

This page The step up to the house is Ceppo limestone from FUM Australia. Plaster shell lights from 1stDibs. Hall table from Nicholas & Alistair. Vase, vintage. Murano chandelier from e Moderno.
Opposite page In the living room are armchairs in Kravet outdoor fabric. Sofa, reupholstered. Custom lacquered coffee table. Rain drum table, vintage. Knoll 'Platner' side table from Dedecor. Moroccan Beni Ourain rug from Cadrys. Artwork by Bill Brown.

GRAND ENTRANCE

Drawing inspiration from Italian rural villas, this intriguing home is overlaid with a generous sprinkling of modernism.

Words CHRIS PEARSON Photography SHANNON McGRATH



These pages The kitchen leads out to the garden. Island in Paonazzo marble from FUM Australia. Joinery in matt white two-pack. Rear benchtop and splashback in Corian. Carlo Scarpa Murano chandelier from e Moderno. Pierre Jeanneret 'Chandigarh' chair from 1stDibs. Ceramic bowls and plates from Carron Paris. Walls in Porter's Paints Stone Paint Fine with French Wash topcoat. Pearl White European oak flooring from Woodcut.



Evocative of Tuscan and Puglian villas, this three-bedroom home in Victoria's Macedon Ranges slowly reveals its secrets. Strikingly, the grey street facade is windowless, giving little clue to treasures hinted at by pine-cone urns atop the rendered walls. "Not having windows on a facade creates a sense of mystery and privacy. It enables the building to read sculpturally," says its designer, David Hicks. "We also have a penchant for concealing a home's entry."

Though the entrance is teasingly tucked away, what a first impression it makes, with its Ceppo marble flooring, intricate wall mouldings, vintage Murano ruched-glass chandelier and mid-century Vittorio Dassi table. It's the beginning of a journey through the home that culminates in a light-filled open plan, where French doors, reprised along that facade, lead to a secluded garden, ensuring a ready connection to the outdoors and generous natural light. The building's simple, pared-back design is embellished with decorative flourishes – in short, the romance of la dolce vita gets a modernist twist.

This is the second project David has designed for the owners. In 2020, he was working on the neighbouring property, a heritage weatherboard homestead whose owners had subdivided on the western side. He proposed the greenfield site to these empty-nester clients, who were wanting to downsize and start afresh. With its leafy outlook and closeness to town, they didn't hesitate. "Our brief was for a smaller but still spacious house with open-plan living, an easy flow and outlooks to the garden from all the rooms," says the owner. "David suggested an Italian villa influence, which we loved."

As well as light and air, the couple wanted a private main bedroom suite, separated from the open plan by, and accessed through, a retreat/study, with a guest bedroom far from the main. "My inspiration came from modest Italian villas, where the facades are relatively plain and have small decorative touches," says David. "They are often rendered or in stone, which both weather over time. Doors and windows are minimal on the facade, often with informal access through a front room, which takes you to one »



This page The study/retreat is softened with billowing linen sheers from De Le Cuona. Herman Miller Eames lounge chair and ottoman from Living Edge. Florence Knoll sofa, clients' own. Antique Malacca table, bought in Malaysia. 'Bertoia' chrome chairs from Dedec. Ceramic vase, vintage. 'Plafonnier' six-arm pendant by Serge Mouille and Murano glass lamps from 1stDibs. Silk rug by RC + D. Gas fireplace by Ortal. Surround in Ceppo limestone from FUM Australia. **Opposite page** (from top) White lacquer doors open to the study space. Artwork by William Riley. // In the dining area is a Florence Knoll dining table with Calacatta marble top and 'Brno' chairs by Mies van der Rohe, all from Dedec. Indian bronze urli decorative bowl, vintage. Artwork by Mark Galea.

SPEED READ

» The owners of this haven in Victoria's Macedon Ranges asked interior designer David Hicks to design a new home for them, with light and privacy being key parts of the brief. » David proposed an Italian rural villa as his inspiration, which translated to a windowless facade and a layout that flowed from one room to another rather than including lots of corridors. Walls of French doors now look out to a secluded garden. » The result combines modernist simplicity with flourishes of ornamentation. » Materials are a mix of raw and polished, including limewash on the exterior, hand-applied plaster on the internal walls, wide-gauge floorboards and lashings of marble. » The furnishings are an intriguing blend of vintage and modern.



Opposite page The main bedroom has a custom bedhead upholstered in Dedar satin. Vintage Tronchi chandelier and Murano wall sconce from Les Puces de Paris Saint-Ouen. 'Platner' chair from Dedecor. Rug from RC + D.

This page (clockwise from left) Growing in the courtyard outside the ensuite is a maple tree. Vintage Pierre Paulin 'Ribbon' ottoman from Les Puces de Paris Saint-Ouen, reupholstered in Kvadrat wool. // Part of the main suite with an artwork by William Riley. // The ensuite has a marble vanity and flooring in Paonazzo honed marble from FUM Australia. '121' tap sets from Vola. Vintage Murano Rostrato wall light from Les Puces de Paris Saint-Ouen. All walls in microcement purchased from Béton Ciré Marius Aurenti in France.

« room and then another. This model enabled us to limit corridors, which reduced valuable floor space.»

The entry vestibule leads to a garage on one side, and a short central hallway on the right (flanked by the study/retreat to the left and a guest bedroom opposite) leads to a light-filled living area. Strikingly, running along the western facade is a second walkway, with banks of French doors along one side and the other totally open to the main bedroom, the retreat and more. "We used this French-style enfilade planning, room upon room, to provide a link from the living space through the retreat to the main bedroom," says David. "Concealing the bedroom suite this way ensures privacy. And the retreat serves as both a private sanctuary and a social connector."

In the retreat, a marble fireplace, an Eames lounge chair and a stunning Serge Mouille six-arm pendant complement garden-facing French doors softened by white linen curtains. Curves, cornicing and bulkheads in this room are reprised sparingly throughout the home. Beyond this room, the walkway opens out to the living area, accented with lime render, marble and an inspired collection of vintage and modern furniture and art.

In a nod to the home's Tuscan muses, the owners wanted simple yet earthy textures. The exterior boasts a limewash and the interior is a crafted plaster finish that "provides a subtle, informal feel. It creates texture and echoes the facade," says »





« David. In the bathrooms, he used microcement for a similar effect, with the added advantage of being waterproof. “These diverse materials create harmonious, streamlined finishes, so various spaces inside and out meld into one.”

While many similar Italian homes would likely feature flagstones, tumbled stone or parquet flooring, David opted for a more contemporary look, with wide timber boards. Diverse marbles also bring luxury to the home, again referencing Italian villas. “Simple or not, most rural homes are adorned with marble as it is a primary construction material,” he explains. “It creates pattern and texture and is a durable surface – something that will age and patina over time, becoming even more beautiful.”

“Quality finishes and fittings, together with specially sourced pieces and David’s attention to detail, make this a special and beautiful home,” says the owner. “It’s really easy to live in and perfectly suits our lifestyle.”

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5 SIGNATURE STYLE KEY PIECES



1 French plaster shell **sconce**, \$995, Cleo Collects. 2 Perrin & Rowe ‘Langbourn’ wall-mounted **basin set** in Chrome, \$920, The English Tapware Company. 3 Medium **plinth** in Cream Travertine, \$639, Fleur Studios. 4 Acerbis ‘Jot’ **chair**, POA, Space. 5 ‘Louis’ marble **bath stool**, POA, Apaiser.

This page The external walls are rendered. French outdoor table and chairs from Miguel Meirelles Antiques. ‘Endicott’ pavers from Eco Outdoor. Opposite page (from top) Tall trees and plantings line the driveway. // Looking down the side of the house, with an antique wrought-iron gate from Architectural Heritage in the UK.

