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Steeling time

A Victorian cottage in Melbourne was given a radical makeover that transformed it into a practically perfect family home.

STORY *John McDonald* | STYLING *Swee Lim* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Shannon McGrath*



DECK Clea Wallage with daughter Matisse, son Rocky and Gucci the lilac Burmese. Modernica 'CS' planter and Massproductions 'Tio' coffee table, Luke Furniture. GAN 'Sail Spaces' beanbag, Hub. Blackbutt decking and bench seat conceal a 3000L inground water tank. **ENTRY** The facade and chimney are the only original parts of the house. Brickwork was restored and repointed. New Lysaght steel 'Custom Orb' roof and existing fretwork in Colorbond Monument (charcoal grey). ▶

This is the life

Despite its proximity to the CBD, the home exudes a sense of tranquillity and calm. There's enough internal space, the outdoor area is modern and low-maintenance, and it's only a short walk to parks, a lake and the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre for Sunday-morning swimming lessons. The neighbours are friendly and there's a great sense of community, with many families sharing early dinners together.

Usually, when a family finds the right house in the right neighbourhood but a renovation is required, it's a matter of researching the options for architects, builders and designers. That's exactly what did *not* happen to Clea Wallage and her husband Denton Pugh in 2015. They had been searching for the perfect property for almost two years and, suddenly, there it was, near to Clea's parents in a leafy suburb just a short hop south of the Melbourne CBD.

Just before the auction day, Clea and Denton discovered that the owner, Justin

Noxon, was an architect and that plans for a full renovation had already been approved. "We took a look at the plans and fell in love with the design," says Clea. "It matched our style - architectural, contemporary and minimalist." The property was passed in, an offer was made and the family took hold of the keys.

The house, a Victorian-era worker's cottage, had 2.5 bedrooms and one bathroom and was positioned on a very compact - 164m² - plot of land. In November 2016 the building work began, headed up by Andrew Warburton of ▶

DINING Denton and Matisse enjoy a bit of quiet time. The dining table extends to seat 12 people. Kristalia 'Nori' table and 'Plana' chairs, Living Interiors. Pot (on table), Zakkia. Vases, both Lightly. Kendo 'Tria' metal side table, AJAR Furniture & Design. Artwork by Clea's father, David Wallage. **Designer buy:** Successful Living 'Rock' suspension lamp, \$930, Space.

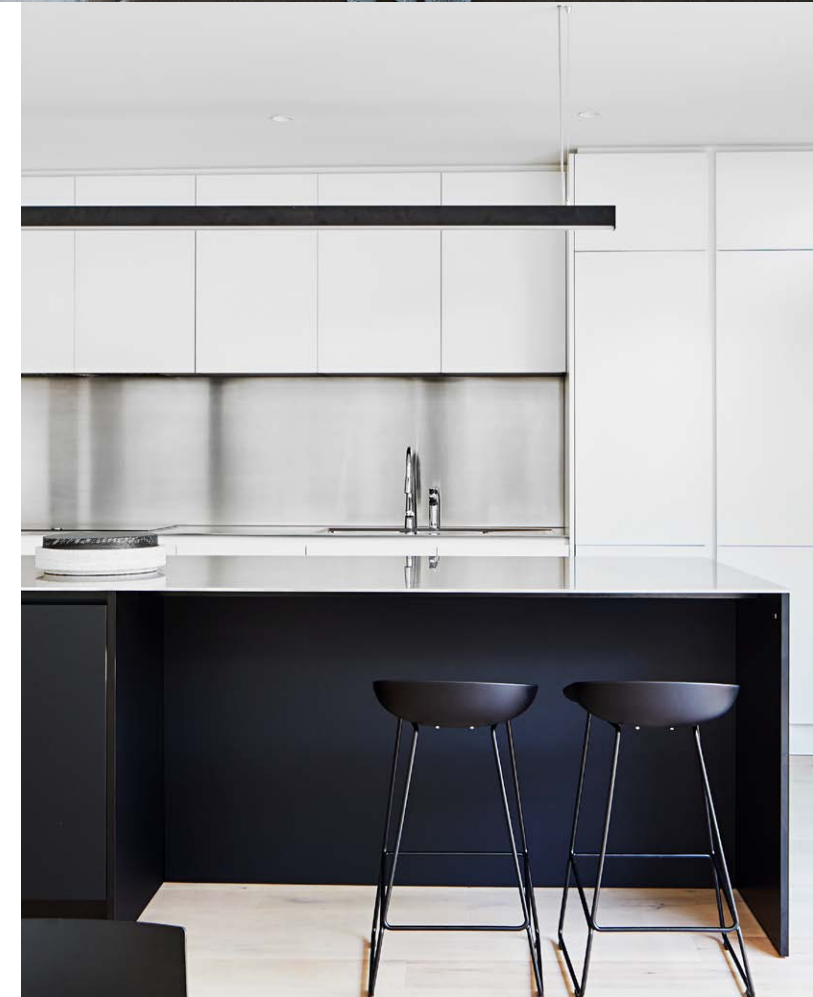
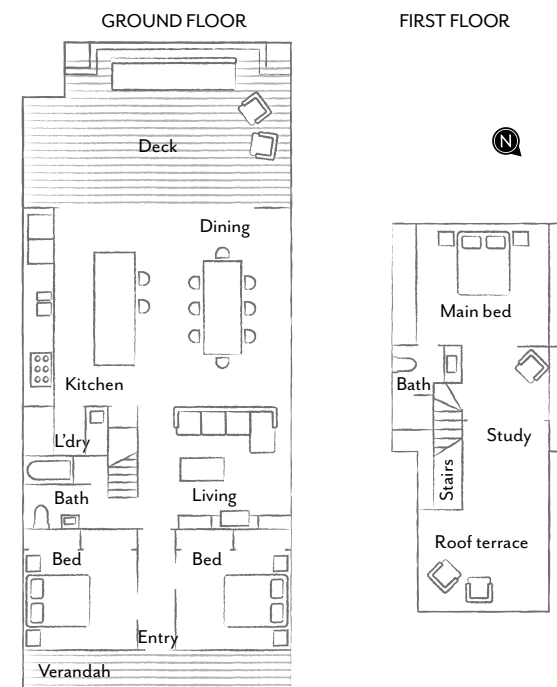


LIVING/HALL Almost every room has built-in storage. “Things can get pretty crazy with all the kids’ toys,” says Clea. Rug, Halcyon Lake. ‘Mayuhana’ pendant lamp by Toyo Ito, Euroluca. Artworks by Penelope Aitken and Michael Mark. Door painted Dulux Monument Low Sheen. **Designer buy:** ‘London’ Carrara marble and powdercoated-metal nesting table, \$2495 (set of two), Urban Couture. **OPEN PLAN** This zone is the hub of the home. Weather permitting, the doors are kept open as much as possible. ‘Plaza’ sofa, King Living. Throw, Country Road. Cushions from Southwood Home. The flooring is Royal Oak engineered timber in White Smoke, laid over a concrete slab. **KITCHEN** The Euromobil kitchen, a custom-Italian design, was sourced from Melbourne company Velo-Craig. Its stainless steel benchtops (at a higher than usual 950mm for the tall family) and splashback lend a commercial-kitchen air. Franke mixer and Billi filtered-water tap. ‘About a Stool AAS38’ stools, Cult. When Objects Work ‘HH’ bowl, Hub. Pendant light, Inlite. ▶

‘WE LIKE BEING ABLE TO PACK THINGS AWAY AT THE END OF EACH DAY AND START THE NEXT FREE OF CLUTTER.’
Clea, owner



THE LAYOUT



THE PALETTE

Dulux Natural White (internal walls)

Blackbutt timber (decking)

Fielders 'Nailstrip' cladding in Dulux Monument (exterior)

'THE PREVIOUS OWNER, AN ARCHITECT, HAD SPENT SEVERAL YEARS THINKING ABOUT THE BEST WAY TO MAXIMISE THE SITE'S POTENTIAL.' *Denton, owner*



Bespoke Project Management, who had worked with Justin before and came recommended. "We pulled the whole house down except for the facade and chimney, due to the heritage overlay," says Denton.

The fact that Justin had spent several years thinking about the best way to maximise the site's potential counted for a lot, and the couple revelled in the collaborative nature of the build. "It was one of the best experiences we've had. We loved every minute of it: the planning and visualisation, the fortnightly site meetings and the endless hours of researching design, finishes and interiors," says Denton. "We had a dream team and all worked seamlessly together."

On August 31, 2017, the family - with children Matisse, now five, Rocky, three, and Missy, two, plus their two cats - moved in. As befits the compact site, the layout of the home is simple and effective. Enter through the front door and you find yourself in an airy hall. To the left and right are the children's bedrooms. An archway rises above a hidden sliding ▶

HOUSES H&G



MAIN BEDROOM A triangular skylight is just one of the clean-lined architectural elements of the home. The 'Regatta' sleep system by De Stijl has a fully adjustable mattress. Bed linen, Hunting for George. Throw, Country Road. Delta Light 'Topix' wall light, Inlite. Tretford cashmere goat-hair carpet (in colour Larch) is cat-scratch resistant. **DAUGHTERS' BEDROOM** Missy and Matisse share this bright and fresh room. Eames Elephant by Vitra, Space. 'Bowron' New Zealand sheepskin rug, Ecowool. Clea's aunt made the cross-stitch almost 40 years ago. Flos 'Glo-Ball C' ceiling lamp, Euroluca. **Smart buy:** Oeuf 'Perch' bunk bed, \$2299, Kiddie Country (can be configured in several ways). **REAR DECK** Black bamboo foliage forms an attractive screen against the dark grey walls and rich timbers. The plants were brought in fully grown by Ben Scott Garden Design, who also addressed the front garden.



door that is closed after the kids go to bed. Through the arch is an open-plan living, kitchen and dining area, with a bathroom, pantry and laundry to the left. Stairs lead up to the parents' quarters, which includes an ensuite, a study and roof terrace complete with leafy outlook.

Heating is provided by a hydronic system teamed with an oft-used fireplace, while cool air flows out of both ducted and split-system air-conditioners when required. There is storage everywhere you look - "everything has its place", says Clea - and even ingenious "living quarters" for cats Gucci and Princess, built into the new roof space and accessed by a concealed cat door. Perfectly planned and purr-fectly practical.

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Noxon Architecture, Melbourne, Victoria; (03) 9650 5889 or noxon.com.au.
Bespoke Project Management, Richmond, Vic; 0425 740 829 or bespokeprojectmanagement.com.au.
Ben Scott Garden Design, Hawthorn, Vic; (03) 9819 6566 or benscott.com.au.

Family dynamics

The home isn't large but it is perfect for the needs of Clea, Denton and the three young ones. It's functional, practical, robustly built and easy to keep clean and organised. Still, a growing family means that a move to larger premises could be on the cards one day. "We will be keen for more space as the children grow older," says Clea. But for now the house is the very model of compact and clean-lined comfort.



BATHROOM A deep Kaldewei 'Saniform' tub makes the kids' bathtime fun, and the tiled ledge is practicality itself. Custom vanity in natural-oak timber veneer. 'Icon' tapware in Iron Bronze, Astra Walker. Carrara marble benchtop and wall tiles. 'November Rain' porcelain floor tiles, Classic Ceramics. Hydronic heated towel rail, De'Longhi. Towel, Loom Towels. **ROOF TERRACE** Positioned above the original roofline and almost facing north, it catches the sun throughout the day. The same tiles were used in the bathroom (above). **REAR OF HOUSE** The towering extension is finished with Fielders 'Nailstrip' cladding, once again in Colorbond Monument. There's a reason it looks darker than the front of the house. "Reflections of light and different angles on this side make it appear quite different," says architect Justin Noxon. "It can create a variety of moods from place to place and time of day." *For Where to Buy, see page 188.*

