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Personality plus

inside co-editor Jan Henderson experiences Travis Walton's grand renovation for Armadale residence that incorporates seamless architecture with interior design to produce excellent style and form.





previous left—Vignette of the large entertaining area with a view to the terrazzo bar.

previous right—The entrance to Armadale residence and the gallery beyond. **right**—The dining nook with curved banquette, custom-designed table and two Platner chairs.

opposite—Fabulous views of landscape and pool can be seen from the dining area

These days substantial homes situated in the suburbs are often sprawling monolithic creations that are well-designed and bang on trend, but lack a distinct personality. Nothing could be further from the truth, however, when talking of Armadale residence. The project, designed by Travis Walton, principal of Travis Walton Architecture & Interior Design, is a spectacular homage of style and panache, and one that is unique to its interior core.

The original house, built in the Deco style, required updating and extending to accommodate busy family life. The brief to Walton was to renovate the existing front section of the house and incorporate a substantial extension for entertaining, with sleeping quarters on a level above. To this end he has devised a floor plan that fulfils requirements, but also incorporates the outside 'in' with seamless unification.

The retained section of the original house has generous ceiling heights and these extend through to the new addition. As for the floor plan, formal areas connect to intimate spaces that then lead to larger areas and afford an opportunity for a delightful journey through the rooms. For example, the entrance sits between the formal sitting room and an intimate gallery, which then leads to a dining room and kitchen that are enjoined, but not fully open plan, thus creating a sense of intimacy for diners. In keeping with the grandeur of the house, Walton has also removed the old bannister stair, widening the void to include a fully enclosed curved timber staircase that is now in harmony with its architectural surrounds.

The colour palette of the interior is black and white and Walton's use of the yin and yang of the colour world is executed with precision. Black skirting boards act as a defining line to white walls and ceilings above, just as black steel-framed internal doors and windows frame the glass and walls. The base palette becomes a mere backdrop, however, to the rainbow of colour presented in the décor, accessories and artwork, which gives the interior its particular character.

In the gallery a large artwork by Dale Frank is breathtaking in its size and vivid emerald greenness, while opposite, photography by Bill Henson sets a moody scene through muted colours and cloudy forms. It seems that every corner of the interior is touched by art, such as the plinth topped by a head with gold helmet, ceramics or statuary dotted throughout the house. It is an understatement to say that the artwork injects pizzazz and a dash of eccentricity into the decoration of this interior.

For sheer opulence the kitchen is outstanding. Set against a Matrix granite splashback and counters, the imposing island bench is clad with hand-polished aged brass and inset with mirror, while the underside supports have been designed to follow the diagonal of the herringbone American oak floor.





below—The magnificent kitchen with Matrix granite splashback and counters and polished brass island bench





Walton has created an interior that is refined and sophisticated, but doesn't take itself too seriously.







Overhead is a geometric brass-edged, glass-sided pendant light (Maxhedron, Bec Brittain) suspended from the ceiling. It is divine, unexpected and somewhat reminiscent of a meteor suspended in space! It is one of many surprising elements that Walton has included in the décor that gives this home a distinct and delicious flavour. Opposite the kitchen is the dining suite to seat 16 (chairs by Christopher Guy) and this space is enclosed by floor-to-ceiling glass affording unobstructed views of the pool and tennis court beyond.

And the pool... Lined with a custom-designed mosaic pattern of black and white Bisazza tiles, the pool's design is an outrageous addition to the outside entertaining area. The tile pattern spreads across the pool floor and curves over the edges like a flattened zebra skin, which is then reflected in three mirrored alcoves inserted into the boundary wall. It is masterful in its design and, surprisingly, looks right at home within the landscape.

Looking back into the home from this area, the entertaining spaces are on full display through the many floor-to-ceiling windows and glazed sliding doors. At one end there is a stunning bar that rises up from the black and white terrazzo floor to become a sculpture in itself, and there is another show-stopping pendant light (Strada, Kelly Wearstler) that adds a beautiful soft glow in the evenings. Bars are back in fashion and it's easy to understand why as this is the place where everyone gathers.

A large sitting area is spread across the remaining floor area and it is the use of black and white in materiality and furniture that helps lift the design to another level of sophistication and style. The main seating consists of a large low-slung black swirled marble coffee table, white leather chairs and black leather sofa (Tufty-Time, B&B Italia, Space) that all sit upon a black and white hand-stitched animal hide. Behind the furniture grouping there is a black custom-designed shelving unit framed by white walls and, further along, an elongated black fireplace at the end of a curved wall near the bar.

Nestled to the side of this expansive public area is a dining nook located around the corner from the kitchen, and the curved banquette, custom-designed table and two easy chairs (Platner, Knoll) are a standout inclusion.

Moving to the level above, the sleeping quarters span the length of the new extension. There is a magnificent master suite with en suite bathroom and two opulent dressing rooms. 'His' wardrobes are clad with an ebonised wood façade and 'Hers' feature a Versailles-style length of bevelled mirrors. The hallway leading to the children's bedrooms has become an intimate retreat with television and library, and beyond this there are two spacious bedrooms each with en suite.

Armada residence is a one-off, something quite rare and bespoke. Walton has created an interior that is refined and sophisticated, but doesn't take itself too seriously. The interplay between the old and new architecture has been sensitively worked and the eclectic décor is a triumph of design. This is a house with oodles of personality that certainly makes the perfect statement for individualism and is in a league of its own.

opposite—The gallery features a large emerald green artwork by Dale Franks that is both dramatic and visually exciting.

above—The pool features a custom-designed mosaic pattern of Bisazza tiles that are reflected in the mirrored alcoves at the side