

An ancient Indian philosophy takes centre stage in the design of a new family's city retreat

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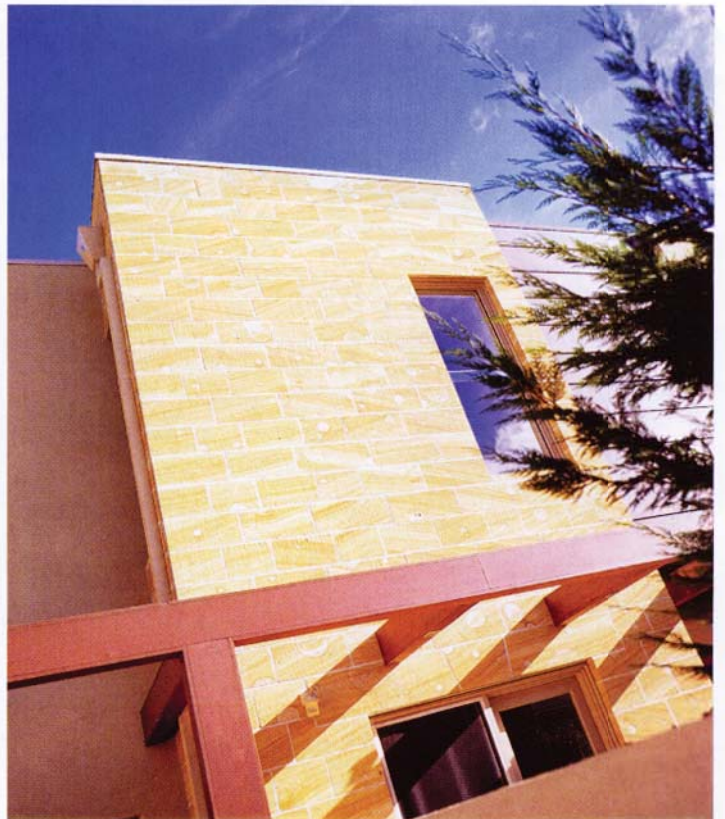
STORY BY BABETTE HAYES. PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN MAGREE

FAMILY PLANNING

Something more ethereal than design principles and aesthetics were at work when this Melbourne home was conceived. The owners, Heiny and Pauline Achermann, had previously lived in a beautiful Neo-Georgian house, but something kept them from settling down. Heiny (right, at window) couldn't understand why until he started looking at Ayurvedic principles (an Indian health approach that works to balance the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual elements of the person). He realised that the house faced west – a decidedly unhealthy aspect. The need to build a home from scratch using Ayurvedic principles was particularly important for the couple's sense of family (with Pauline, Heiny has just started his second family). The plan for their home was specific – they wanted a site that faced east, and it had to have a particular street number. The house had to be squarish in design with light drawn into the centre, and the front door and bedrooms had to face the rising sun. No simple task.



Heiny and Pauline Achermann (top left), with Ken Charles and Geoff Lavender (at left) of Centrum Architects, spent almost a year planning their home based on Ayurvedic principles. Left: toddler Thomas Achermann.



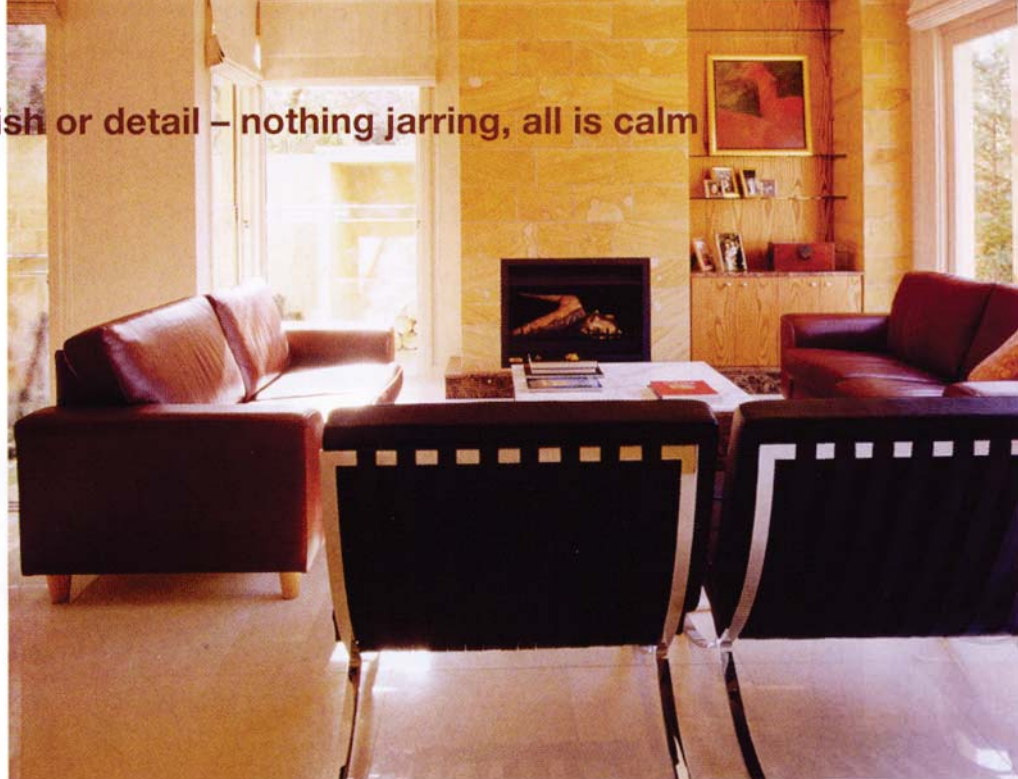
The east-facing facade (above) bears strong asymmetric lines in keeping with Hindu principles of balance. A copper gate completes the walled street frontage; pavers from Elite Ceramics. See Resources for contact details. Top right: the internal courtyard gives 'breath' to the rest of the house, with retractable awnings to filter light. In one corner is a metal sculpture, *The Dogs*. Right: front elevation.

One space is separated from another by

Living and dining areas (this picture) are separated by a 3-step change of level. Hanging above the dining table is a striking composition of glass pendant lamps; table and chairs from Graham Geddes Antiques. The floor throughout is Crema Marfil Sagfra marble from Signorino Tile Gallery. See Resources for contact details. Entry door by Centrum Architects.



subtle changes in level, finish or detail – nothing jarring, all is calm



The foundation for the design of this Melbourne townhouse isn't about symmetry, clean lines or sweeping curves. It's about balance. Heiny and Pauline Achermann wanted to use the principles of the Ayurveda system to create a private space that was calm, flowing and full of good energy for themselves and their new son Thomas.

With the help of Ken Charles and Geoff Lavender of Centrum Architects, the couple set about translating the ideology of this Hindu doctrine into bricks and mortar. As an architect, Ken Charles relished the opportunity to break free of the usual design dictates. "We went for simplicity, refinement and a sense of haven," explains Ken, "but we weren't restrained by any particular architectural ethos." The project, which took almost 18 months, was a leap into the unknown for both the owners and the architects. ▶

In the living room (top), leather sofas from Arthur G Designs are grouped around the sawn-sandstone fireplace. In the niche beside the fireplace hangs Piet Noest's *Magnolia*. Centre right: classic-styled leather chairs from Living Interiors. See Resources for contact details. Right: Pauline Achermann in the casual eating area; the kitchen is finished in figured anegre joinery with Uba Tuba granite benchtops.





Architect: Centrum Architects, South Yarra, Vic (03) 9821 4644. Builder: Heber the Builder, Toorak, Vic (03) 9824 8930.

In the bedroom (left), furnishings of contrasting shape and texture invoke balance through skewed symmetry. Below left: a walk-in robe, in figured anegre, opens directly to the ensuite (below), where twin semi-recessed basins are set in a vanity of Marron Emperador marble. The ensuite floor is Crema Marfil Sagra marble from Signorino Tile Gallery. See Resources for contact details.





A calm colour palette, symmetry and light combine for serenity

The staircase void (above) is a dramatic gallery space where 30 miniature scenes by Dutch Australian Piet Noest hang in perfect symmetry. A frameless glass balustrade allows the works to be viewed as you climb the stairs. Clerestory windows flood the landing with natural light.