

*Welcome to the house of fun*

# JANUARY

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**On our cover**  
 Historical elegance meets the fun of a Caribbean holiday at this gorgeous home by Kate Walker. Turn to page 20 for more.  
 Photograph by Armelle Habib.





# Mornington MEETS MIAMI

Designer Kate Walker allowed her imagination to soar when reinventing this family home, creating the vision of her wildest dreams.

STORY *Elizabeth Wilson* | STYLING *Julia Green* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Armelle Habib*

AT HOME WITH **H&G**

Designer Kate Walker has transformed a two-storey 1980s residence into a charismatic resort-style home. Landscaping and pool design by Heath Blair, Plume Studio. Pool installation by Laguna Pools. Tectona 1800 sunloungers, Classic With A Twist. Cushions, Lucy Montgomery. Custom umbrellas, Lynch's Window Fashions. **OPPOSITE** The facade is Florida-inspired, painted Dulux White Cloak Half with shutters in Dulux Cook's Beach and a front door in Dulux Babe. Miami marble and granite pavers, KWD & Co. Entry light, The Montauk Lighting Co. Mandevilla is planted in pots from Kellock Pots & Planters.







*“I ABSOLUTELY ADORE THE  
STYLE OF COLONIAL HOMES.  
IT’S SOMETHING I’VE BEEN  
DRAWN TO MY WHOLE LIFE.”*

*Kate Walker, owner and designer*

Being able to envision and conjure a bold new identity for a 40-year-old property requires imagination and daring. And both were in ample supply when designer Kate Walker reimagined this residence as her own family home on Victoria’s Mornington Peninsula. Drawing on her love of what she calls “Caribbean Colonial” homes, she remodelled a well-preserved, unassuming two-storey 1980s dwelling into a glamorous, palm-fringed tropical beauty that would look at home in the Bahamas or Florida Keys.

When Kate bought the property in early 2020, it had been languishing on the market. “People couldn’t see beyond the tired interiors,” she says. As soon as Kate viewed the property, she was buzzing with ideas: “I had an immediate vision for the place. It was electric.” Above all, she could see it as a perfect nest for herself and her “Brady Bunch” – her partner Anthony, her children Charlie, 16, and Jemima, 14, and Anthony’s children Max, 13, and Annika, 11.

Built as a builder’s own home, the house sits on a glorious 2000-square-metre block a few hundred metres from the beach with views of the water and a tennis court on site. “The build quality was outstanding and it was in great condition,” says Kate, founder and director of design company KWD. She could easily look beyond the salmon-coloured carpets and polished black granite but the floor plan felt back to front. “The house was oriented to face the view – which is understandable – but there was no sense of entry at the street frontage. You walked through the front door into a corridor leading to the laundry. The whole floor plan needed articulation.”

Kate workshopped it with local drafting studio Rod Hannah Design. To define the front entrance, they added a portico – it’s the only extension to the existing structure. They reduced the three-car garage to a two-car space to accommodate a new (and dreamy) laundry, and enclosed the front verandah to create internal access from the garage. The old laundry became a powder room – featuring pink Gucci wallpaper – near the entry. And two smaller ground-floor rooms were merged to create one sitting room. The new, spacious entry vestibule now ►

Two small rooms (a study and a dining room) were converted into this light-filled sitting room, which Kate calls ‘the den’, located at the front of the home, directly off the entry vestibule. Highlight windows above the door are a feature of the renovation. The painting by Craig Parnaby is a commissioned work and depicts Kate and Anthony’s blended family. Benit Sculpted pendant light, The Montauk Lighting Co. Sofa, sisal rug and silk rug, all KWD & Co. Armchairs, Lincoln Brooks. Table lamp, Cromwell. **OPPOSITE** Designer Kate Walker in the spacious new entry. Floorboards are Biscayne European oak laid in a herringbone pattern, KWD & Co. Door, 3D Windows and Doors, painted Dulux Babe. Pots, Kellock Pots & Planters.







**ABOVE LEFT** Gypsum coffee table, Coco Republic. Custom silk rug, KWD & Co. Wave fireplace screen, Inventory by Rachel. Bowl, Boyd Blue. Cire Trudon candle, Smoke and Vanilla Boutique. **ABOVE** "I wanted this space to be bright, airy, crisp and fresh," says Kate, pictured with Anthony and her children Charlie and Jemima in the living room. **LEFT** Cape Colony sofas, Stuart Membery Home. Cushions, Lucy Montgomery. Cape chairs, Boyd Blue. Gypsum coffee table, Coco Republic. Benit Sculpted pendant light, The Montauk Lighting Co. Sisal rug and custom silk rug, both KWD & Co. Curtains in James Dunlop Textiles 'Kyoto Snow', made by Lynch's Window Fashions. *Mystery in the Making* painting by Georgie Wilson, Greenhouse Interiors. Giraffe duo (on mantelpiece), Cromwell. **OPPOSITE** This landing opens onto the back deck. Wideboard Biscayne European oak floorboards and sisal rug, both KWD & Co. Artwork at bottom of stairs is by Matt Lucas. Sophia flush-mounted light, The Montauk Lighting Co. ►

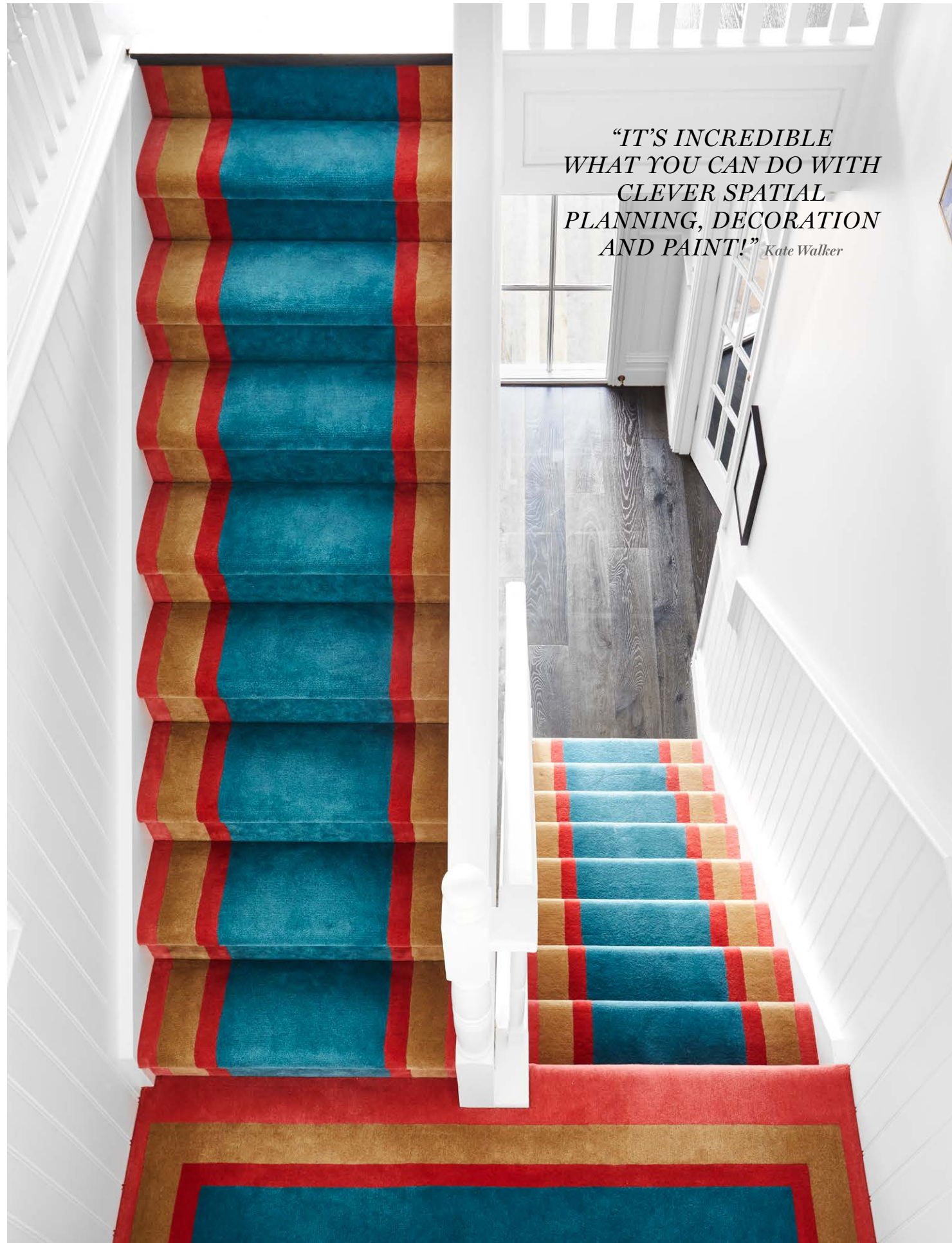




**THIS PAGE** “This is the space where we all congregate – I love a huge dining bench,” says Kate of the kitchen. The benchtop stone is Amazonia from Gladstones Granite and features veining in olive green, charcoal, light grey and taupe. Custom joinery and stools designed by KWD. Door fronts in weathered oak by Farmers Doors, painted Dulux Snowy Mountains. Kew handles, Hepburn Hardware. Zellige Blanco Matt splashback tiles, National Tiles. Tapware, The English Tapware Company. Kelly Wearstler ‘Cleo’ pendant lights, and Cara sculpted pendant (above dining table), The Montauk Lighting Co. Majestic oven, Ilve. **OPPOSITE** Dining table and chairs, Boyd Blue. Colony console, Stuart Membre Home. Sisal rugs, KWD & Co. ►

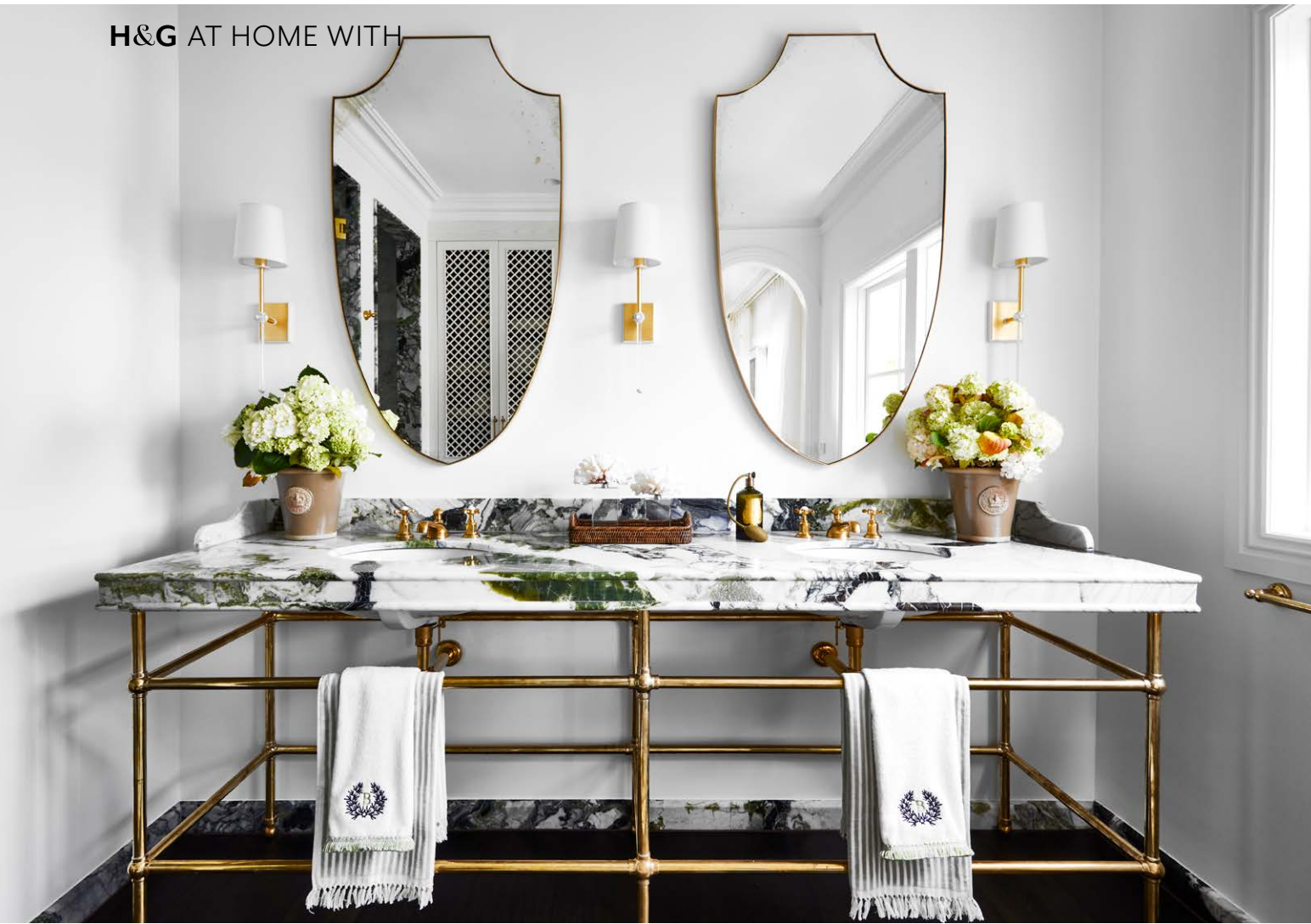






**ABOVE LEFT** Each of the three upstairs bathrooms has a very individual identity. Charlie’s bathroom features Zellige Aqua Gloss wall tiles, National Tiles. The flooring is a combination of Fatima’s Reflection and Ghosted terrazzo, Fibonacci Stone. Perrin & Rowe tapware and shower, The English Tapware Company. Towels, Business & Pleasure. **ABOVE AND LEFT** The bunk room is ready for Max and Annika when they visit. Bunk bed, Pottery Barn Kids. Bedlinen, Bed Bath N’ Table. Chair, Temple & Webster. Round cushion, Lucy Montgomery. Kaipo two-drawer chest, Cromwell. Pineapple lamp, Coote & Co. Higgledy Piggledy Stripe wallpaper in Taupe by Anna Spiro. Rug, Etsy. **OPPOSITE** “One of the main design challenges was that the stairs were at the rear of the home. A staircase usually comes off an entry, leading you upstairs as you walk into a home,” says Kate. “It was a design dilemma. We had to make the stairwell work in its original position, so we designed this incredible stair runner.” She opted for a bold design, using colours that recur throughout the house: “It adds flair to a functional space.” Custom runner, KWD & Co. ►





**ABOVE** The main ensuite vanity is a Hawthorn Hill basin from The English Tapware Company, customised with an Amazonia stone benchtop. Custom shield mirrors, Outlines. Wall sconces, The Montauk Lighting Co. **BELOW LEFT** Walk-in wardrobe joinery designed by KWD, made by DMA Kitchens with door fronts by Farmers Doors. **BELOW MIDDLE** The dramatic floor of the ensuite's shower enclosure, designed by KWD and made by Marble Mosaics, features four different stones. **BELOW RIGHT** The ensuite's shower and powder room doorways are framed in stone. **OPPOSITE** The main bedroom suite includes a hall table and coffee table, Cromwell. Sofa from Boyd Blue, custom upholstered in Kelly Wearstler 'Dame' fabric in Ivory from Elliott Clarke. Artwork by Zoe Young. Rugs, KWD & Co. ►



*"THE BEDROOM HAD A FIREPLACE SO I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A PERFECT PLACE FOR A SOFA. IT HAS BECOME A SURPRISE LIVING SPACE. I SPEND A LOT OF TIME HERE."*

*Kate Walker*







*“IT’S NOT A BIG HOME – IT LOOKS LARGE, BUT IT’S NOT. I’M NOT INTO BIG HOUSES, I’M INTO PLACES THAT CREATE CONNECTIVITY, I REALLY LIKE TO BRING EVERYONE TOGETHER.”* Kate Walker

connects to a large social kitchen/dining to the left and two living spaces on the right. Upstairs, Kate retained four bedrooms and converted two bathrooms into three. In the vast main bedroom, she carved out space to create a walk-in wardrobe; in the ensuite, she created a luxe hotel vibe by dividing the space into a shower enclave and a mini powder room. At every opportunity she incorporated new glazing - including highlight windows above the doors - to summon light and air. “I wanted this home to breathe,” she says.

In decorating the home, Kate let her imagination take full flight. “I adore the style of the Colonial-era homes in the Bahamas and Florida Keys,” says Kate who has named her home ‘Biscayne’ in a nod to Biscayne Bay, Miami. “I describe the look as ‘Caribbean colonial’ - the ‘Caribbean’ referring to a relaxed holiday vibe and the ‘colonial’ suggesting a sense of history, collection and curation.”

The home is painted white inside and out with exterior trims in pastel hues - a reference to the original colours in the home. “It’s a very 1980s colour palette,” says Kate. “We used pink, blue, yellow, green - even touches of terracotta here and there. We also have potted bangalow palms throughout the home because greenery adds life.”

Creating a resort feel was central to Kate’s vision, but this wasn’t just about sunloungers and candy-pink umbrellas beside the pool: “The resort feel we wanted to create is about activities - we love big family breakfasts and dinners around the island bench, we play tennis, we light fires in the outdoor terrace, we play board games - we create moments when we all connect together.”

Kate sold her previous home fully furnished, which meant she and Anthony could start afresh when furnishing Biscayne. “The challenge was to make it feel like all the pieces were collected over years,” says Kate. “I’ve mixed North American pieces with Asian furniture and European antiques. It’s eclectic but it works.” There are fun elements and exquisite finishes and every room has an individual identity. Best of all, when Kate steps inside her front door, she feels like she is on holidays. “Sitting on the deck in the afternoon sun having a drink with Anthony and watching the kids in the pool or playing tennis - it’s glorious. You could be anywhere in the world.”

► *KWD, Mount Martha, Victoria; (03) 5974 1800 or [katewalkerdesign.com.au](http://katewalkerdesign.com.au). Plume Studio, Windsor, Victoria; (03) 7018 3240 or [plumestudio.com.au](http://plumestudio.com.au). Montique Construction, Mornington, Victoria; [montiqueconstruction.com.au](http://montiqueconstruction.com.au). Rod Hannah Design, Hastings, Victoria; [rodhannahandassociates.com.au](http://rodhannahandassociates.com.au).*



**ABOVE LEFT** The outside powder room features flooring in Miami marble with Atlantic grey granite strips, KWD & Co. Basin and tapware, The English Tapware Company. Benit sculpted wall sconce, The Montauk Lighting Co. Mirror, Lucy Montgomery. **ABOVE AND LEFT** “Laundries are really important spaces. I think a laundry should be given as much credential as a kitchen,” says Kate. Tumbled marble tiles laid in chequerboard pattern (flooring) and Copacabana quartzite (benchtop and splashback) both KWD & Co. Arched door, 3D Doors and Windows. Joinery designed by KWD & Co, made by DMA Kitchens using door fronts by Farmers Doors. Tapware, The English Tapware Company. Joinery handles, Hepburn Hardware. All artworks - a mix of landscapes and seafaring objects - are by Mornington Peninsula artist Edward Pope. **OPPOSITE** The front verandah was covered in to create this hallway leading from the garage to the front entry. Console, Boyd Blue. Lamps, The Montauk Lighting Co. Rug, Cadrys. At the end of the hallway is the powder room featuring Gucci heron print wallpaper.



*“SITTING ON THE DECK IN THE AFTERNOON  
SUN WATCHING THE KIDS IN THE POOL OR  
PLAYING TENNIS, IT’S GLORIOUS. YOU COULD  
BE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.” Kate Walker*

“I’m in the pool all the time,” says Kate. “I love coming home and feeling like I’m on holidays – Anthony’s the same. We work so hard during the week so to be able to treat this home as an escape is so powerful.” Tectona tennis player’s bench and sunloungers, both Classic With A Twist. Custom tiered patio umbrellas, Lynch’s Window Fashions. White umbrella, Basil Bangs. Ceiling fans, Living Styles. Outdoor lights, The Montauk Lighting Co. The landscaping, by Plume Studio, included the installation of several 12-metre tall palm trees, adding to the existing stands of advanced trees on the property. *For Where to Buy, see page 190. ▶*



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## LIFE & STYLE

*Kate Walker shares some firsts and favourite things.*

**FIRST ADULT HOME?** A single-fronted Victorian timber home. I adored it.

**BUCKET-LIST DESTINATION?** Cinque Terre, Italy.

**DREAM DINNER SPOT?** A table for two overlooking Lake Como in Italy (2).

**DREAM CAR?** A 1958 Mercedes Benz 190SL convertible (4).

**FAVOURITE DOWNTIME PURSUIT?** Going for long walks with friends  
I don't have a chance to catch up with very often.

**FAVOURITE FLOWERS?** Parrot tulips (5).

**FAVOURITE SCENT?** Le Labo's Neroli 36 (9).

**FAVOURITE ARTISTS?** Charlotte Keates, Wayne Pate, Clara Adolphs, Zoe Young and Craig Parnaby. I currently have my eye on a Charlotte Keates work called *Everything Green is Different in Spring* (3).

**FAVOURITE FASHION LABELS?** I love supporting Australian designers such as Zimmermann (10), Scanlan Theodore (8), Dion Lee, Camilla & Marc and Viktoria & Woods. Stunning, wearable designs using beautiful fabrics.

**DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE INFLUENCES?** I am obsessed with [Australian architect] Marcus Martin, especially his work from the 1930s. In terms of interiors, I am inspired by US designer Kelly Wearstler (1) for her boldness and the fascinating way she uses colour and materials, and British designer Kit Kemp's use of fabric and scale, and the playfulness of her compositions – as seen in the Firdale Hotels (7) in London.

**I'M CURRENTLY READING...** A lot of coffee-table books, such as *A Room of Her Own* by Robyn Lea. I'm also enjoying books by Tamsin Johnson (6) and Mim Design. It's really inspiring to look at the work of other designers to see how they interpret different spaces. **H&G**

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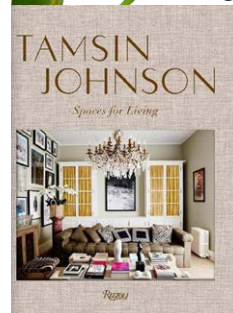
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