

Blurring the lines

Atlas Architects reshapes a 1980s farmhouse to better suit its spectacular surroundings.





Less than an hour's drive from Melbourne is Mornington Peninsula, an area that's become a favourite seaside holiday destination for many thanks to its swimming and surf beaches, hot springs and countless wineries and cellar doors. With some of the most majestic views in Victoria, the region boasts cascading emerald hills that divide Port Philip from the Bass Strait. Until recently, you could find a 1980s brown brick farmhouse with a pitched roof amongst these striking vistas which tragically had its back turned to the best views. But today, the property is unrecognisable.

The breathtaking transformation of the home now known as 'The Seat' is the work of Atlas Architects, who helped devise a modern yet seamlessly integrated new dimension to the home. Their design is not only centred around making the most of the view, but also connecting the structure to its surroundings. But building new, contemporary areas and structures that seamlessly integrated with an old farmhouse was not an easy feat.

"Working with an existing structure is always a challenge," explains Atlas Architects' Aaron Neighbour. "The existing roofline of the original home was bitsy and messy. We had to figure out a way to modify and evolve it without disturbing the building's form. Our key driver was to blur the lines between old and new, inside and outside, simplicity and complexity; and our solution was to create a steel fascia pergola structure that enveloped the existing building

so it still reads as one solid line. While effectively encaging the house, the pergola allowed for the extension of the roofline and provides privacy where it shelters the open space at the entrance, creating a northern courtyard."

Atlas Architects has honoured the iconic landscape in every aspect of the project, from the folding origami roofline that echoes the undulating hills and valleys of the site to inserting and rotating the new volume so it faces the panoramic view and directly frames the horizon. "The pergola frame really is one of the most remarkable elements of the exterior," says Aaron. "It's both complex and understated, a skeletal abstraction of the roof form, integrating new with old by encaging rather than plugging in. The frame covers and envelops the existing structure so that the space outside is framed like an artwork and exterior spaces are defined by the pergola's strong lines."

In tandem with the pergola, the project's dark tonal Resene colour palette also helps to simplify the home's appearance – where different elements are disguised and can visually merge into the new contemporary silhouette, which recedes and makes space for the green and purple tones of the landscape to come forward. Atlas Architects selected a Resene formula that would suit the different materials that make up the exterior, which includes steel, fibre cement sheet, bricks and timber – Resene Sonyx 101 semi-gloss waterborne paint, which was tinted to Resene CoolColour Bokara Grey and Resene

opposite, above left and right: The locals refer to the area of the Mornington Peninsula where this project is located as 'The Seat'. Aaron says that their clients loved this nickname so much that they decided to adopt it for their home. It won a Resene Total Colour Landscape Award for its beautiful integration with its surroundings. Exterior walls painted in Resene Sonyx 101 CoolColour tinted to Resene Bokara Grey and fascia and pergola in Resene Sonyx 101 CoolColour tinted to Resene Black. Design by Atlas Architects. Images by Tess Kelly, www.tesskelly.net.

Resene
Black

Resene
Bokara Grey



left and below: Mornington Peninsula is said to have some of the best views in Victoria, and the new design makes the most of them. The home sits seamlessly within its natural and landscaped surroundings, with a colour palette to complement it. Exterior walls painted in Resene Sonyx 101 CoolColour tinted to Resene Bokara Grey and fascia and pergola in Resene Sonyx 101 CoolColour tinted to Resene Black.

top tip

When choosing dark paint and wood stain colours outdoors, choose a Resene CoolColour formula – which can be used on all sorts of exterior materials and applications, from weatherboards and concrete to windowsills. Resene CoolColours look like normal Resene colours, but thanks to special pigment technology, they reflect more infrared waves to keep your substrate and coating cooler. Find out more at www.resene.com/coolcolour.

living areas have been prioritised above all else in a way that welcomes family in and encourages connection, reunion and shared experiences – something the renovation does with grace and elegance.

Inside, the colour palette is a dark, cosy and calm collection of Resene greys and charcoals – Resene Ironsand, Resene Quarter Ironsand, Resene Half Bokara Grey and Resene Colorwood Crowshead wood stain – paired with bluestone flooring. The hues and finishes Atlas Architects chose don't only connect with the exterior palette, they also help to limit light reflection, creating less strain on the eyes and elevating the expansive windows, views and natural light to centre stage.

“The interior creates seclusion where desired, such as the more private living spaces, and feels expansive in other moments, as when the foyer opens up into the home's dramatic cathedral ceilings,” Aaron explains. “The kitchen and pantry are practical and service-oriented, but they are also part of the social and entertaining hub. Designed as a full-sized bar, this functional zone has the aesthetic of a private club, accommodating family gatherings and social events.

“The colour scheme strikes a clever balance with the full-length and full-height windows and doors, achieving a cosy, grounded feeling,” he continues. “The main living, dining and kitchen used Resene Half Bokara Grey to



CoolColour Black. “Resene Bokara Grey is a dark charcoal that can look almost black under certain conditions, but in the sunlight, the colour's grey heart comes through clearly. Deeper Resene Black was used for trimming elements such as the fascia and door and window frames to subtly highlight the outline of the building,” says Aaron.

While Resene CoolColours look the same as normal Resene colours, they help to better protect the substrate by reflecting back more of the sun's harsh UV waves – and Resene CoolColours are recommended when painting or staining dark colours outdoors. “We hadn't used a Resene CoolColour formula on a project before, however, we are excited to specify it next time we have a dark building exterior,” Aaron says.

In addition to the exterior changes, the owners – a semi-retired couple with many children and grandchildren – were also after a home that was unapologetically intended for enjoying quality time with loved ones; where



Resene
Quarter Ironsand

Resene
Colorwood
Crowshead

- Resene Half Bokara Grey
- Resene Ironsand
- Resene Bokara Grey
- Resene Black

above left and right: As you make your way between the different interior and exterior areas of the home, the deep and moody Resene colour palette blends seamlessly throughout – championing the views. But rather than rely on a single paint colour, Atlas Architects closely considered the light and angles of each space and selected a handful of different smouldering charcoal hues, formulas and finishes to achieve the right effect. Low ceiling painted in Resene SpaceCote Flat tinted to Resene Half Bokara Grey, entrance, living room and kitchen walls in Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen tinted to Resene Ironsand, rumpus room walls in Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen tinted to Resene Quarter Ironsand, rumpus room raked ceiling in Resene SpaceCote Flat tinted to Resene Quarter Ironsand and timber beams and screen stained in Resene Colorwood Crowshead.

• create a dark expansive folding plane. The half strength was chosen so that the texture of the lining board could be brought out clearly. The walls feature Resene Ironsand to create a softer tone and differentiate from the ceiling. This way, the raked ceiling could appear as if it is a floating plane. The existing part of the home has the same colours applied, but with less strength. The intention was to differentiate the existing spaces from the new and to create a transition from the more public area of the house to the more private areas. The interior timber beams and screen were stained with Resene Colorwood Crowshead wood stain to enable the timber grain to show through.”

• To ensure the design intention was achieved within the constricted timeframe and budget, Atlas Architects

implemented some creative solutions for reducing waste. “We worked with the steel fabricator to achieve a precise 3D model of the steel frame for the building and the pergola which enabled precision fabrication and fast installation; the interior cabinetry was designed for swift installation and waste was minimised. The roof cladding offcuts were used to clad the existing fireplace. The new extension also leveraged the existing building infrastructure for mechanical heating and cooling,” says Aaron.

Choosing Resene products was another important component of ensuring the outcome they were after. “We like using Resene for their wide selection of paint colours and timber stains, as well as their excellent customer service. Furthermore, we find their colour range to be distinctive – especially when it comes to their neutral shades and tones.”

For Aaron and his team, the design of the project also offered an opportunity to learn a different way to approach renovations. “This project was really about how we could allow the architecture to truly integrate with the landscape; people forget how important this is. The landscape flows fluidly into and through the building and becomes the focal point, the nucleus connecting all elements; the dark interior creates a dramatic yet unpretentious stage for nature. It forced us to consider not just how a building sits in its landscape, but how it can evolve over time, with new dimensions and additions, and how the different elements can all work in concert to create a calm, considered, unified space rather than a building that feels iterated, divided or over-engineered.”

While many of the new plantings are still small at this point, it’s easy to imagine how the structure will become even more engrained within its surroundings as the landscaping fills in. “We plan to visit the site in a few years once the creepers have matured,” Aaron says. “The pergola structure effectively encages the house. Over time, the plants at its base will grow, creeping up to the roofline and enhancing the home’s privacy with flora so it feels contained but never confined. We believe this will dramatically change the appearance of the home, and we are excited to see the outcome.” **BW**

To see more of Atlas Architects’ work, visit www.atlasarchitects.com.au.