

Winner space

Melbourne is well represented in the Australian Interior Design Awards. By Alison Barclay

There are more than two ways to read a book, not that the marketers of dead trees and iPads are likely to notice. No shelf, desk or lap can contain the Bang Boom Zettel Z, the incredible exploding comic-book that can be read any which way ... and which, by the way, is a lamp.

Created by Germany's Ingo Maurer, the BBZZ so tickled designer Caecilia Potter that she put one in her sons' den. "The boys often sit there and think of different stories because the lamp can be read in so many directions," says Potter, whose dashing revamp of the family's Hawthorn home is shortlisted for the 2012 Australian Interior Design Awards on April 27. However, the Atticus and Milo director also solved a more traditional problem: the forest of ex-trees.

"We have books everywhere – a book tower in the dining room and, upstairs, books all over the wall. We have thousands," says Potter, who used scraps of space in alcoves and around doorways to house her library in the heritage-listed 1890 mansion known as Huntingtower. Concealing – and revealing – the books are sliding panels with text recounting the house's history, including its starring role in the 2009 Ana Kokkinos film *Blessed* and the Salvation Army film *Soldiers of the Cross* in 1900.

"A huge part of our (firm's) work is the storage of books and libraries," says Potter, a contender in the residential decoration and use of colour categories. "I'm an avid reader myself and I find a lot of our clients have book collections or extensive home offices. I am trying to do that in an interesting way."

As are many awards finalists, who collectively might say reports of the death of the book have been greatly exaggerated. The awards celebrate the best, most original interior designs of the past year, with nominations from all over Australia, but in the sprawling shortlist it's the images of beautiful bookshelves that are most striking. Some, such as the Queensland University of Technology library's "book canopy" ceiling, are spectacular; others, such as a Sydney bathroom wall seemingly made of books, strange. (It turns out the wall is glass and backs onto a living-room library.)

The directors of Melbourne-based interior design firm Caia Di Lizio, Tania Di Lizio and Nicolina Caia, scored a dream job in Melbourne's inner east – a grand Victorian whose contemporary extension included a swirling white staircase up to a study that had views of the city. They fitted a full wall with bookshelves in black timber veneer and the floor with carpet emblazoned with a thistle, by Scottish designers Timorous Beasties. "Given that the owners had a lot of books and wanted somewhere quiet to read, we built the shelves with that practical sense but at the same time a sense of beauty," Tania says.

The study has a desk for laptops, but the books are the thing for this team who in past projects have lined corridors and divided rooms with stunning bookshelves. First-time AIDA finalists, they are up for a colour in residential design award, having also created a stairwell livened by a brilliant yellow curtain and a cascade of 14,000 black glass balls that took a week to install. Says Tania: "Now I think of it, it looks like buzzing bees. Or flies!"

Many home-owners prefer tidy concealment, as architect Matt Gibson found when he persuaded a Kooyong family not to demolish their damaged Victorian but to restore and extend it.

"It has a sense of time, as you move through the various areas of the dwelling from the old to the new," says Gibson, whose team is nominated in the residential design and use of colour categories. "From the front door, you get this wonderful vista down to the rear, through all the periods of the house's history."

The extension encloses a pool, whose bluestone edges take their cue from the magnificent bluestone room divider between kitchen and lounge. In the kitchen, all is hidden behind limed oak cabinets. But the room divider uses this lovely timber to show off books, ceramics and sleek gadgetry in an area devoted to kicking back and cracking a hardback.

It brings a new dimension to the sneaky but common habit of scrutinising other people's bookshelves. "My husband does that at open for inspections," Caecilia Potter says. "I say 'don't linger too long'." ■

Details: australianinteriordesignawards.com

