Time after time

This French-style house references several architectural eras,
from classical Roman through to the 1920s

In a stately suburb such as Melbourne's
Toorak, a certain level of presence and
grandeur is expected. For this house,
architect Christopher Doyle wanted to
match the elegant French style of the rest
of the street without creating a property
that would overwhelm the site.

He collaborated with homeowner and
property developer Peter Johnston, who
took on construction and interior design.

"The site is long and narrow, and we
were restricted by a covenant to building
only one level," says Johnston.

"Because of this, it was appropriate to
create a residence that was in a traditional
style, but pared back, with contemporary
influences. The challenge was to make the
most of the site and still create a space that
felt open and grand."

Doyle introduced elements of both
modern and classical Roman architecture.
He enhanced Johnston's existing collec-
tion of French antiques by referencing an
eclectic 1920s French look.

"Our aim was to bring together the
benefits of many different styles," he says.

Above: This house draws inspiration from both
French and classical Roman architecture with
its surrounding wall and single-level layout. The
architect wanted to allude to the historical nature
of the suburb without replicating it.

Facing page: A French slate roof achieves a focal
point at the entranceway. The landscape design
allows the look of the exterior to change over
time by using climbing plants that will eventually
envelop the property wall, changing appearance of
the courtyard.
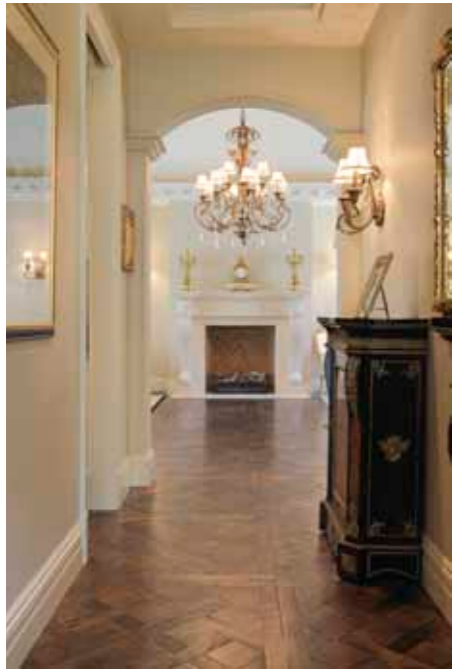
Above: **A sense of space was achieved by raising the height of the ceiling. Romantic French elements are introduced with arched entranceways and custom chandeliers throughout the residence. French antiques complement the architectural style.**

Right: **Formal spaces such as this living room draw inspiration from a more decorative 19th-century Parisian architectural style.**

"The open layout of a contemporary house creates a spacious feeling, but can give away too much. With this property we hoped to achieve a seamless transition from the smaller rooms to the open central living area. The courtyard creates a vital link between these two ideas, juggling all the main living spaces and creating a sense of openness.

"We were able to maximise the space and create a house that is both understated and grand. To me, this represents the ideal of architecture," says the architect.

Top and above: The house was constructed against one side of the property line, leaving a small gap. This allowed landscapers to create the perception of a larger outdoor area using climbing plants and fountains. The space conserved here allowed a courtyard and pool on the north side of the property.

Left: The residence is surrounded by a plaster wall which adds an element of privacy and gives the north-facing courtyard the effect of being an outdoor extension to the living area.
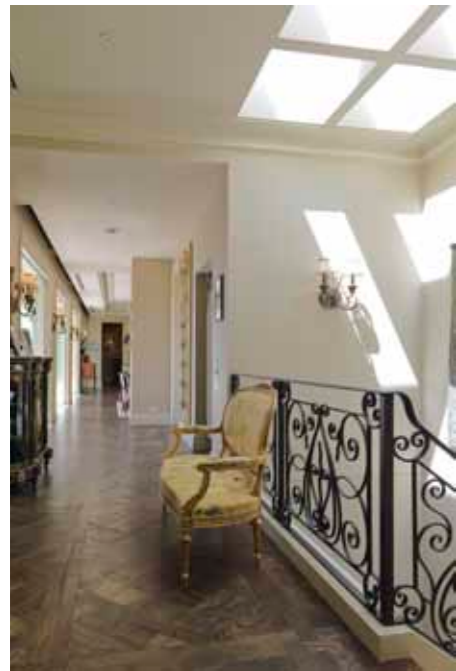
Top: The homeowners have a collection of French antiques which are displayed throughout the home. A parquet floor adds a romantic element to the design.

Above: A monochromatic staircase creates a clean and dressed look while remaining true to the aesthetic of the rest of the house. A wrought-iron balustrade references the Art Nouveau style popular in France at the turn of the 20th century.

Architect: Christopher Doyle, Christopher Doyle Architects (Melbourne, Vic)
Interior designer: Royale Construction & Development Enterprises
Builder and landscape designer: Royale Construction & Development Enterprises
Kitchen manufacturer: Hove Kitchens
Cladding: Water-based render by Toscano Solid Plastering
Roofing: Slate tile by Roof Service Company
Flooring: Polished concrete; honed travertine marble tile from Schots Emporium; Versailles parquetry panels by Le Parqueteur
Lighting: Custom Lighting

Doors and windows: Baked enamel finish by Absolute Coatings
Door and window hardware: Pitella; Designer Doorware
Audiovisual equipment and home automation: HowDol; Phillips; Samsung television; LP Morgan screen; Marantz projector; Sonance speakers
Furniture: Graeme Geddes; James Moran

Story by Lydia Brewer
Photography by Andrew Ashton

Above: As building restrictions dictated that the property be no more than one storey high, a basement level was constructed to accommodate a family room. The level was dug out, allowing windows to let in light down one side, creating the perception of a ground-floor level.

Left: Different concentrations of light are achieved in different parts of the house by sectioning off separate areas and utilising both natural and artificial light.