

New Kid

Loca gives a couple space to entertain in a 4.5 metre 1870s worker's cottage

Fiona Barr, owner— Our house is one in a row of three identical cottages; it's in a great location but was bit small for our needs. We wanted a modern renovation that would respect the history of the building.

The existing kitchen-dining area could only seat four and we love food and entertaining, so wanted an area to have our friends over for meals. We also needed storage and hoped we could include some built-in seating and a WC.

Lo'ca were recommended to us by a local architect and we shared their fondness for mid-century architecture. They provided us with two exciting options, which highlighted the need for an architect even for a small square box.

Ana O'Connell, Lo'ca Architects— The alteration of this heritage-listed villa called for opening up to the sun and garden with a living, dining and kitchen extension. Alongside this, the brief included much-needed remedial work and a thermal upgrade. Our design response was to restore and upgrade in keeping with the original character, while adding a modern single-storey sun-catcher to the back of the house. From a heritage viewpoint, it was important to provide the desired inside-outside relationship without affecting the original character of the Italianate villa.

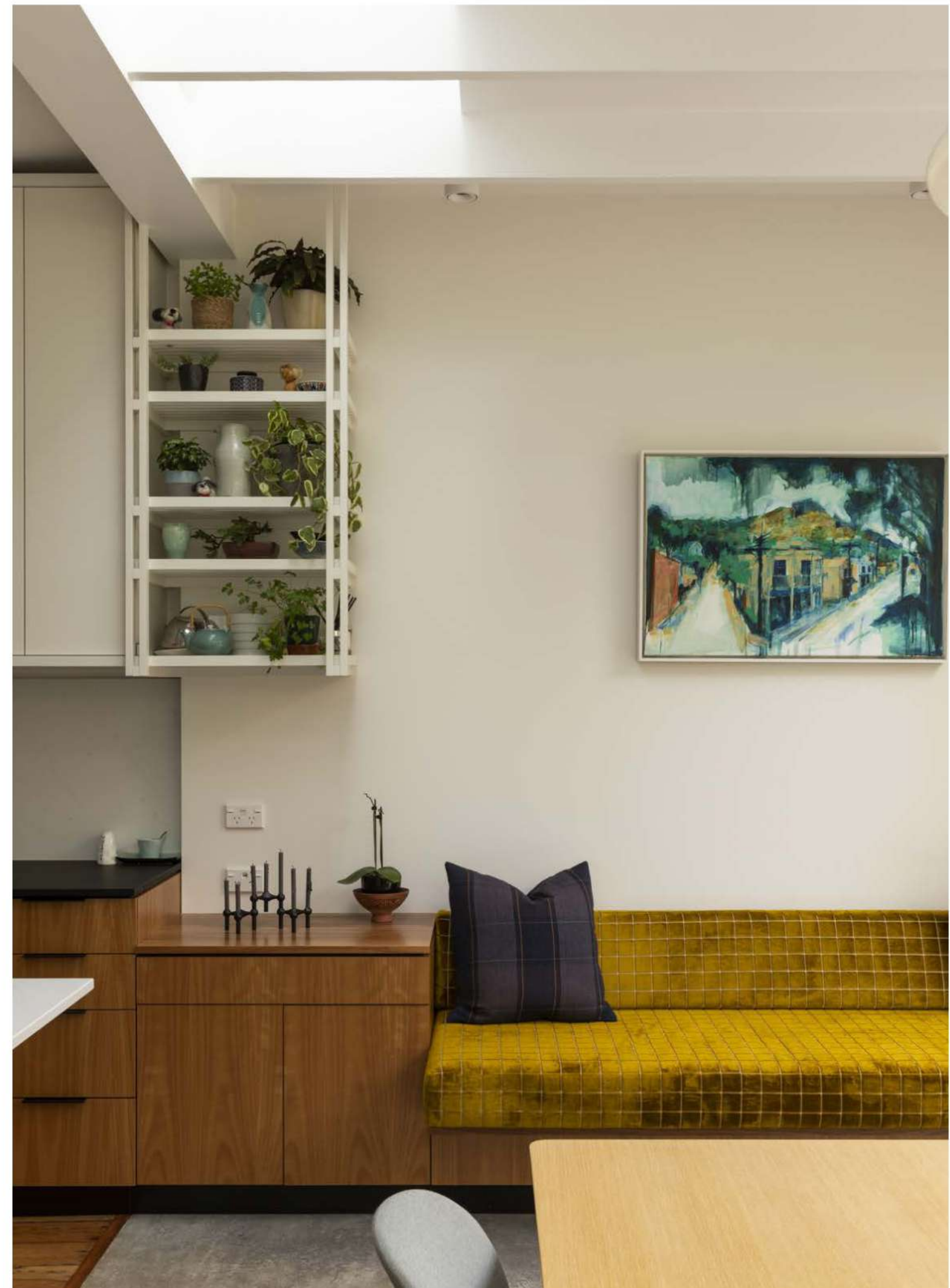
The extension opens up the dark,



Opposite— It's a villa with mid-century leanings.

Above— As well as an easy connection to the garden, full-height sliding doors provide a picture window to this pretty pocket of nature.

Right— The house now has a foot in both worlds, where original native-timber floorboards meet clear-finished concrete in the extension. Skylights open the single-storey extension to the light.





internally focussed villa and reinterprets the timber craftsmanship and vertical volumes of the villa in a modern way. The extension contributes space for the new kitchen, as well as an additional dining area. It is sympathetic in form and scale, harking back to the original lean-to that clipped onto the back of the villa. Skylights and oversized sliding doors improve natural daylight and sun penetration. The exposed concrete floor functions as a passive solar heat sink. The courtyard provides outdoor seating and borrowed volume that encourages expansiveness in the interior spaces.

Lo'ca Architects— The street elevation had some historical damage and rot, which triggered the weatherboards and windows being replaced. The restoration remains faithful, with careful detailing work replicating the curved timber keystone sash window head and sunroom windows. All the existing windows have been replaced with double-glazed sealed units, and insulation installed throughout.

We love the generosity of volume and light that the extension provides, alongside the subtle textures and materiality of the interior. With a foot in both worlds, we kept the design in the extension quite paired back, while picking up on the traditional villa use of decorative timber and texture. Vertical weatherboards in the extension pick up on the villa weatherboard texture but they are rotated to be vertical and painted dark grey. The clear-finished concrete contrasts with the villa's native-timber floor. The kitchen joinery straddles the villa and extension and is painted to match the wall colour, aiming to make the space feel bigger than the 4.5m width of the room. The below-bench timber veneer joinery picks up the grain and tone of the timber floor.

The talented builder Chris Swift did a great job working around the challenges created by the villa's leaning walls and sloping floors. There's a new window that needed to slope vertically to align with the existing leaning wall. Surprises are always unearthed with every alteration – it's interesting to see the layered history underneath the linings.

It's such an unexpected surprise to walk into the compressed villa entry, then turn into the kitchen where sky and garden views draw you through. The contrast between the narrow exterior street frontage and the interior really does feel like a Tardis.



Opposite—A Louis Poulsen 'PH5' pendant hangs above the table.

Left— The villa is one in a row of three identical cottages.

Below— Thermally broken aluminium joinery has been fitted throughout the home. No easy feat in a villa that comes with all its original charm, including leaning walls and sloping floors.





Top—Dexter in the living room

Left— new built-in seating

Below— In their brief, the owners requested the addition of a WC in the extension, which is now discreetly located behind panelling.

