

Kindred spirits

This inviting home on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula takes country style to new heights.

STORY *Janice Hogg* | STYLING *Julia Green* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Armelle Habib*





FOYER This transition point between veranda, living room and hall needed a unifying element – here it's in the form of V-groove barn doors, custom made from cedar. The flooring is engineered European oak. A pommel horse is an unusual and fun touch. **EXTERIOR** Past planter boxes featuring Chinese elms, a path of Endicott Crazy Paving from Eco Outdoor leads through Village Green kikuyu lawns to the wonbark frontage of the home. The water tank is a traditional style that references older rural and coastal properties.



Transforming a horse paddock with a few scrubby trees into this spectacular five-bedroom resort-style home in Flinders, on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula was no mean feat. The creator of The Barn, developer and self-described tradie Troy Robinson, assembled a dream team of design and building talent to shape his project - which also includes a tennis court, landscaped gardens, guesthouse and swimming pool - from plans to reality. "Troy really only builds houses for himself," says Lloyd Robinson, Troy's father and collaborator. "It's really important to him that he builds a house he would be happy to live in himself, and he often makes changes along the way that he believes would be beneficial to the property. So it's quite an organic process in that way."

Troy was on site with his kelpie mate Roo every day during the build, keeping an eagle eye on all aspects of the project. "I don't build the properties myself. I subcontract all the work but I'm always on site. I change things often and rapidly as and when I want to, depending on what feels right to me. A property evolves like a piece of art. I was brought up in an artistic, energetic environment in a family of seven children so perhaps that's why I see things differently."

His first hurdle was the land itself. "The soil in Flinders provides one of the major challenges, with a tendency to big cracks in summer and sticky clay in winter," he says. "I like homes to transition from inside to out with minimal level changes, but this was difficult to achieve with the requirements for drainage and clearance levels." The only solution was to "move a lot of soil around" and install extensive drainage systems. A mammoth task, but it's worked a treat: today, manicured lawns of soft yet robust Village Green kikuyu turf - a species purpose-bred for Australian conditions - help ground The Barn, which looks resplendent in its surroundings.

Another shining feature of this property is that it sits so well within the natural environment. The design has its roots in a traditional Australian aesthetic with its wide verandahs, pitched roof and high ceilings. Troy clad The Barn in ironbark, which true to its name, will weather over time to an almost metallic silvery tone, complementing its corrugated Colorbond roof in Woodland Grey. "The contrast of the rustic timber with the crisp white windows and the steel doors works really well," says Troy.



"A PROPERTY EVOLVES LIKE A PIECE OF ART."

Troy Robinson, developer

LIVING Custom-made cube shelves attest to Troy's love of books, which have been subtly colour coded in this collection. Black steel cross-bruts support the vaulted V-groove ceilings. The dry-stack stonework chimney is made in the local Sorrento/Portsea limestone. Fireplace, Jetmaster. Chairs and custom ottoman, Arthur G. Camerich sofa, Saltwater. Single Gyro square ceiling lights, Gentech Lighting. Artwork by Natalie Nowotarski.



"The Barn, which sleeps 14, is ideally suited as a holiday home for a large extended family," says Kate Walker of KWD, one of Troy's longtime collaborators - and one of his biggest fans. "Troy is very discerning in what he selects and we are generally very aligned in terms of our ambition for the project and the completed house. He has a strong vision that we try to encapsulate and enhance. We show him where he could take that dream with the latest and greatest innovative products, and the end result is always incredibly rewarding."

The result is spectacular indeed. Entry to the L-shaped home is via steel-framed french doors that lead inside to a living space with impressive 5.5-metre cathedral ceilings and wide engineered-oak floorboards throughout. Continuing the modern farmhouse aesthetic is the barn-style internal door that divides the expansive open-plan living, dining and kitchen from the entry and hallway to the bedrooms. "The barn door for the very large opening into the living area is ideal because it doesn't take up any space," says Troy.

At the far end of the living area, a stunning stone chimney, fitted with a Jetmaster fire, soars to the full height of the room. Stonemason Jonathan Watts, another member of the dream team, laid the white limestone, sourced from the nearby Sorrento/Portsea region, in traditional dry-stack style. "Working with the subcontractors who make the build come alive is really satisfying," says Troy. ▶

KITCHEN/DINING The wall colour, Dulux Domino, was selected to match to the Gaggenau appliances so they would disappear from view. Clock from Amsterdam. Luna dining table, MCM House. Framed limited-edition prints by Natalie Nowotarski flank the steel-framed doors that open out to the courtyard and outdoor entertainment area with its striking steel sculpture, *United* by Lachlan Ross.

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**THE DESIGN HAS ITS ROOTS IN A
TRADITIONAL AUSTRALIAN AESTHETIC.**

LOFT *Above and right* Making the most of the space above the garage, the loft is perfect for TV watching and accommodating extra guests. Camerich sofa, Saltwater. **MAIN BEDROOM** Shutter-style doors are another bucolic touch. Bedlinen, Abode Living. Lamp, Saltwater. Armchair, Arthur G. Bench sourced in Megève, France. **BATHROOM** The main bathroom features warm-grey honed Turkish limestone and Spanish handmade white tiles on floors and walls with Zimbabwe charcoal-coloured granite benchtops finished in a linen texture. Posh Solus freestanding bath and Scala brushed-nickel tapware, Reece. Side table and accessories, Saltwater. ►





"WE WANTED IT TO BE VERY FUNCTIONAL BUT ALSO WITH ELEMENTS OF LUXURY."

Kate Walker, interior designer

VERANDAH Troy Robinson and his kelpie, Roo, on the verandah, which features stylish slatted pergolas.

GUESTHOUSE "I'd be happy living here," says Troy of the guesthouse which overlooks the pool, gardens, tennis court and the cabana opposite.

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On one side of the living room is a ceiling-height library wall of bookshelves, a signature feature installed by the book lover.

The adjoining open-plan kitchen and dining area to the right of the entry is anchored with a dramatic wall painted in Dulux Domino, a deep, almost black, grey. "The room was so large we felt it could accommodate a bold colour," says Troy, who says that he matched the wall to "the very beautiful Gaggenau appliances" so they would recede.

The marble island "altar" bench is one of his favourite features. The Luna oak table, from MCM House in Sydney, grounds the centrally located dining room, which opens out to the courtyard, pool, tennis court and guesthouse on one side or to the hallway that leads to the wing housing four of the five bedrooms, the bathroom and ensuites.

Bedroom floors are laid in a luxuriously thick carpet in eco-friendly undyed wool. "Understanding that the house may be used as a permanent home or a weekender, we wanted it to be very functional but also with elements of luxury," says Kate, adding that "no expense was spared in terms of ensuring that the fit-out was exceptional, from the wide-board oak floors, Carrara marble and the custom carpets".

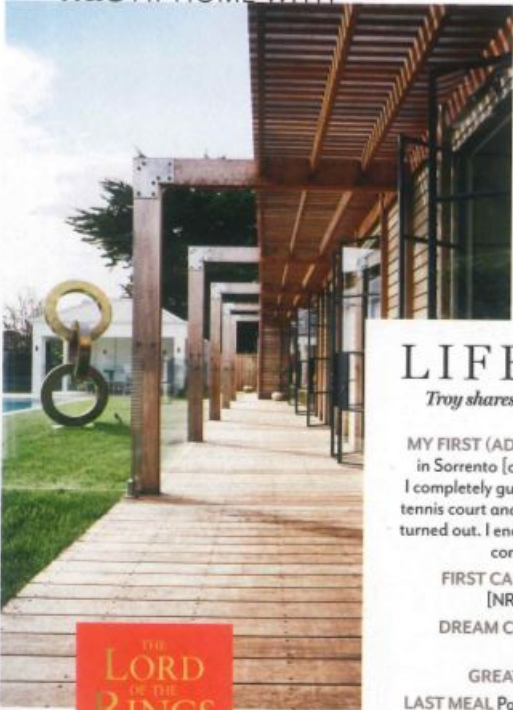
Above the garage at the end of the bedroom wing is what Troy has dubbed the loft, which has low vaulted ceilings, four bunk beds and a Camerich sofa from local homewares store, Saltwater. "It's a big room but it feels very cosy," says Troy. "It's the spot we go to watch a movie or the AFL. It's great for kids to stay over, too."

Testament to Troy's eye for detail, the 12-metre swimming pool, built by Alan Russell, is lined in tiles colour-matched to a smoky blue pebble he brought back from a cove at the southern tip of Greece. A cabana sits at one end while facing it is a guesthouse that furnishes the fifth bedroom with ensuite. Another standout feature in the garden is the steel sculpture by Lachlan Ross.

The property is a stone's throw away from all the attractions of nearby Flinders and the Mornington Peninsula: a variety of beaches, diving and fishing spots, all the water sports you could imagine, or simply shopping in the village. And while these sound all very tempting, it's also likely you might never want to leave The Barn with its expansive living spaces, movie room, swimming pool, tennis court and that very relaxing true-blue Australian ambience. ▶

KWD, Mount Martha, Victoria; (03) 5974 1800 or katewalkerdesign.com.au.





LIFE & STYLE

Troy shares some firsts and favourite things.

MY FIRST (ADULT) HOME A 1970s red-brick house in Sorrento [on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula]. I completely gutted it, doubled the size, and added a tennis court and pool. I was pretty pleased with how it turned out. I ended up selling it to the CEO of a power company as a holiday home.

FIRST CAR A VS Holden ute I bought from [NRL player] Cameron Smith.

DREAM CAR Ferrari Testarossa 512 in red – isn't it everyone's?

GREAT READ *The Lord of the Rings*.

LAST MEAL Parma with the boys on Thursday night.

FAVOURITE PROJECT YOU'VE DONE? My current project, The Barn, which has just been completed.

I LOVE A VASEFUL OF... Jellybeans.

NUMBER ONE SCENT Cut grass.

NEXT PURCHASE FOR YOUR HOME?

A Bang & Olufsen TV [Beovision Harmony, right].

NEXT HOLIDAY DESTINATION?

A trip around Australia.

WHO INSPIRES YOU IN THE WORLD OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN? British industrial designer Jony Ive [designer of the Apple Watch], interior designer Andrew Parr, and architects Allan Powell [of Powell and Glenn, who designed the project at left] and the late I. M. Pei [designer of the glass pyramid at the Louvre]. But inspiration is everywhere.

FAVOURITE STATIONERY ITEMS? Graph paper, sharp lead pencil, rubber and scale ruler.

FAVOURITE ARTISTS? Hans Zimmer, The Cure, Florence and the Machine, Bob Dylan, Angus & Julia Stone.

WHAT ARE YOU READING RIGHT NOW?

My new accountant's terms and conditions. I should finish reading them before Christmas...

WHAT MUSIC ARE YOU LISTENING TO RIGHT NOW? George Michael.

HOME OR GARDEN PROJECT GOALS FOR 2019?

A beach house in Blairgowrie, Victoria. H&G



FAVOURITE COLOUR COMBINATION?
WHITE ON WHITE.

THE
LORD
OF THE
RINGS

J.R.R. TOLKIEN

