The muddy path is paved, the furniture uncrated, and another family begins life in a new home.

In Victoria this year a record number of families will be moving into houses of varying stages of completion.

Approximately 80 per cent. of these houses would, if examined in detail, give a rather sad picture of trends in domestic architecture.

Rather they would reveal a pathetic attempt to create a 1939 house in a 1951 economy. Smaller and lacking the finish and fittings of their prototype, they would indicate the fact that misplaced sentiment rather than logic is still the strongest factor in the design of our houses.

The remaining 20 per cent. of this year's house crop gives us the data whereby we might examine the contemporary house, see just what it is and perhaps what it will be.

In the first instance, most would be of timber construction, partly for economy, but mainly for flexibility. The "snob value" of materials is disregarded, and any material which will suit a purpose is used. Thus the hipped tile roof, that hallmark of suburban solidity and respectability, is always replaced by a light, low-pitched roof of asbestos, aluminium, or asphalt composition.

Materials are mixed judiciously, but nevertheless in a way which bewilders the finance-company valuer. (It will be many decades before a timber frame is regarded as anything but a cheap make-shift method of construction.)

A variation in materials gives the exterior and interior added interest and richness.

Thus a room may have three plain sheeted walls, a fourth of painted brickwork, stonework or natural boarding. Many new floor coverings are being used—tiles of cork or asphalt, rubber and linoleum (in strong plain colours). All these materials are familiar, but until recently were relegated to the factory and office building.

Similarly the standard colour scheme of curdled cream with a pea-green kitchen is exchanged for perhaps a neutral grey, fawn or white. Colour accents are introduced carefully, on doors, fittings, ceilings or even single walls. These accents are of strong rich colours, wholly dictated by the occupants' personal preferences.

The open planning of contemporary houses gives with imaginative use of colour and texture an infinitely varying space-pattern which belies the overall compactness of the plan. The 1951 house averages 10-12 squares; prewar: 12-16.

The open plan has been developed here over the last 30 years. Rather than divide a house up into tight little compartments, the modern architect tends to include internal partitions only where essential. The living area of the house, although zoned for various activities, is usually only partially divided, with light semi-transparent screens, fittings or various heights or where site conditions warrant, changes of floor level.
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INSPECT THE ABOVE AT STAND No. 22
Trends in Small Home Design—Continued

The kitchen is now included, to a degree, in the living area. The housewife who has become the maid and the cook is no longer excluded from the social group.

The laundry has moved in on the kitchen. The typical contemporary kitchen is screened in part from the main living area, perhaps a bar-type counter is the only barrier. The mechanical equipment would today include a washing machine, and each piece of equipment would be placed according to a carefully conceived plan of working procedures.

There does not seem to be a satisfactory substitute for that old stand-by—the open fireplace.

Many contemporary variations are worked on the old theme. The fire may warm two rooms or even the whole house, but most people prefer and will presumably continue to prefer the man-handling of wood and ashes to the aesthetic thrill of a glowing electric element or the gentle wave of heated air.

To reduce housework and give a sense of order, more and more furniture is inbuilt as part of the house design.

![Dream House of 1939](image)

In addition to the usual storage cupboards, in hall, bedrooms and kitchen, beds, dressing tables, sideboards, radios are now inbuilt.

Many houses have unusual features which are designed for particular occupants, but which, adapted, may eventually become standard in the imaginative and custom-built house.

Thus: a wall of bookshelves slides aside to include a bedroom or study in the main living area, when entertainment space is required or a family decreases in number.

The garage is finished internally so as to allow its inclusion when occasion demands.

For the large family the standard toilet fittings are regrouped, a closet, shower, bath and lavatory, in separate compartments.

Many of these ideas can and are being included in today's houses.

Many do not require an oversize budget. But all do require that commodity, the shortage of which is perennial in the field of house design—imagination.

![Dream House of 1952 (80%)](image)

The 20 per cent. of significant houses (some surveys place the figure as low as 5 per cent.) are in the main designed by architects who have devoted many hours to studying the site conditions, the future occupants' requirements and way of living, the local materials markets and every other aspect of the very complex problem of designing a rational and beautiful house.

Even when this preliminary study is completed and the blueprints have the local council's O.K. stamped on them, only half the architect's task is completed.

Market fluctuations will remove a certain material, produce another. The work of each trade must be supervised from both a practical and aesthetic angle. When the structure is complete the architect will turn to selection of colours, fabrics, furnishings and equipment.

And so another contemporary house is built. Each 1951 house will be as individual as its occupants, but, like them, may have many things in common.

Almost certainly it will be regarded by neighbours with undisguised amazement and scorn.

That is the price the occupants must pay for living in a contemporary house in Melbourne.
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