

elements of **STYLE**



Lawyers say that people who represent themselves "have a fool for a client." The same cannot be said for architects for whom designing and building their own home is almost a rite-of-passage.

Quick Facts

Parras residence

Location:
Moonee Ponds VIC

Owners:
Damian and Tina Parras

Architect/project manager:
Damian Parras

Builder:
Jag Homes Developments

Bricklayer:
Albi & Son Bricklayers

Featured Product

Austral Bricks® Elements®
Zinc semi-glazed clay bricks



Photography: Roger du Buisson



previous page. As dusk falls the glaze of the bricks takes on a glow. The brickwork spanning the outdoor room is supported on an L-shaped lintel.

from left. The zinc-clad upper level floats above the more grounded brickwork. A glazed internal courtyard draws light into the centre of the house along the narrow northern boundary. Architect Damian Parras describes brickwork as "an honest and very durable material."

Damian Parras, a partner in Max Architects, and his wife Tina spent five years living on the site in a quiet Moonee Ponds street before commencing construction.

"First and foremost the house has to work," Damian considers. "That was critical. The aesthetics then plug into that. A house is very much a machine and we spent those five years looking at how we work and operate and live and then related that back to the site and orientation."

The building is constructed on a reinforced slab with a suspended slab at the upper level. The base walling is predominately brick veneer featuring Austral Bricks Elements Zinc semi-glazed bricks. "It was always going to be brick," says Damian. "What I love about brick is that it's an honest and very durable material, especially at ground level. It also works really well in terms of maintenance."

He wanted a dark base to create the foundation of the project and anchor the lighter upper-storey materials. After reviewing products from several brick companies Damian knew his quest had ended as soon as he saw the Elements Zinc. "Its metallic sheen can suddenly spring into life as it

catches the sunlight, adding another layer to the aesthetic quality of the house," he enthuses.

The dark brown mortar was finished with shallow-ironed joints and the walls capped with Colorbond® Ironstone® flashings that drain into concealed gutters.

The west-facing block is a little narrower than standard but Damian and Tina were keen not to build to both boundaries. A bluestone-paved path flanking a silver travertine blade wall leads visitors to a discreet front entrance tucked away in an alcove adjacent to the garage entrance. The balance of the front elevation is taken up with a rumpus room overlooking a small, semi-enclosed garden.

To the rear, an outdoor room with a built-in barbecue connects the dining area, kitchen and main living area with the east-facing backyard via massive sliding glass doors. The nine courses of brickwork spanning the opening are supported on an L-shaped lintel.

The greatest design challenge came on the long northern boundary: how to maximise light penetration without compromising the

view. The solution was to design a glazed internal courtyard that captures the northern sun while maintaining a garden outlook. It also preserves the house's flow-through design, allowing a direct visual connection to the street, even though the main living areas are to the back of the house.

The upper level is clad in zinc to the front and rendered polystyrene to the rear. Damian has recently noticed that the render is starting to weather and wonders whether a light-colour brick – possibly from Austral Bricks Burlesque® series of high-gloss bricks – would have been a better choice.

He is full of praise for their builder – Jag Homes Developments – and the bricklayers, David and John Albi. "The bricklayers were fantastic. They took a lot of pride in their work."

There is an industry joke that an architect's house is never complete. The Parras house is an exception although there is always something to do. Damian and Tina are currently working on the landscaping, but at least their low-maintenance brickwork will stay looking great for generations to come.