

THE LOCAL PROJECT



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BLAIRGOWRIE HOUSE

MANNA MADE AND
BELLHAUS DESIGN OFFICE

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Interior Design, Build and Styling by Manna Made • Landscape by Franklin Landscape & Design • Timber Flooring by Made by Storey



Unknowingly seeking a change from the pace of inner-city Melbourne, Dan and Dani Reilly of design and construction practice Manna Made were drawn to Blairgowrie’s easy tempo and the unruly beauty of its back beaches. The pair – who purchased an undeveloped site with the intention of building a weekend retreat – pivoted halfway through construction and relocated to the Mornington Peninsula permanently. The home they have designed and built for themselves is both a fitting reflection of the coastal locale and of the couple’s informed and thoughtful design sensibilities.

As Dani explains, their affinity for Blairgowrie grew as the project progressed. “We were going back and forth to site a lot, and we just fell in love with it down here,” she reflects. “The project got bigger, our emotional investment increased, and our intentions for the home – turning it into our primary residence – well, that changed as well.” This shift resulted in various iterations early in the design phase; however, the couple, who collaborated with Bellhaus Design Office in navigating planning controls and documenting the plans, harnessed an agile approach. “Changing the design, flipping it on its head and focusing on the liveability internally – that was exciting,” Dani explains.

As well as the home’s evolving requirements, the site – which is located within a high-risk bushfire zone – posed several challenges. A five-metre slope and a flood overlay addressing the lack of street drainage paired with excavation restrictions carried a string of complexities regarding layout and footprint. As Dan says, “we would’ve loved to have excavated further back into the property to give ourselves more floor space underneath; however, we were limited with how much we could cut in –

we could only remove a certain percentage of existing vegetation.” Thus, the ground floor is set back from the street and is compact in comparison to the first floor.

Despite these restrictions, choosing to embrace the site’s pre-existing conditions proved significant in adding merit to the project’s outcome. A series of cleverly arranged linear forms allows the ground floor to burrow pleasingly into the earth and, conversely, sees the first floor open to the north-west orientation and connect to the surrounding landscape. As Dani says, “to maximise the liveability of the long, elevated site, we knew we needed to create a dual structure home or explore different pods.” Downstairs, a garage, study and powder room are modestly sized and functional; upstairs, two separate forms run the length of the property from north-east to south-west, separated by a central staircase and landing. To the left, there are three bedrooms, a main bathroom and a suite with views to the backyard, and to the right, there is a formal living room and a large open plan kitchen, living and dining area. An outdoor deck punctuates the plan, and the pool is nestled among native and indigenous landscaping.





Ash from Made by Storey's Tonal collection features throughout the home, chosen for its pleasing hues, textural finish and the individual nature of each board.



The tone of Ash from Made By Storey is silver, ashy and warm, tying in with the home's surrounding trees and other materials used within the project.

Spatially, it is a generous home, yet its presence from the street is deliberately gentle. This is due in large part to the rectilinear form and sympathetic approach to materiality informed by the surrounds. “It’s quite a solid structure from the street,” Dani offers. “However, it sits nicely and blends in, and as the trees have grown to encase the home, we’ve become even more discreet.” Blackbutt shiplap cladding in a dark oil stain and sandy handmade bricks bring softness and tactility. “I love how rough and rugged the ocean side of the peninsula is – it’s incredibly beautiful and we wanted to draw on that,” Dani offers. Much like the neutral tactility of the landscape, the interiority of Blairgowrie House is rich and nurturing in its almost uniform tonality. Natural light and haptics direct the atmosphere and detailed surfaces deepen the experience within each of the carefully considered volumes. Downstairs, a polished concrete floor is offset nicely by feature brickwork whilst upstairs Marmorino lime plaster walls cultivate an inviting space alongside deep grey natural stone and Made by Storey French oak floorboards.

Dan and Dani selected Ash from Made by Storey’s Tonal collection for its pleasing hues and textural finish. “The tone is silver and ashy, but it has warmth to it,” Dani notes. “We have a lot of trees around the house with similar tones, so it works nicely with that, as well as with the rest of the materials in the project.” Given the location is merely 400 metres from the beach, opting for a lighter colour seemed appropriate to reduce visibility of sand and the wire-brushed finish brings a welcomed roughness reminiscent of driftwood. “Each board is completely different to the next and each section of each board is tonally unique. I love that we have that aspect throughout the project,” Dani says. “Even though the colour is consistent, there’s so much movement in the floor and it pulls everything together.”

Specifying finishes and fixtures is a familiar process for the couple, whose work across high-end residential projects demands such aptitudes. As Dani says, each decision for Blairgowrie House was influenced by a consideration for the home’s immediate lived experience as well as its



The lighter colour and wire-brushed finish of Made by Storey's French oak floorboards creates an appearance reminiscent of driftwood.



Each decision for the project was influenced by the home's lived experience, with the palette and materiality mirroring its coastal location.

lasting footprint. “As we moved further into the build, [this consideration] ignited conversations that I was having with myself and the other suppliers we were using. I was more inquisitive and wanted to know more about their processes and what they stood for, and that ultimately drove a lot of the decisions we made.” This responsible approach to specification saw the use of material offcuts to reduce waste; double-glazed, thermally broken windows; hydronic heating; and a cement-free concrete shell for the pool. Further, natural materials and the limewash plaster finish results in a home that “breathes internally”, and a filtration system reduces air pollutants. As Dani notes, all these choices were inspired by a shared “desire to produce something low-tox, sustainable and ultimately easy to live in.”

Dan and Dani were initially drawn to the laid-back tranquillity of the Mornington Peninsula. Blairgowrie House, which conveys a sense of calm neatly paralleled by its natural surrounds, will allow them to engage with those inclinations every day. Whilst the project evolved from an occasional weekend to a permanent home, its guiding principles never wavered and the finished home expresses the very essence that inspired its conception.



Intended to emanate a laid-back tranquillity, Blairgowrie House conveys a sense of calm paralleled by its natural surrounds.

