

## FEATURE PLANTS

### FRONT YARD

*Magnolia* 'Little Gem'

### COURTYARD

Maple trees

(*Acer palmatum* 'Sango  
Kaku' and *Acer rubra*  
'October Glory')

Chinese star jasmine  
(*Trachelospermum*  
*jasminoides*)

Various succulents

**COURTYARD** Owner Alice enjoys the new corridor's northern orientation and indoor-outdoor connection, while son Manny and family feline Lela bask in the sun. Windows: Architectural Steel Bricks; Austral Bricks. Outdoor table and chairs: The  
**EXTERIOR** The 5.5m width of the site was a challenge. Roof is Stramil corrugated cladding. For Where to Buy, see page 187.



The rich character of marble will continue to shine through, even with the inevitable marks of family living

Tucked behind a picket fence and a stand of magnolias in Melbourne's inner north lies a cleverly appointed home in which old and new coexist harmoniously. An easy synergy has been struck between the charming heritage facade and an inspired renovation that perfectly accommodates a young family.

Daylight now streams into the compact former worker's cottage; pre-transformation, the only sunny room was the laundry. "It had the best location in the house, as it overlooked the garden - great if you were doing the washing, but that was about it," says owner Alice, laughing.

She and Brett bought the two-bedroom cottage in 2004, shortly after moving from New Zealand. "We've been here ever since," says Alice. "We love Melbourne, particularly this part of it. We really are very privileged to live where we do."

The home's ultra-central location is all the more appealing for its friendly village vibe, something Alice and Ben really appreciate since becoming parents to son Hugo, six, and Manny, three. "We live in such a great community, and I think that's probably why we have

stayed," says Alice. "We know everyone in the local shops and all of our neighbours. They've watched our children grow up."

Phase one of their renovation, in 2005, involved restumping and rewiring the ageing terrace. A mottled green carpet was replaced by polished-concrete flooring. "That was all we needed to do at the time," says Alice. "But once I was pregnant with Manny, we realised that we needed more space."

In late 2015, the couple engaged Antony Martin of MRTN Architects and builders Technique Construction Group, giving them a simple brief. An additional bedroom with ensuite was their original priority, but the budget was later expanded to also allow for a new kitchen.

Antony's visionary plans turned the conventional terrace renovation on its head. "The standard approach in a lot of these single-fronted terraces is to add an additional bedroom and a bathroom above the living area," says the architect. "But this often means you end up with a compromised space upstairs,

while also detracting from the living space downstairs due to an incorporated staircase. We decided to treat this project in a very different way." ▶

*"We soon realised that we needed more space. We considered moving but really didn't really want to leave." Alice*

**This is the life**

Thanks to their architect's highly efficient design for the narrow (5.5x40m) site, Alice and Brett have been rewarded with a spacious, airy home that fulfills all of their family's needs. "There's nothing more we want to do to the home on a structural level," says Alice. "We may just add some more furniture or art over time. We tend to go for classic designs, although we really love contemporary photography on the walls."



**LIVING** Warm timbers, tan leather and a cosy rug make a snug counterpoint to cool concrete. Entertainment unit, Woodbeast. Togo chair, Ligne Roset. Ottoman, Hunting for George. For similar sofa, try Nick Seali. Rug, Southwood Home. Vintage mirrors, Angelucci 20th Century. Fans, Beacon Lighting. **Designer buy:** Flow timber stools, \$395 each, Southwood Home. **KITCHEN** "We're so glad we decided to add a kitchen makeover to the renovation," says Alice. Splashback and benchtop in Calacatta Classico from Peraway Marble. American oak joinery, Tap, Franke. Vintage stools, Artwork by Marian Drew. For Where to Buy, see page 187.



*'All of our furniture has been chosen because we love the look of it and because it wears really well.'* Alice

**LIVING/DINING** Hugo gets creative on the String storage system from Great Dane, which features a nifty pull-out desk. Stool, Ikea. WK dining table, Industria X. Vintage Dutch industrial chairs, Modern Times. Artwork by Brooke Holm. "I like to have things on a wall; I don't like a lot of blank spaces," says Alice.  
**HALL/STUDY** Along its 10m-length, the cloister-like new hallway incorporates a compact workspace and, in the foreground, a casual seating area with a large window/door that opens up to the courtyard garden. Stairs lead up to the new parents' suite. Chapel Red bricks, Austral Bricks.  
**Designer buys:** Flare wall lights, from \$385 each, Ross Gardam.  
**ENSUITE** "Having our own bathroom is just brilliant," says Alice. Terracotta wall tiles, Artedomus. Mosaic splashback tiles and honed basalt floor tiles, Classic Ceramics. Custom vanity in American oak veneer. Sink, Rogerseller. Tap and showerhead, Vola. Towels, Southwood Home. *For Where To Buy, see page 187.*

◀ Instead, a striking blackbutt-clad parents' wing was built above the existing garage, connected to the home by a 10m-long brick hallway with sunlit work, play and storage areas.

Given the scale of the renovation, the family moved out for the duration of the works. "We rented for six months, then house-sat and went to visit family in New Zealand," says Alice. "It wasn't easy living out of a suitcase with two small children, but it was well worth it when we moved back in."

In their luminous new kitchen and open-plan living zone, the organic beauty of marble surfaces has been effectively teamed with American oak joinery in a mix of natural and inky hues. And, much to the homeowners' delight, the house is now visually connected to the leafy garden from many of the rooms. Favourite vintage pieces furnish the interior and cherished artworks endow spaces with personality and drama.

"In a smaller home, every space and every piece of furniture has to work very hard," says Alice. "All of our furniture has been chosen because we love the look of it and because it wears really well." ▶

**MRTN Architects**, Melbourne, Victoria; (03) 9329 4145 or [mrtm.com.au](http://mrtm.com.au). **Technique Construction Group**, Box Hill South, Victoria; 0418 337 069 or [www.techniqueconstruction.com.au](http://www.techniqueconstruction.com.au).



THE PALETTE

*Dulux Domino*  
exterior

*Dulux Natural White*  
interior, throughout

Try this accent

*Dulux Bio Blue*

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.



RENO SNAPSHOT

LIFE-CHANGING INCLUSION

"Without a doubt, our ensuite," says Alice.

UNEXPECTED BLOWOUT

"Happily, there wasn't one. We managed to make sure things stayed on budget."

COST-CUTTING IDEA

"I sourced the kitchen handles from the US myself; they were very cost-effective."

FAVOURITE ROOM

"The gorgeous new kitchen, which has really become the hub of the home."

BIGGEST CHALLENGE

"Visiting the building site with inquisitive toddlers."

WORDS OF WISDOM

Splurge on big-ticket items that will need to stand the test of time.



*'I like honest, natural materials with lots of texture coming through.'* Alice

**MAIN BEDROOM** left and opposite "Being able to see the green of the garden, the sky and rooftops from up high gives what is really quite a small bedroom a sense of space," says Alice. Custom American-oak veneer joinery. Vintage bedside table. For similar lamp, try Hub Furniture. Sheets, pillowcases and felt plant pot, Hunting for George. Hydra throw in Mustard, Southwood Home. Roller blind and curtains by Clearview Sun Control, in Allusion linen-blend fabric in Cookie. Stonefields carpet in Slate, Feltex Carpets. Artwork by Ellie Malin.

**Designer buy:** Finley bed, from \$4976, Jordan.

**COURTYARD** Hugo and a friendly lion share secrets in their pop-up play space. Behind them, the two-storey addition is clad in Borat Timber shiplap in blackbutt with a Cutek oil finish.

Windows in painted mild steel, Architectural Steel, Tent, Tigerroy. For Where to Buy, see page 187. H&G

THE LAYOUT

