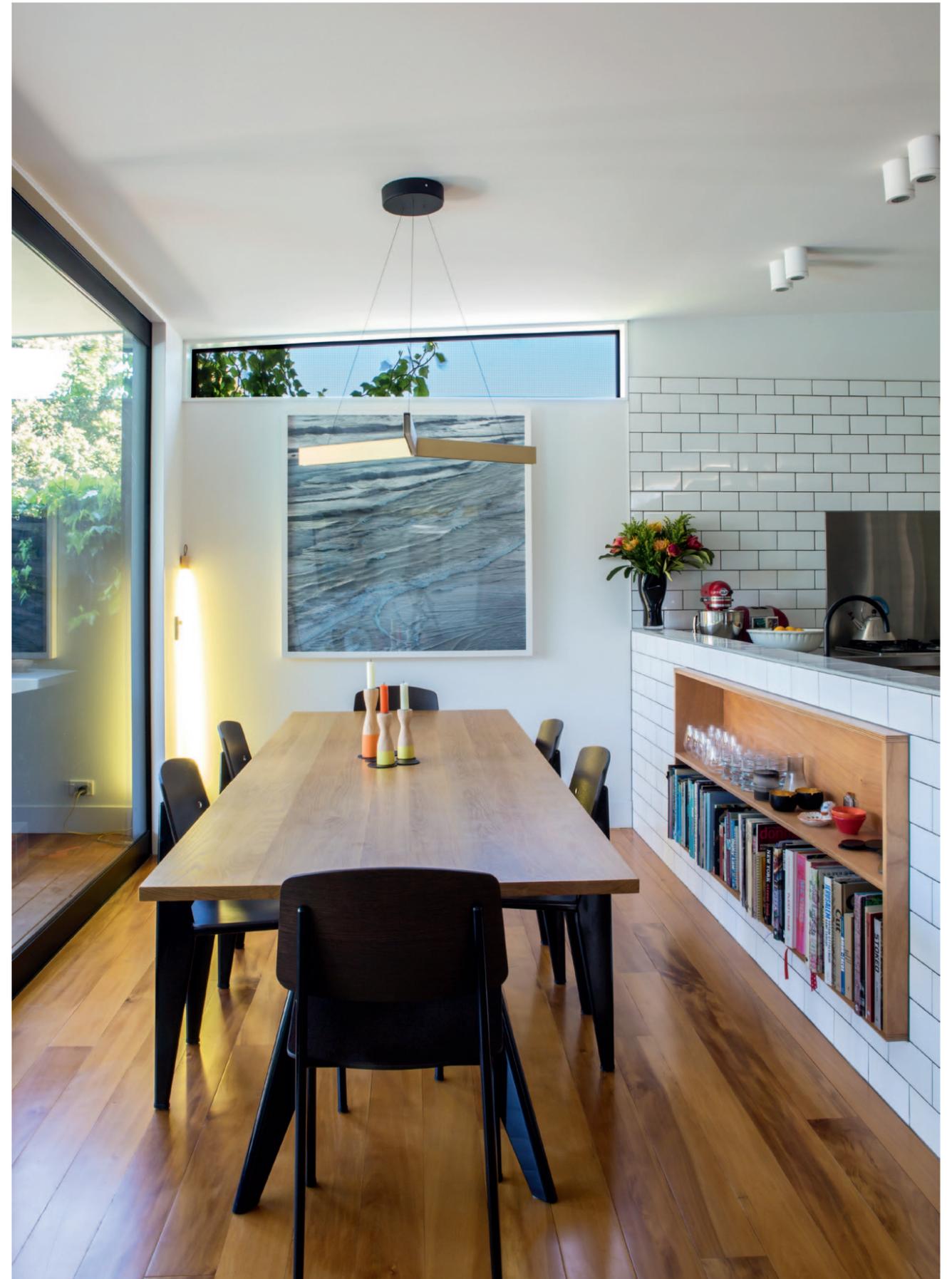


# Quite the opposite

Boldly contemporary,  
yet sensitive to its history,  
this revamp of a classic villa  
has everything going for it.

WORDS  
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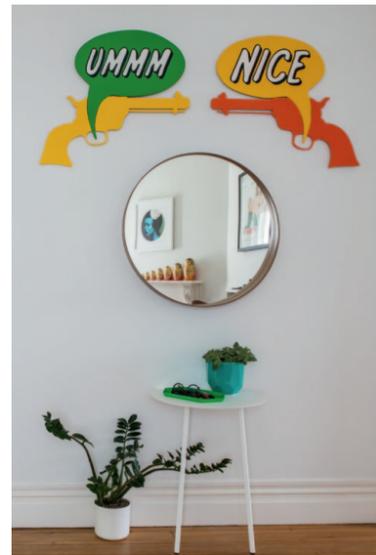


With sloping ceilings and clerestory windows, the open-plan addition captures a lightness of being that's in contrast to the insular spaces of the Victorian era.

"I DON'T LIKE VILLAS," SAYS JAMIE Hitchcock. "They were designed for a different time and place." Why buy one then? It's a conundrum many homeowners face when they want to live on Auckland's city fringe. So although they may salivate over the modernist pads that occasionally pop up for sale further afield on the North Shore and are tucked in leafy corners of the eastern suburbs, they generally tend to sign on the do-up dotted line – and then look for an architect.

These days Jamie, his wife Rachel and their children, Gala and Freddy, are as happy as larks in their Grey Lynn villa, a home advertising creative Jamie describes as a "modest gaffe" when they first bought it. The couple was unmoved by the villa's colonial cuteness and timeless timber features, but a little-known park accessed through a gate in the backyard was a real selling point. Ten family homes encircle this secret reserve. "It has trees to climb, a creek to cross and room to run around in," says Jamie.

What the pair knew from the outset was that they'd renovate and extend. Architect Tim Dorrington's children attend the same ▶



**TOP** In the dining area, *Muriwai* by Jae Hoon Lee hangs beside an EM table and Standard chairs by Jean Prouvé. The freestanding fluorescent light in the corner is *Linea* by Selab & Alessandro Zambelli for Seletti. **ABOVE LEFT** The original living room doubles as a music room and is furnished with an Arne Jacobsen Egg chair, an ottoman by Fritz Hansen and artwork by fashion designer Adrian Hailwood. **ABOVE RIGHT** Pop art by Gary Smith decorates the hallway.

**ART SPACE** The bench seating in the new living area reflects the materiality of the gaboon ply sideboard on the other side of the room. The glittering artwork on the wall above Jamie and Freddy is by Reuben Paterson. At Jamie's feet is a Jack light by Tom Dixon.

## THE PROJECT

Advertising creative Jamie Hitchcock and his marketer wife Rachel renovated this three-bedroom villa in Auckland's Grey Lynn for themselves and their children Gala (10) and Freddy (9).



“Either you go with a renovation that’s sympathetic to the villa, or you do the complete antithesis.”

**EXTENSION** The new living space was designed to fit the furniture, so the proportions of the low-slung double-sided Carmo sofa by BoConcept are perfect. The TV recedes against a dark-stained ply wall so as not to dominate, though it would have little chance with such a line-up of visual candy. The art seen here includes works by (from left) Yvonne Todd, Peter Stichbury, Judy Darragh, Karl Maughan and Sam Mitchell.



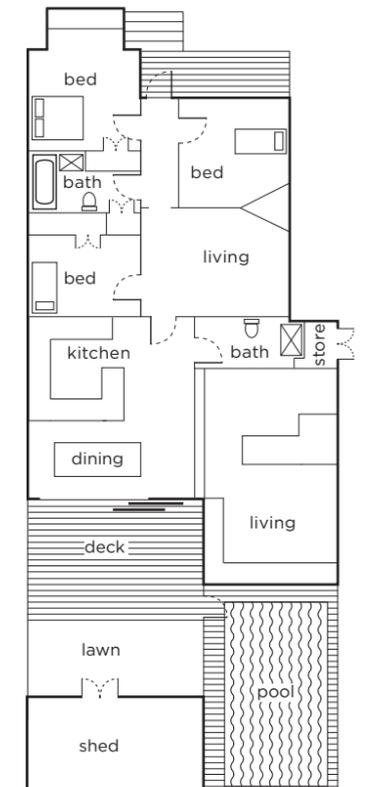
school as Gala and Freddy, and the Hitchcocks liked his style. “His strong modernist aesthetic is liveable and interesting. Conceptually, he’s a good thinker,” says Jamie.

In the funkiest advertising tradition, they gave Dorrington Atcheson Architects a one-word brief: Opposite. “Either you go with a renovation that’s sympathetic to the villa, or you do the complete antithesis,” says Jamie.

Tim cleverly took both approaches: he was sensitive to the villa’s footprint and the streetscape, but not afraid to make bold contemporary moves. The design story began in the original home, where a warren of rooms was opened up to simplify the spaces. A decorative arch in the central hallway was also removed. Out the back, the garage (another selling point in a suburb designed before two-car families) was relined and transformed into a playroom. “We put in a set of French doors, so we can see the kids from the kitchen,” says Jamie.

From the footpath, only a hint of the addition, black and box-like in cedar cladding, is visible. With sloping ceilings and clerestory windows, this open-plan room captures a lightness of being that’s in contrast to the insular spaces of the Victorian era. It links to the old house through a door at the end of the existing hall, but steps down on one side as the flooring changes from timber to concrete.

Within this space, there’s an updated kitchen (once part of a lean-to addition), a new dining area and a capacious living zone. Also within the extension, a container-like insertion with >





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walls of rough-sawn black ply houses a second bathroom and a compact laundry.

Surprisingly, the couple opted not to pull out the kitchen. The layout was good, the storage adequate and the cabinetry a neutral tone – “It wasn’t broken, so we didn’t fix it,” says Jamie. Instead of starting over, the Formica benchtop was replaced with stainless steel, and white tiles were added to bring an urban grittiness to the palette.

Keen collectors of art and furniture, the Hitchcocks presented Tim with a sketch-book layout of the pieces they were investing in so he could design the dimensions of the new living room around them. “I was paying instalments on the furniture as we went along,” says Jamie. “The day the extension finished, we moved in the new stuff.”

Modern in mood, this second living area marries something old with something new to create something better. “The house now has spaces that can easily accommodate 60 for a party, yet doesn’t feel impersonal when there are just the four of us.”

Living a stroll away from good coffee and an Uber ride from great restaurants are obvious bonuses of this location. But just beyond the back fence is the real clincher: a collegial, inclusive community right on tap. ■



**EXTERIOR** Beyond the addition’s full-height windows and sliding doors, a pool fills the entire section. “We didn’t need grass because we have the park,” explains Jamie. To the right behind him is another standout piece: a Karelia armchair designed by Liisi Beckmann for Zanotta in 1966 from folded polyurethane. “It’s my folly,” says Jamie. “I wanted to put something silly in the room. Kids love it, but half the adults who visit are unsure.”

DESIGN DETAILS



TOP, FROM LEFT Split Level beach towel, \$70, cittadesign.com. Laurence artwork by Sam Mitchell, \$7000 (framed), melanierogergallery.com. Tri pendant light by Resident, \$2350, simonjamesdesign.com. Hattarakukka cushion cover by Marimekko, \$57, boltofcloth.com. BOTTOM, FROM LEFT Bibendum chair by Eileen Gray for ClassiCon, POA, matisse.co.nz. Arnold Circus stool by Martino Gamper, \$230, everyday-needs.com.

ASK THE ARCHITECT:

Tim Dorrington of Dorrington Atcheson Architects

**Tim, what was your overall approach to this extension?** We took Jamie’s brief of ‘Opposite’ and ran with it. The addition has a pitched roof that slots beneath the eaves of the original home. They definitely read as two architectural styles and the detailing is different too. We opted for no architraves or skirting boards, just wall planes that blend smoothly to the ceiling and floor.

**Was it tempting to convince the Hitchcocks to rip out the kitchen and start again?** Of

course, but they took a sensible approach by choosing to retain aspects of the home that worked. We planned around that by updating fittings such as the black tapware, which is the same as we used in the new laundry. By adding gaboon ply shelving to the island bench, we created more storage for cookbooks and knick-knacks and helped to define a designated dining area.

**Why is it worth extending the back of a villa like this?** Even though the amount of space added may not be substantial, the enhanced amenity is. The Hitchcocks now have two living rooms and a new dining area. And extra storage in the built-in bench seats makes up for the fact that there was so little in the villa.