

# LIGHT FANTASTIC —*Buenos Aires*

## Preface

Hidden behind discreet fences away from the downtown hubbub, chef Fernando Trocca's home has been transformed by Alejandro Sticotti into a modernist masterpiece filled with sunshine, greenery and pine.

WRITER  
*Ed Stocker*

PHOTOGRAPHER  
*Ricardo Labougle*

Buenos Aires can be a deafening city – the car horns and the barking dogs rarely let up. But away from the bustle of downtown, the calm, tree-lined streets of the northern neighbourhoods are a welcome respite. Vicente López, where this bolt-hole is located, is one such haven: an up-scale quarter just beyond the city limits, yet minutes from the centre by train.

The barrio is a mishmash of architectural styles, from modernist blocks to French-style townhouses. This family home, tucked away on a residential street, is a solid 1960s structure that's unremarkable from the outside. But this is a house that guards its secrets well, protected from prying eyes by a fence made of lapacho-wood, sourced from Argentina's subtropical north-west. Step through the cut-out door and you enter a whole new world.

The expansive ground floor is open-plan. Architect Alejandro Sticotti spent a year working on the refurbishment with owner Fernando Trocca, a chef and restaurateur, and his wife Delfina. The inside of the house was gutted. Walls were taken out; the kitchen was moved to the front of the house and a staircase was extended to give access to a roof terrace.

One of the great assets of this house is the light. However, when the couple bought the property it was so dark it was "like a cave", according to Trocca. Skylights newly installed in the stairwell



01



02



03

and upstairs bathroom maximise the natural light; floor-to-ceiling windows at the back of the house allow sunshine to flood in while maintaining direct access to the garden.

The outdoor space is paved – no need to toil away tending grass – with potted plants such as cacti and aloe vera giving it a tropical air. A table is set up for alfresco dining with lightweight white garden chairs picked up from the Dorrego fleamarket in town.

The centrepiece in the garden is a regal 70-year-old palm tree that provides welcome shade in summer. A brick barbecue in one corner – perfect for grilling the finest cuts of meat sourced from the Pampas – is an essential piece of kit in any home in this part of the world. The

## Alejandro Sticotti CV

**1953** Born in Buenos Aires

**1985** Qualifies in architecture from the University of Buenos Aires (UBA)

**1987-1997** Teaches architecture and design at UBA

**1990** Creates first line of modular furniture

**1991** Opens first business, NET, in Buenos Aires

**2005** Wins the international prize at the Puro Diseño fair

**2008** Starts exporting to the US

**2012** Sticotti's "museum seat" selected for the Bienal Iberoamericana de Diseño in Madrid

## Vicente López

Vicente López is a wealthy municipality just beyond the capital's northern fringes in Buenos Aires Province, not far from the shores of the Río de la Plata (River Plate). Named after the author of Argentina's national anthem, its most famous barrio, Olivos, is the location of architect Alejandro Sticotti's own home, a self-built residence. It's also where Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's presidential residence is located (used by successive heads of state since 1931). Fernando Trocca and his wife live in one of the smaller neighbourhoods in the municipality (also named Vicente López), which has around 25,000 residents. The area is predominantly residential and, unlike the city, the houses here are mostly low-rise – a mixture of colonial Spanish style, Parisian-influenced townhouses and modernist 1960s and 70s constructs. Trocca lives a few blocks from a house that was once owned by Argentina's ex-leader General Juan Domingo Perón.



04



STYLIST: ANA CARDINALE

05



06

- 01 Street view of the house, protected by wooden fencing
- 02 Outdoor dining table with flea-market chairs
- 03 Living-room space on the open-plan lower floor looking on to the garden, complete with palm tree and *parrilla* (barbecue)
- 04 Ground-floor bathroom extends towards the garden
- 05 Modernist ensuite bathroom linking to the master bedroom
- 06 Wood-and-marble kitchen allows chef Trocca plenty of room to get creative



- 01 Industrial-style stairwell is flooded with sunshine from a skylight
- 02 View from the first-floor bedroom looking out onto the terrace
- 03 L-shaped downstairs sofa with Peruvian throw. The black canvas is by Federico Colletta



01

uncluttered residence is full of warm touches. Wood dominates, from the Brazilian-pine walls downstairs to a Scandinavian-style light made by Sticotti, also a furniture designer, on the first floor (Trocca refers to him as “the king of wood”). A bookshelf stuffed with cookbooks opposite the kitchen, meanwhile, acts as a nifty room divider.

The cooking space is ample, as you’d expect given the owner’s profession. Decked out with all the requisite mod cons, its elegant grey-hued marble surfaces allow plenty of space to prep food for dinner parties.

The walls of the apartment are full of photographs and contemporary works of art from friends and household names such as Claudia Mazzucchelli and Federico Colletta. Colour is everywhere, too, mostly in mementos collected on the couple’s travels.

The upstairs master bedroom is the pièce de résistance and has been given an earthy feel by the wooden boards slotted together on the walls (rescued from demolished houses in Buenos Aires’ La Boca neighbourhood), with impressive views of the palm below. “I love the way they’ve done this house,” says architect and furniture designer Sticotti. “I love the style, the books, the colour. In truth it couldn’t be any better.” — (M)



02



03