

THIS PAGE: Lucy Clemenger in the study; DROOG-designed custom wallpaper featuring an enlarged detail of COENRAET ROËPEL's Still Life With Flowers (1721) from the Rijksmuseum; 18th-century Brownbill oak Longcase clock. OPPOSITE PAGE: in the living room, STUDIO STAMP Belgian linen curtains from BQ Design; MOROSO Diesel Longwave armchair and Fjord footstool from Hub Furniture; MUUTO storage basket from Living Edge. Details, last pages.



PARK LIFE

By ANNEMARIE KIELY
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Portrait by ANNISS+BARTON

Architect
Lucy
Clemenger
draws upon
Prahran's
verdant
Victoria
Gardens and
its majestic
plane trees
for her
parklands-
inspired
Melbourne
home.



THIS PAGE, FROM BOTTOM LEFT: *the living room's west end was turned into a library with oak shelving. An oak door at the end of the Victorian hallway signals departure from the old and entry into the new.* MOOOI *Non Random* pendant from *Space Furniture*; LOOM RUGS *Bosphoros* floor runner; DNA artwork (2008) by DNA II. OPPOSITE PAGE: *in the study, REDUXR O'lamp and HAY About a Chair AAC 21, both from Cult; desk by LUCY CLEMENGER, custom-designed to disappear into the space.*

The architectural debate around extending old homes typically divides opinion into two camps. On one side of the chasm sit the traditionalists, who defend a literal deference to history in the detail and massing of new structure. On the other side group the differentiators, the arch-defenders of contemporaneity, who consider bygone ornament a crime and aggressively distinguish 'now' in the new.

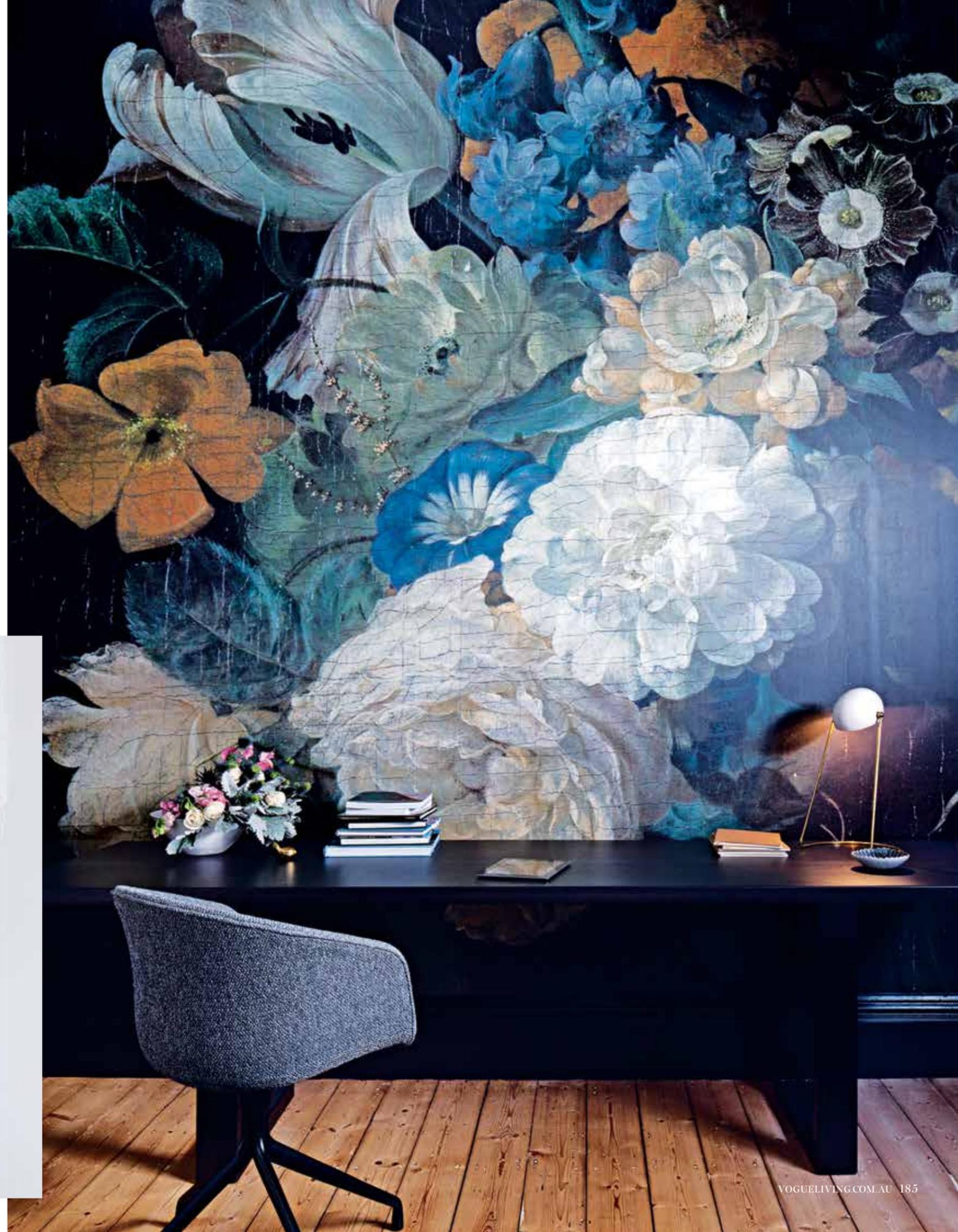
Architect Lucy Clemenger, the former big-practice player who recently leapt into self-named office, considers said camps and the sway of her allegiance relative to the addition she designed for the rear of her Melbourne home — a double-fronted, tuck-point brick structure, circa 1880s. Clemenger's position states in both her personal attire — classicism layered with an edgy chic made ready for the messy realities of motherhood and site meetings — and a résumé rich with experience in European practices, such as the playful likes of Delft-based Mecanoo.

"There was no heritage overlay; I could have knocked it down," she says, recoiling at the memory of the inner-city Melbourne property that first presented in 2012 with strident 1970s wallpaper, floral carpets glued to floors and wooden putti perched on "puke-yellow" walls. "It was a pretty ghastly place — all Victorian detail stripped from tight stubborn rooms and a very bad 1980s extension with a mess of outhouses," Clemenger says. "But it made a certain contribution to the streetscape and it was part of the history of the site."

And that 412-square-metre site, stretching to the west edge of Prahran's Victoria Gardens, bathes in the borrowed tones and mottled light of its century-plus plane trees, the wind-responsive groans of which promised all the enchantment of an Enid Blyton novel.

"We were sold on the site when we saw those majestic trees," says Clemenger of her and her husband Tony's enthrallment with the wider world of the park that offered their two young children active adventure. "Whatever we did, the house had to leverage that landscape."

Clemenger looks to the four-hectare grounds that annually reverberate with Puccini (part of the annual 'Stonnington's Opera in the Park') and laughs about the dress circle seats that don't see the stage. But the impediment of sightlines by century-plus plane trees were a small price to pay for immersion in the surrounding picturesque that was planned by park designer William Sangster in the late 1800s and later embellished by Edna Walling. »





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *in the study*, Untitled (2007) by GEOFF NEES; *vintage velvet chair* from Muster Life-Styling. *In the kitchen*, oak-clad pantry and Alea cabinetry from POLIFORM. *A concealed wine cellar* sits adjacent oak-lined stairs. *In the main bedroom*, STUDIO STAMP Belgian linen curtains from BQ Design; SOCIETY LIMONTA Bijou sheets; MANON BIS French cushions; Wattle (2009) by ADAM PYETT; LOOM RUGS Berber rug.



« “Why ignore that history?” asks Clemenger of her decision to restore the front of house back to its ornamental best (replete with lace-worked verandah) and raze the rest.

Writing a wish list of rooms and requisite storage that could do the “damned impossible” (make the clutter of kids non-existent while catering for endless entertaining options), Clemenger drew many variations of plan until the purest shape and sections presented. She premised the ground-floor open-living scheme on parkland vistas, blocking out views to an unseemly boundary wall to the north and visually embracing the park to the east. Additional bedrooms and the main bathroom were cocooned in a cantilevered first floor, the timber-clad bulk of which seemingly floats and fades into the branches of bordering plane trees. “We spoke very early on to [landscape designer] Fiona Brockhoff about the garden,” she says. “She has used a lot of plants from the park so it feels like an extension of that space.”

Accordingly, Clemenger carried the park palette through internally, replicating the greys of plane tree bark in aggregate-strewn concrete flooring and Carrara marble, while boxing all the ephemera of living into oak-clad units that frame and proclaim the park as a bridge between all eras. It’s the threshold between Victorian formality and turbo-charged modernity, as tells in the kitchen’s automotive paint-protected joinery and mirrored exhaust fan.

“It works so well for kids,” says Clemenger, stating she’s got the goat bell ready for the day they can slip through a hole in the fence for unsupervised park play. “I’ll just ring it and they’ll come running.” Or not, she sighs in acknowledgement that teen years manifest a tendency to ignore. That’s when a glass of wine in the dress circle will be most deserved. *VL*

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CLOCKWISE: *in another view of the kitchen*, custom Marley table by LOWE and TOSSB Hoola pendant lights, all from Hub Furniture. *In the guest powder room*, Carrara boned mosaics from BYZANTINE DESIGN; PARISI Flow basin and VOLA mixer from Mary Noall. *In the living room*, NONN Liaison sofa; Loom Rugs Moroccan Beni Ouarain Berber rug; The Meseta (2015) by EARL CARTER. Details, last pages.

“Whatever we did, the house had to leverage the landscape”

— LUCY CLEMENGER

