

Inside a Tag Walter masterpiece: Clinton Krause

Description



Peter and Karen Herbert (and Lexi) relaxing at home in their Tag Walter masterpiece near the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens.

Bluestone columnist and architect CLINTON KRAUSE previously worked in Daylesford before relocating his business to Warrnambool. Clinton explores the architectural styles that gives our region so much character.

Somehow my visit to the home of **Peter and Karen Herbert** near the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens reminds me of approaching the imposing façade of the National Gallery of Victoria.

The house gives very little away from the street. High brick walls are punctuated here and there with window openings strategically placed for privacy. Massive roof overhangs all round give the building an air of grandeur.

Once through the front door, however, this impression of an almost-fortress like structure is replaced with the sensation of entering a cathedral – expansive high rooms are flooded with natural light from vast panels of north-facing windows and the raking ceilings soar majestically throughout, echoing the lines of the elegant butterfly roof that is the crowning glory of this home.



Strong architectural lines and expanses of north facing glass are defining characteristic of the Tag Walter style.

The house was designed by '**Tag**' **Walter** in 1958 and built for local business couple **Septimus** and **Alison Morse**, with Peter and Karen taking ownership in 2007 and immediately embarking on an extensive program of renovations.

However other than the substantial task of upgrading all the services for power, water and heating throughout the building – and some cosmetic improvements – the original floor plan remains largely unaltered. It stands as a testament to Tag's masterful consideration of orientation, open planning and forward thinking.

The house form is a long east-west rectangle with a gently sloping 'v'-shaped roof line rising from the centre of the house, culminating in delicate roof overhangs that cantilever 1200mm beyond the walls.

The long side of the house faces north and this facade is almost totally glazed with a continuous bank of geometrically arranged windows that rise to the meet the ceilings and further reinforce the visual illusion of the floating roofline.



BEFORE: Fluoro colours were proudly on show in the original kitchen. (Original image supplied by Peter and Karen Herbert.)



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AFTER: The sleek new kitchen fit-out replicates the original galley style arrangement.

Photos of the original kitchen show a brave mix of colours along with blonde wood timber features to cupboards and bulkheads.

Karen points out one of the many quirky details: cupboards and drawers hang suspended above the floor from the benchtop – a novel approach which has regained popularity in recent times with the advent of wall hung bathroom vanities and entertainment cabinets.

The configuration of the original kitchen is also very innovative for 1958. It features a long, wide galley that provides huge expanses of benchspace with designated areas for preparation, serving and eating.

The substantial island bench links the kitchen with the living room where large windows provide good natural lighting.

In fact the original design was so practical that the Herbert's have maintained the basic layout in their renovations. The new, sleek, white marble and timber joinery pays homage to Tag's inspired and innovative design and sits well with the architectural character of the home.



The light-filled interior. Despite extensive renovations, the original 1950s floorplan remains largely intact.

Peter and Karen have confidently brought their own sense of style to other areas of the home too.

The interior of the house has been painted throughout in a soft white palette, providing a neutral backdrop to coordinated arrangements of contemporary and themed furnishings. The effect is one of timeless style – enhanced by the strong clean lines of the original architecture.

Sympathetic additions to enlarge the garage, and the enclosure of a walled courtyard to create a new 'outdoor room', reference existing materials, roof forms and building details and merge seamlessly with the original structure.

Peter and Karen's informed approach has revitalised this home, ensuring that the essential architectural elements of Tag's vision have been maintained and integrated into a modern, luxurious environment for large scale entertaining.

The good design 'bones' and creative innovation of this 1950's masterpiece have ensured that the home has easily made the transition to the 21st Century and continues to be a comfortable, much-

loved and inspiring example of great mid-century Australian architecture.



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Once you step in from the street, the house reveals itself as an elegant arrangement of brick, timber and glass.

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1. mid century housing
2. Peter and Karen Herbert
3. Peter Herbert

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