

RENOVATION

domain

SMART IDEAS

Coloured glass feature column

Featuring at the entry and the remodelled rear, these squares of blue and green are subtly included in the french doors on the left of the fireplace to provide a counterpoint to the expanded glass. They also allow light to filter through from the south-eastern rear in a unique way. Their use in the entry and rear provides a unifying link between the new work and the existing house as well as individual flair.



French door windows

Two glass panels in one of the doors open vertically so both top and bottom can be opened while the shifted panes meet in the centre to create airflow you can regulate. It's a terrific idea; with this type of window you can open up the doors a little or a lot.

Back to black

Sitting against the biscuit brick veneer, this black timber beauty answers the question many renovations forget to ask — what does it look like from the outside? The coloured glass panels from this aspect look flash. It's amazing how a coat of paint can turn pleasant but everyday brick veneer into smart style.



Small changes give a big result

It took only a few simple touches to transform this house, writes Lou Sweeney.

TO MAKE a renovation work, all you have to do is look to your environment. It doesn't have to mean massive demolition, imported Italian marble or a home theatre. Sometimes all it takes to make a house your home is to look outside your window.

When you live in Kalorama, in the Dandenongs foothills, the view is most definitely the thing.

For Anne and Alister Pate it was being able to see the beauty that surrounded them, and they managed that in a cost-effective manner.

Their house is simple but that's not to say it's some sort of rustic log cabin. The brick veneer has some good and some not so good '80s hallmarks — but a small-scale renovation has magically enhanced the feel here.

A long steep driveway leads to the side entry of the house with bushland, hills, valleys and towering trees all around.



Anne and Alister Pate's modest renovation opened up their house.

PICTURE: GARY MEDLICOTT

The renovation is small, with the main remodelling at the rear of the house but it works terrifically well and should inspire those on a budget.

At the entry, a column of coloured glass windows acts as a primer to the work done inside.

Mrs Pate says the main reason for the renovation was to open the house up to the views outside.

"At the rear were a couple of windows, a half window and a very ugly wood box, where the wood for the fire could be accessed from the outside. We were frustrated by the lack of aspect. Why was there no big window to take everything in?"

Nic Owen of Nic Owen Architects in Carlton created

what he calls "a new box to form the rear of the house".

Mrs Pate says they wanted to make the changes since they moved in. "We wanted to open up the side too but the neighbours went up a storey so it blocked our view and we didn't think it practical in the end."

They also wanted to move the fireplace into the corner, the natural home of the fire but it remains in the centre of the living area and provides a nice centre to the extended windows that frame it.

The renovation has seen the removal of those restricted-view windows. Two large picture panes have been fitted to the rear wall and all the greenery of the ranges creates a postcard

view from your armchair. Another line of those coloured windows appears on the left. The aquamarine and green squares give a different perspective and a simple but interesting visual impact to the room. A clear glass square among the colours at eye level gives an uninterrupted view of the hills.

Outside, a set of wide red-gum steps lead into the terraced backyard where a cleared area provides room for outdoor entertaining beneath the natural canopy and further down you can plunge into the bush proper.

The rear of the house is painted black. It's a dramatic statement that frames the wide windows in a contemporary fashion.

When the Pates have the time, money and inclination you can see how this house will be utterly transformed one day.

As it is, plans for expanding the front of the house are on a drawing board somewhere far, far away and they are happy with the small renovation they have done.

"It's the light, the views and the access to the outside that have made so much of a difference," Mrs Pate says.

It just goes to show how much you can improve your home in 10 days with \$15,000. Sometimes the smallest touches are simply the best.