

This page Originally designed by architect Louis Chiodo, the house has access to outdoor areas from nearly every room. On the banquette, bespoke cushions from Unique Fabrics. Male outdoor table with 'Maxim' chairs, all from Satara. Opposite page The foyer has been transformed with rich navy walls in Taubmans 'Star Spangled' and curved furniture to soften the vast space, including custom sofas by Studio del Castillo and 'Meadow' brass cocktail tables from Boyd Blue. 'Florence' padded stool with brass base from Essential Home. 'Lugano Shimmer' wool and silk rug from The Rug Establishment. Bespoke 'Juniper' floor lamps from Boyd Blue. 'Abaqus' pendant lights from Christopher Boots. De Castelli 'Syrò' mirrors from PAD Furniture. On the mantelpiece, vessel by Simone Badmer-Turner. Custom walnut veneer console in cognac finish and cast-brass handles from Boyd Blue and Kelly Wearstler 'Armato' table lamp from The Montauk Lighting Co.



After years of coveting their neighbour's house, this family can finally call it their own.

Wishful



thinking

Words CARLI PHILIPS Photography TIMOTHY KAYE

Patience was the ultimate payoff for the owners of this home in Harkaway, a village midway between the city and country in the foothills of Victoria's Dandenong Ranges. Now pride of place for a couple with three children, the house was built by their former neighbours as they watched from down the street, wistfully envisaging a home just like it for themselves. So when the house came up for sale in 2019 they swooped, engaging designer Penny Del Castillo, of Studio del Castillo, who they had worked with previously. Like many of the large, distinguished blocks in the area, its connection to the surrounding environment was palpable.

"My husband and I got married in Lake Como and my first thought driving up here was 'why did we get married in Italy?' It's right here, complete with manicured gardens, a boathouse and a go-cart track that goes around the dam. It's insane," says Penny.

Designed by architect Louis Chiodo about 10 years ago, the home's Tuscan style attracted the couple, but the interior fixtures and finishes were not aligned with their aesthetic as a young modern family. They briefed Penny to deliver an entirely new scheme that included furniture and fittings. Given its generous floor plan and soaring ceilings, lighting was a top priority.

"It was all about getting the right proportions and perfect drop," says Penny, who sourced the lights that would fill the height. A case in point is the show-stopping »



This page The entrance has sweeping features such as double-height steel French doors, soaring ceilings and marble flooring. Custom armchairs by Studio del Castillo upholstered in 'Brugge' velvet from Elliott Clarke. 'Sandton' side table from Boyd Blue. Artwork by Meg Cowell. **Opposite page from top** The outdoor loggias are reminiscent of Tuscan architecture. 'Pinu' pagoda chair from Satara. In the formal living room is a 'Caravel' two-piece coffee table in solid walnut and Estremoz marble from Collector, Portugal. Custom modular sofa with chaise by Studio del Castillo and cushions from Hermès. 'Jean' ribbed marble table base with bronze metal top from James Said. 'Cumulus' rug from The Rug Establishment. On the top shelves, 'Emmerson' stone rings (left) and 'Flynn' sculpture from Boyd Blue.





« Christopher Boots 'Abacus' brass and quartz pendant light, its graphic web of spears and globes dramatising the entrance. "We went to great lengths to find a modern chandelier that could sit in front of the grand eight-metre arched window without detracting from the view."

Louis planned the home so that a terrace or courtyard is accessible from almost every direction. Wedded to the gardens, there's a resort-like feel complete with a tennis court, professional poker table, basketball court and gym. Penny says the property has become a magnet for hosting. "There's so many incredible opportunities for entertaining and naturally, it always turns into a bit of a party session. With the pool deck and cabana, there's no need to go on vacation. It's all right here."

The dated grand foyer has been transformed with rich navy walls and curved-edge furniture that softens the vast space. Organic-shaped, brass-framed mirrors creep up the wall while a circular gold and blue rug was custom-made to foster a more inward-looking experience. A short corridor meets the west-facing master suite which has been designed with a European twist, kitted out with a four-poster canopy bed and French doors leading onto the lawn, a chateau-style ensuite, walk-in wardrobe and adults-only lounge. Another bedroom is adjacent, followed by an office featuring walnut joinery and a large antique desk from Cromwell.

"It's the one room that's heavy and almost doesn't look like it belongs in the house," says Penny. "Their instinct was to change everything in the interiors that was traditional but I wanted to curate something with an ambience »



This page In the den, library and office the custom partners desk is an 1860s-inspired design. 'Hawa' mirror from Boyd Blue. The horse is a family heirloom. On shelves: feather and beza necklaces from Bisque Interiors, antique hand-carved timber head from Timor and original 1970s Britannica encyclopedias. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: in the living area of the master suite, Kartell 'Foliage' armchairs by Patricia Urquiola from Space, 'Indira' glass and marble coffee table and 'Majuli' solid white marble side table both from Boyd Blue, all on a wool and silk rug from Jenny Jones. Above the mantelpiece is a brass mirror from Boyd Blue. 'Prometheus 1' pendant light from Christopher Boots. 'Callahan' cabinet from Boyd Blue and a 'Wavy' brass table lamp from Bloomingdale's. In the garden-facing breakfast room is a 'Baxter' mahogany table from Boyd Blue with custom leather dining chairs by Porus Studio, Portugal. The 'Quadrix' pendant light is from Christopher Boots. The gallery-like hallway hosts a trio of artworks by David Bromley. The console is finished in satin black lacquer and gold metal leaf and is topped with a vessel by Simone Bodmer-Turner. 'Modi Iron' custom Persian runner from The Rug Establishment.

SPEED READ

» Designed by architect Louis Chiodo about 10 years ago, this house was originally built by another family. » Attracted by the property's Tuscan aesthetic and indoor-outdoor connections, the neighbours snapped it up when it went on the market in 2019. » The new owners then engaged designer Penny Del Castillo, of Studio del Castillo, to deliver an entirely new scheme that included swathes of custom furniture to make the most of the generous floor plan and soaring ceilings. » To fill the height, Penny sourced dramatic lighting such as the show-stopping Christopher Boots 'Abacus' brass and quartz pendant light which graces the entrance foyer. » Penny says the property has become a magnet for hosting. "There are so many incredible opportunities for entertaining ... With the pool deck and cabana, there's no need to go on vacation. It's all right here," she says.



« that celebrates both the old and the new world. The study is a private space off the hallway and it only took a small push for the clients to get on board with the idea that this room could be a little step back in time.»

The opposite wing of the house is a hub for family and guests, with a kitchen, living and games room, atrium breakfast space and a formal dining room with stacking doors that open onto a loggia-like alfresco area. At the far rear are the children's bedrooms and a casual back entrance to the house that's used daily. There was a temptation to make changes in the kitchen, but it was put on pause with a new layout set for down the track.

The timely project coincided with Penny's seasonal visit to the trade shows in Paris where she was exposed to suppliers from all around the world. "It was just before the world shut down and it allowed me to have access to so many products that had never been seen in Australia before," she says, citing Portuguese designers Porus Studio and Collector, in particular. "My clients were seeking a glamorous yet liveable home. We made those changes with beautiful furniture and decoration while still retaining its original features and keeping its soul intact." # delcastillo.com.au



This page, clockwise from top A softly pretty aesthetic features in one of the children's bedrooms with the 'Hampton' bed from Xavier Furniture under a custom decorative fabric canopy by Studio del Castillo and a chandelier retrofitted with pink silk lampshades. 'Chantal' unicorn table lamp from Luxo Living. Small framed picture on wall from Hello Belle Co. In the main bedroom, 'Bernhardt' four-poster bed from Voyager Interiors. Ligne Roset 'Paipai' sofa from Domo. Visual Comfort 'Juliette' table lamp by Suzanne Kasler from Bloomingdale's. The Arteriors 'Fallon' faceted mirror in gold leaf from Boyd Blue stars in the powder room and is flanked by 'Melange' sconces by Kelly Wearstler from The Montauk Lighting Co. Calacatta Fabricotti marble on the vanity from Signorino. **Opposite page** In the main ensuite is a freestanding bath from Decina with bath spout from Phoenix Tapware. 'Florence' round ottoman from Essential Home with padded quilted detail, brass base and cream velvet upholstery.

