

Don's SUPA IGA
back a wide
way of Vegan

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Harmony on the Yarra

A STUNNING RENOVATION INCORPORATES THE FIVE ELEMENTS - EARTH, FIRE, AIR, WATER AND METAL - TO CREATE A UNIQUE AND SPACIOUS HOME

“**E**very house I have renovated has asked me a question about who I am. This one very assuredly asked me to consider myself as a modern woman,” says Martina Stobart, a counsellor and former teacher. “I had to reinterpret what I’ve always found comfortable and appealing, and somehow marry the modern with timeless design.”

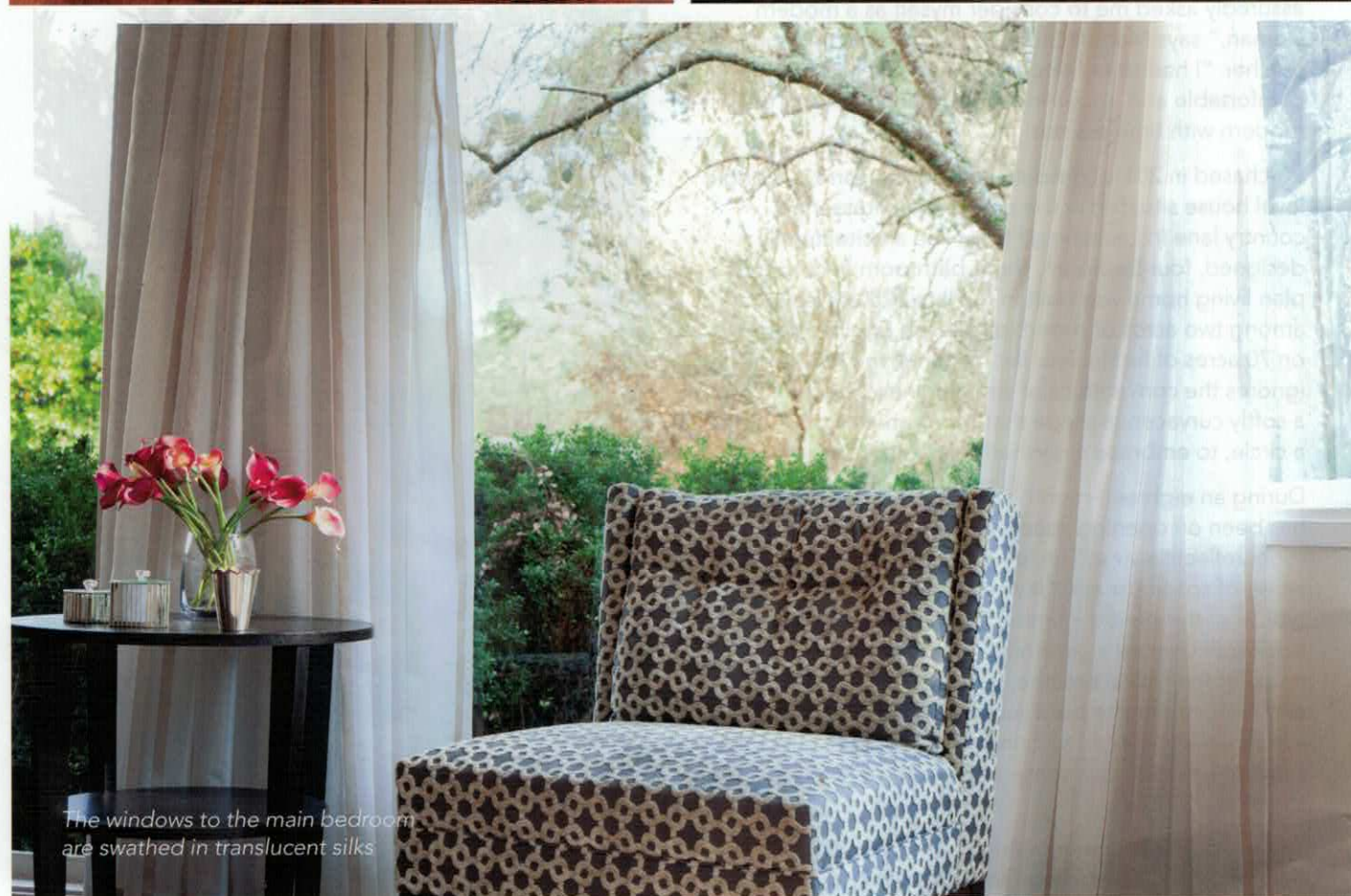
Purchased in 2011, Lonsdale Park on the Yarra is a single level house situated at the end of a quintessential country lane in Launching Place. The architecturally designed, four-bedroom, three-bathroom and open plan living home was built in the late 1980s. Nestled among two acres of superb all-season English gardens, on 70 acres of fertile river flat pastures, the house boldly ignores the conventions of straight lines. The floor plan is a softly curvaceous shape that forms an arc, one-third of a circle, to embrace a northerly aspect.

During an eighteen-month renovation, Martina’s focus has been on opening spaces. Now each light-infused room reflects a view. The luxurious home has a profound sense of spaciousness. “It was an earthy type of house typical of the period – timber, beams and exposed brickwork created a cavernous feel. I wanted to open it up, let the house breathe, bathe the rooms in light and remove the line between the outside world and the inside world. I sought to bring nature in, and reflect the seasons by creating a sense of harmony in every room,” she says.

The process was one of paring the house ‘back to neutral’. The raked ceilings and walls were painted a soft

Martina and Bella at home





The windows to the main bedroom are swathed in translucent silks

eggshell colour, and brick walls plastered. All the metal window frames were replaced with timber. Only the slate floors were left untouched. "I had to work with them – which then influenced the interior design elements of the home," says Martina. "One shade of green would make the slate look dirty, yet another shade would make it warm. I sought to retain a sense of earthiness in the furnishings and make them a foundation rather than a distraction from the views."

With barely an exterior wall, floor-to-ceiling windows provide an endless view into and through the home framing the gardens. The home is solar passive – in summer the sun creeps only to the edge of the patio, while in winter it bursts into the house to warm the slate floors.

Martina, with dog Bella, shares her time between Lonsdale Park and the city, and runs several businesses including the Lonsdale Park accommodation. A lover of a 'grand project', Martina, who came to Australia from Germany at the age of 22, bought the property for how it made her feel. "I was born on an island in the middle of a river on the outskirts of a town. We like the things we grew up with and are comfortable with. I found a sense of place in the Yarra Valley. I grew up with space so this property claimed me with its house, paddocks, river and beautiful trees." She wanted to buy Lonsdale Park the moment she saw it.



Martina's exquisitely crafted table, made locally

*"Martina's love of birds is reflected
in every room."*





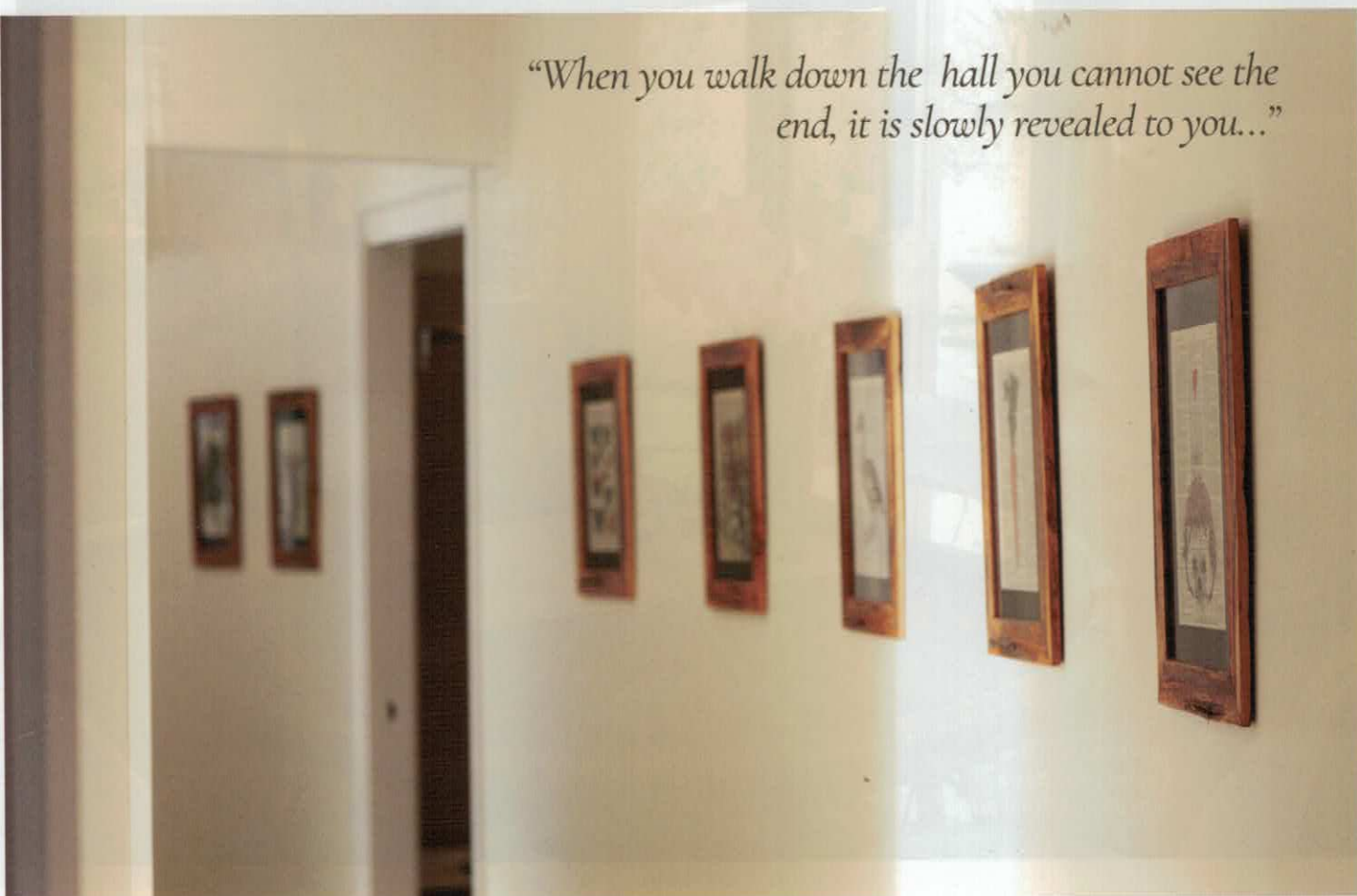
Instinct has served Martina well in the design of the interior. She has collected many beautiful and unique pieces along the way, discovering treasures that spoke to her vision. She has sourced bespoke furniture – curvy side tables, rippling benches and an exquisite oak dining table with softly wavered edges from local craftspeople. “I’m interested in how places make people feel – to not be dictated to by the furniture but to instead have the freedom to be who they are.”

Martina expresses her unique way of harmonising spaces by incorporating the five elements – earth, fire, air, water and metal. “I brought in the fire element in the orange of the chairs, and the zigzag pattern on the upholstery. There is warmth, and there is balance. I have also worked with numbers.” She explains how a side table has three distinct parts, and stools are set in fours for solidness. Her love of birds is also reflected in every room – feathers can be found in a print, a mirror, a fabric.

Living in and decorating a curved home has been a rewarding challenge. “When you walk down the hall you cannot see the end, it is slowly revealed to you. I love the mystery that creates.” Inspired by travels in India, she has swathed the French doors to the main bedroom in softly translucent silks – through these doors there is a dramatic round window that showcases a stunning garden of colour and shape. Everything flows, nothing is abrupt.

The expansive botanical-like gardens, which have been featured in the Australian Open Garden scheme and the home on TV program Postcards, flow through the seasons. Martina has designed meandering pathways that reveal secret alcoves and hidden resting places.

“When you walk down the hall you cannot see the end, it is slowly revealed to you...”





This page and opposite top: The converted chook shed provides a modern refuge with an industrial edge



Martina's garden showcases local sculptures



An avid gardener, Martina is on first name terms with her trees and plants: English Oak, Cherry, New Zealand Cabbage, *Cussonia spicata*, witch hazel, English holly, magnolia, *Taxodium distichum*, Monterey pine, liquid amber, Chinese Elm, *Parrotia Persica*, Ginkgo and ornamental pear, silver birch, olive, Japanese maple and an abundance of rose varieties including the Guelder Rose.

Tucked around corners, surprises await – sculptures (again by a local artist), birdfeeders, a pond filled with flowers, dragonflies and frogs. The Yarra River runs through the property – a ten-minute walk to the clear mountain waters of the swimming hole – and Martina has, with friends, planted thousands of trees along the banks. A rehabilitated dam, complete with a boardwalk, is a sanctuary for flora and fauna.

Across the lawn, a converted chook shed has been transformed into a modern refuge with an industrial edge. The Lonsdale Park Studio, which also functions as accommodation, with its polished concrete floors, clean lines and large plate glass windows, has provided Martina with another chance to explore the intersection between timeless beauty and modern design.

Martina has captured a sense of generosity in her welcoming home, which she offers as luxurious accommodation for up to eight people and is popular with bridal parties and extended families. "I hope my guests feel honoured and respected. This is more than colour swatches and mood boards – it is intrinsically located in a sense of purpose and respite," she says. "I'm at home here. That is a state of being that goes beyond the physical and embraces the essence of our place in nature and our humanity. That is timeless." •