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Drama by the bay

Show-stopper in eclectic Elwood. PAGE 4



PRIVATE PROPERTY

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IT'S refreshing to meet an interior designer who talks about natural materials, craftsmanship and buying furniture that will grow old with you. Paul Hecker is passionate about finding the right solution, not a quick fix for people's homes.

Scandinavian design is the biggest influence on Hecker's work. He believes the simple lines, restrained palette and calm interiors of Scandinavia are perfectly suited to the Australian lifestyle.

Hecker and partner Hamish Guthrie of Hecker Guthrie don't slavishly follow the latest trends in interior design.

"Our whole philosophy is about longevity and craftsmanship," says Hecker, who has more than 20 years' experience in the industry.

"We're interested in what's good and what's bad, not what's in and what's out."

People who follow fashions are only setting themselves up for constant reinvention, he warns.

The firm is working on Canopi, a townhouse development that is under construction at Valley Lake, in Keilor East. Here, Hecker is drawing on his design principles to maximise the compact living spaces. He plans to inject a sense of lightness and freshness into the rooms by keeping materials to a minimum. Similar materials will be used internally and externally to increase the feeling of space.

The lounge rooms will have clean lines, quality oak finishes and views of Valley Lake. Smart storage and spacious bedrooms complete the package.

He says kitchens should be simple and neutral so they won't date. It isn't necessary to fill up all the walls with built-in cupboards. "I like to design things that hopefully have longevity. Built-in components should be more like furniture."



If there are too many materials used in a house, people find it harder to personalise the space when they move in, Hecker says.

The clean lines also extend to the exteriors of the townhouses, where greenery is another important factor.

Hecker is a believer in investing in well-designed furniture. "You should buy once, buy well and buy forever," he says.

Not surprisingly, he loves tactile



materials, including timber, leather, stone, concrete, copper, cotton and linen, and uses these in his interiors.

He says objects with a history add to the ambience of a home. Give him beautiful timbers any day but, he says, "veneer is a last resort".

He points out that while it started in the postwar period, Scandinavian design is constantly evolving.

"I like honest design where you

In Canopi's living areas (main) and kitchens (left), designer Paul Hecker has kept materials to a minimum to maximise the space.

can see how it's all put together," he says.

Hecker feels his work has become more sophisticated throughout the years. He says we are obsessed with light in Australia and our houses would be cooler — and rugs and artwork would last longer — if we concentrated on southern and dappled light.

We have much in common with our Scandinavian counterparts, he says, in that we like to connect with nature, enjoy a simple palette, keep architecture calm and layer it with personal objects. The casualness and non-fussiness of Scandinavian style works well here, he says.

Travel is another inspiration. Hecker visits the Milan Fair regularly and recently toured mid-20th-century American buildings and Scandinavian churches.

"The beauty of being in design is that it enriches your life on so many levels," he says.

Contact
Hecker Guthrie
 9421 1644
 heckerguthrie.com

BOUTIQUE



\$399,000-\$590,000
ALPHINGTON
24 Como Street
Private sale
Agent Brace Real Estate,
 9480 1277
Melway 31 C11

ALMOST within the grounds of Alphington Primary, not far from the local grammar school and hospital, close to cafes, transport, parkland, golf clubs and the Yarra River, this development has a fantastic location, whichever way you roll. No. 24 Como Street, a boutique block of 12 apartments, isn't new, but you could be forgiven for thinking so given its recent overhaul.

The renovation project, carried out by a local builder, began at the tail-end of last year and is expected to be completed in August. Appealing to first-home buyers and investors, the apartments now feature open-plan dining and living rooms, CaesarStone kitchens and bathrooms and panel heating, and have one car space each.

Polished timber floorboards run throughout. Some boast a private courtyard or balcony and there are paved and landscaped communal spaces. There are two one-bedroom units, priced from \$399,000 to \$420,000, and 10 two-bedroom apartments, which will cost between \$510,000 and \$590,000. Newly listed, all 12 are up for sale so buyers can choose between upstairs or downstairs real estate. Floor plans are available during open for inspection times or by appointment.

EFFIE MANN

