

# SUNSHINE STATE OF MIND

The light that shines on this coastal villa enhances its airy and elegant interiors, making it a home that is both uplifting and relaxed

WORDS RACHEL LEEDHAM PHOTOGRAPHY ARMELLE HABIB/LIVING INSIDE

## EXTERIOR

The home was built in the 1980s and the facade was remodelled, including the addition of a porch. Door in Babe; shutters in Cooks Beach, both Dulux Australia. Landscape architecture, Plume Studio



**SITTING ROOM**

'The windows are low so I hung curtains full height and drew the eye up by electrifying the colours on the rods,' says Kate. Benit pendant, Aerin at The Montauk Lighting Co. *Mystery in the Making* painting, Georgie Wilson at Greenhouse Interiors. Coffee table, Coco Republic. Sofa, Stuart Membery Home Collection. Rugs, both KWD & Co

Looking at this home's gracious, airy rooms furnished with pieces that appear to have been collected over time, it is hard to imagine that it was ever the 'ugly duckling' interior designer Kate Walker is describing: 'It was built in the 1980s, which was not a great time for Australian architecture,' she says. 'A lot of potential buyers had been put off as the house felt uninviting, but I could see that it had been designed back to front. You entered into a very narrow hallway with a laundry room at the end – there was absolutely no sense of arrival.'

It was the property's coastal location in the hamlet of Mount Martha on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula that was a huge draw for Kate and her two teenage children. 'I have lived on the peninsula for nearly two decades and it is a wonderful part of the world,' says the designer, whose studio, KWD, is situated close to the house. 'We don't need to be in a capital city as my clients love coming down for presentations; some of them end up moving here,' she laughs.

Kate was handed the keys to the property just as the pandemic descended on the world, and this guided her approach to the renovation. 'I realised we needed to move in quickly so I decided not to seek permission to increase the footprint but instead make every existing space beautiful,' she explains. It was also at this point that Kate met her new partner, Anthony Hansen, and a house that had been bought for three now needed to accommodate six. 'Anthony has three children and we wanted a bedroom for his two youngest, so I had to be very clever with the spatial design,' she remembers.

The uninviting facade was tackled by covering an old walkway to create an enclosed veranda incorporating a porch for a strong focal point. Inside, a small study was demolished to provide a proper hallway, while the kitchen's three different zones were united to form one large cooking and entertaining space. Upstairs, walls



were moved to carve out three bathrooms for the four bedrooms. 'The children's rooms are not large, but I combated this with layers of texture,' says Kate.

Indeed, layering is key to the aesthetic, a beautiful fusion of Caribbean and Floridian island influences: 'When I saw the verandas at the back of the house, I could picture shutters, curtains blowing in the breeze and rooms layered with furniture,' she says. Kate's passion is art, and the home includes works that are personal to her such as the diptych in the snug which depicts Kate and her family enjoying the nearby beach. 'For me, the art is the glue that holds the schemes together,' she says.

The garden was an even bigger project than the interiors and involved the creation of outdoor rooms, as well as a tennis court and pool complete with pink parasols that match the shade of the front door. The planting is the work of landscape architect Heath Blair from Plume Studio, who has succeeded in creating a tropical paradise. 'You really do come through the gates and feel transported. It gives you an immediate sense of calm, yet you are invigorated, too,' says Kate.

As someone who usually rises before 5am and works every hour of the day, Kate particularly enjoyed these outdoor spaces during lockdown, when for a while the pace of life moved to a gentler rhythm. 'Most afternoons we would be on the veranda at 5pm with a negroni, watching the sun go down. I do miss that little ritual.'

■ [katewalkerdesign.com.au](http://katewalkerdesign.com.au)



**KITCHEN**  
'I wanted this room to feel strong and gutsy,' says Kate of the aesthetic, which was inspired by commercial kitchens in high-end hotels. The monolithic quartzite island is almost five metres long, so that one end can be used as a preparation area while the other serves as a

homework space; it is also used for all the family's informal meals. The latticed doors tap into the breezy coastal style that runs throughout the house. Bespoke stools in Vallan in Sage, Elliott Clarke. Bayliss table lamp. Andrew Martin. Cleo pendant lights. Visual Comfort & Co at The Montauk Lighting Co



**DINING AREA**

A sculptural pendant anchors this area within the large kitchen, while a round table breaks up the linear feel.

Cara Sculpted pendant, Ralph Lauren at The Montauk Lighting Co. Baxter table; Lodge chairs, all Boyd Blue. Still life painting, Zoe Young



**STAIRCASE**

The 1980s staircase is relatively narrow, but Kate mitigated this with a fun bespoke runner that incorporates the red, blue and tan hues that flow throughout the spaces.

Precision Pharmacy floor lamp, Kelly Wearstler at The Montauk Lighting Co





**MEET THE OWNER/DESIGNER**

Kate Walker shares her inspiration

**YOUR STYLE IN THREE WORDS**

Curated, textured, solid.

**GREATEST INDULGENCE** The landscaping. Every single plant is new – but it is like you are in a tropical paradise.

**FAVOURITE SPACE** The terrace on a beautiful sunny day, with the outdoor fan whirring in the breeze.

**GO-TO COLOUR** Oxblood for fashion, furnishings and hard finishes. It's a beautiful partner to two of my other favourite colours, bone and Yves Klein blue.

**SECRET ADDRESS** eModerno for unique 20th-century lighting, furniture and decorative art.

**INSPIRATION** Currently, Beata Heuman – her vision is so original and playful.

**LATEST PURCHASE** A mesmerising hand knotted Jan Kath rug. A real piece of art for the floor.



**BEDROOM**

**This is a statement scheme that still manages to feel serene – the beautiful grasscloth wallpaper setting the calm tone.** Ionian Sea linen wallpaper in Tide, Ralph Lauren at Designers Guild. Green Oaks pendants, Jeffrey Alan Marks at Boyd Blue. Bespoke rug, KWD & Co

**BEDROOM**

**All of the decoration in this children's sleep space will be suitable as they grow.** Higgledy Piggledy Stripe wallpaper in Taupe, Spiro Store. Blind in Eadie in Yellow Lavender, Mimi Pickard. Kaipo rope chest, Cromwell Australia. Scalloped jute rug, Etsy



**BEDROOM**

**Pops of coral red and teal introduce a feeling of modernity in this classic and timeless scheme.** Hampton four-poster bed, Early Settler. Bedside table, Cromwell Australia. Sybil lamp base and gathered shade, Bragg & Co. The Shape of Clouds art, Art Club by Heidi Middleton

**MAIN BATHROOM**

Arched mirrors have a regal look.

Mirrors, Outlines. Lucia Medium Tail wall lights by Julie Neill, The Montauk Lighting Co. Hawthorne Hill washstand, The English Tapware Company



**BATHROOM**

The blue basin and loo marry well with the watery tones of the tiles. Zellige tiles, National Tiles. Rockwell basin. The Water Monopoly. Terrazzo flooring, Fibonacci



**CLOAKROOM**

The former laundry has received a makeover with an arresting wallpaper and chic sanitaryware.

Heron print wallpaper, Gucci. Paris basin on stand, The Water Monopoly

**MAIN BATHROOM**

Having the shower and loo behind closed doors is a luxurious feature. The quartzite on the door frames and skirting features green veining to echo the green of the loo's ceiling and wallpaper. Dune wallpaper, Hermès





**EXTERIOR**  
Pastel pink parasols and matching striped cushions bring retro glamour to the pool area



**TERRACE**  
The pergola structure, which incorporates a fireplace, helps make this space feel like a room. Sofa and footrests from the 1800 collection, Tectona