

Retro lift brings Japan St gem to life



Carefully researched colours and a flair in the garden have given this property in Japan St, Warrnambool, a burst of new life. Image: Clinton Krause.

Bluestone columnist and architect CLINTON KRAUSE previously worked in Daylesford before relocating his business to Warrnambool. Clinton explores the architectural styles that gives our region so much character. [Visit his website here.](#)

What a difference twelve months can make.

My visit to this retro beauty in Japan Street, Warrnambool, marked the first anniversary of the owners' purchase of the property and upon entering the house, I found it hard to believe that so much could be achieved in such a short period.

Michael and Helen have jumped head-first into the challenge of breathing new life into this house – which was previously a little tired and in need of love.

“ I had been searching for some time for just the right place,” remarks Helen, “and after our first visit we decided then and there that we could make this into a fantastic and comfortable home”.

Helen has a definite flair for renovating and has taken on numerous projects in the past, ranging from a small flat in London to a substantial bluestone homestead on a rural property outside Geelong.

Eight homes later and the couple have dropped anchor in Warrnambool, and, without a moment's pause, launched themselves into another major building project.



Geometric windows, brightly coloured blade walls and a soaring roofline add drama and excitement to the main façade.
Image: Clinton Krause.

Helen is not perturbed by overseeing the months of disorder and chaos that comes with demolition and renovation.

Many hours were spent consulting directly with tradesmen and the finer details of joinery design for the kitchen were resolved on site.

“I found both the builder (John Downie) and Matthew Parkes (Omega Kitchens) an absolute delight to work with,” says Helen and it is evident that their practical advice combined with Helen’s intuitive design flair have produced outstanding results.

On our tour around the house I am intrigued by Helen’s bold and fearless use of colour and pattern.

Even the humble toilet has been enlivened with a feature wall of candy stripe wallpaper and old window louvres replaced with a rainbow of pastel coloured glass.



The original bath and matching soap holder have been jazzed up with a striking ‘ AndyWarhol ’ themed mosaic tile splashback. Image: Clinton Krause.

Indeed Helen's extensive use of wallpaper requires further exploration.

New wallpaper in the entry is a perfect match with the 50's era of the house, a bold, striped band in the kitchen adds an unexpected burst of colour and movement, and the witty, shoe-themed paper in the dressing room tells me a lot about the Helen's interest in footwear.

"My mother loved using wallpaper," Helen muses. " I remember as a child that she systematically embarked on covering nearly every wall in the house. I even had a rose-themed paper on my bedroom ceiling which I would gaze up at and daydream over ".

Obviously unafraid of a "bit of bling', the tiles Helen selected for the bathroom are also worthy of special mention.

Helen was keen to keep the deep, pink enamelled bath and as much of the original detailing in the bathroom as possible. But it is the new splashback to the bath that raised a few tradesmen's eyes during the project.

A close inspection of the small mosaic pieces reveals a homage to Andy Warhol – even the famous Marilyn Monroe lithograph is there giving me a sultry stare.

While the structural bones and intelligent original layout of the house remain, it is this new and confident styling brought to the house by Helen and Michael that have reinvigorated the property and consolidated the home as a modern, welcoming and comfortable residence.



CLINTON J KRAUSE
ARCHITECT

0488 204 673