

## cheat sheet

**Who lives here:** Andrew Cramer, a director at Citi in investment banking; his wife Kate, a mum and part-time public relations agency office manager; sons Charlie, 4, and Oliver, 2; and Hungarian Vizslas, Woody and Fox.

**Style of home:** A double-fronted, brick Victorian house with a dark, boxy 1970s addition, transformed by a minimalist open-plan extension and outdoor area that meets the needs of a growing family.

**🕒** The couple bought the house in August 2013 and rented it out while they considered their plans. They then commissioned architect Tom Robertson in early 2014. Building finally started in August 2016 and was completed 12 months later.

**💰** The cost of the renovation was approximately \$500k.

### kitchen and dining area

Kate had the 65-kilogram glass pendant made locally. She loves her polished concrete floors, which look like terrazzo, as they have a timeless feel – and hide marks. Her grandmother's vintage Featherston dining chairs were reupholstered by Grazia and Co. A marble offcut on a base by Tuckbox Designs forms a neat hallway table (right).



**DREAM IT. DESIGN IT. DO IT.**

# pared back

When one half of a Victorian Melbourne home is restored and the other rebuilt as a modern, minimalist extension, the result is a simple, timeless and comfortable family home

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(MAIN PICTURE) MARBLE BENCHTOP IN STATUARIETTO, SIGNORINO TILE GALLERY, TELA GLASS JUG, CULT. HK LIVING CERAMIC JUG, PLATES AND POT, HOUSE OF ORANGE. HAY ABOUT A BAR STOOL, SIMPLE FORM. CUSTOM-MADE TABLE, NICK McDONALD AT MADE BY MORGAN. HAY COLOURED VASES AND PAPER. PORCELAIN TABLEWARE, CULT (THIS PAGE, TOP RIGHT) CULT PENDANT IN SMOKE, ARTICOLO LIGHTING



### living area

A monochromatic colour palette is timeless. "It allows the artwork and furniture to sing," says Kate. It's continued in the Prostoria 'Tundra' couch, custom-made by Meizai to seat up to 10, and the Hay 'Pea' rug in Light Grey from Simple Form, which defines the relaxation zone.

**W**ith plans to start a family, Kate and Andrew Cramer knew their tiny, two-bedroom cottage in Melbourne's inner-city Windsor wasn't going to cut it, long-term. So they started house-hunting, initially looking further afield in the hunt for more space. They even put an (ultimately unsuccessful) offer on a house in bayside Albert Park.

But their hearts were really in Windsor. "I remember one night we were walking home after dinner and I said, 'Why are we even considering moving away? We love it here,'" remembers Kate. "Windsor is just pumping and it's near to both of our parents."

Soon after, an agent sent details of a Victorian four-bedroom house on a rare 610 sqm block, just around the corner from their existing house. "Before we'd even gone inside, we were like, 'OK, how do we buy this?' It was exactly what we were looking for," says Kate.

Luckily, the interior at the front of the house, with original ceiling roses and fireplaces, didn't disappoint. And it was enough to forgive the dark, rabbit warren of an extension - with red ceiling - at the back.

But, more importantly, it was the way the house felt that had them at hello. "It just had so much charm and a beautiful family feel about it," says Kate. "We later discovered it had belonged to a famous Melbourne photographer called Rennie Ellis: it was like we could feel the love, the history and the stories as we walked in."

## DREAM IT.

Initially, the couple rented the house out while they considered their plans. "Our first thoughts were to do a renovation on the existing extension," remembers Kate. "We thought we could put in some skylights, and then knock out a few walls to open it up."

But, in time, they realised the best thing would be to build a light, bright, modern extension, a decision which was confirmed when Kate fell pregnant with son Charlie, now aged four. "Our needs evolved. All of a sudden, we started thinking longer-term and how many bedrooms we'd need, for example, if we had three children. We also thought if we were going to do it, we might as well do it properly and make it a 10-year home and avoid having to move in five years because we'd outgrown the house," she explains.

They chose Tom Robertson, from Tom Robertson Architects, to help them turn their dreams into reality. "We immediately clicked with him and all got on very well," says Kate. And it turned out that Tom was more in tune with the project than Kate could have imagined.

"The first time I met Tom, I was actually nine weeks pregnant, but hadn't yet told anyone," she remembers. "We walked out into the back garden and Tom said, 'You're not pregnant, are you?'"

"All of his subsequent designs for the house were sent through with the title, A House for Charlie, which was lovely."



(TOP) MARBLE SLAB, SIGNORINO TILE GALLERY; CUSTOM-MADE COFFEE TABLE BY NICK McDONALD AT MADE BY MORGEN; FIVE OTTOMAN IN LIGHT GREY, LUKE FURNITURE; CORTES CUSHION IN IMPERIAL ROSE AND CANAIS CUSHION IN LIGHT GREY BY BUREL MOUNTAINS FOR FIGGSCOPE-CURATES; ARTWORK: NOTHING INTO NOTHING BY BENJAMIN MADLIK; SIMPLE FORM. (BOTTOM) AGOC BENCH, LUKE FURNITURE; CANAIS CUSHION IN MEDIUM GREY BY BUREL MOUNTAINS FOR FIGGSCOPE-CURATES

### exterior

The original charming facade was enhanced with Dulux 'Weathershield' low sheen paint in Natural White and Domino, and a pair of 'Moni' wall sconces from Articol Lighting.

## the moodboard



Light-filled interiors and oversized windows in this Noosa, Qld, home, from our December 2016 issue.

'Moni' wall sconce, from \$2000, Articol Lighting, [articolighting.com](http://articolighting.com).

Enoki Migoto marble side table in Black, \$6395, and Grey, \$7515, Living Edge, [livingedge.com.au](http://livingedge.com.au).

### Kate and Andrew's wishlist

**+ As much natural light as possible.**

"Slightly scarred by the original house, in that it was so dark, a key part of our brief was light and more light," says Kate. "We feel at peace in light-filled homes."

**+ Keep it timeless.** "We didn't want any black or brass tapware, for example, as we didn't want it to look like a house of 2017. So we tried to be very conscious of that in our decisions on the fixtures and finishes and not choose anything that would date."

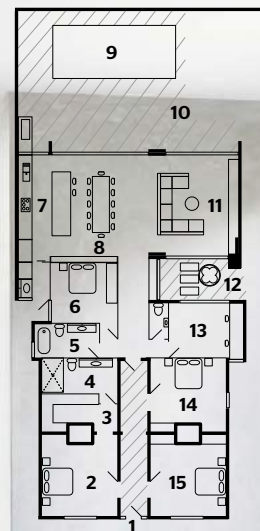
**+ A 'cook's' kitchen.** "I love cooking and entertaining so I was very specific about the things I wanted, such as a big, standalone gas oven, two dishwashers and a huge island bench that I could spread everything out on."

**+ A patch of grass.** "Pretty essential with two young boys," says Kate.



## bench seat

Looking out onto both the courtyard that separates the study and living area and the home's rear deck, this area is handy as a place to get kids' shoes on, and as a quiet reading or conversation nook.



- 1. Entry
- 2. Master bedroom
- 3. Walk-in robe
- 4. Ensuite
- 5. Bathroom
- 6. Bedroom
- 7. Kitchen
- 8. Dining area
- 9. Pool
- 10. Deck
- 11. Living area
- 12. Courtyard
- 13. Study
- 14. Bedroom
- 15. Bedroom

## the best bits

- + **The pool and outdoor shower.** "We really considered whether to install a pool, but I'm glad we did; we use it a lot," says Kate. "The other night I had a swim and a shower after putting the boys to bed and it was lovely. I never thought I'd have a pool at my age."
- + **The bluestone step.** "I love that we kept the old step at the end of the hallway in the original part of the house. It's worn to the point that it's got a dip in it where so many people have stepped on it over the years."
- + **Storage.** "Having lots of storage was high on our priority list and, in particular, I love the roof storage in our walk-in wardrobe. It's got a pull-down ladder and it's a great place to hide all the old baby stuff, photo albums and suitcases that you'd otherwise have to find room for in the house."

(TOP) TOWEL IN DARK GREY, SHERIDAN. (BOTTOM) TYDE QUILT COVER IN PALE GREY MARLE, COUNTRY ROAD. SILK AND WOOL THROW IN GREY, SPICECRAFT. (OPPOSITE) LEIVAS CUSHION IN ONIX GREEN AND CORTES CUSHION IN TURMALINA BY BUREL MOUNTAINS FOR FIGGSCOPE CURATES. ARTWORK: NOTHING INTO NOTHING BY BENJAMIN MADJLIK. SIMPLE FORM. (OUTSIDE) HAY OUTDOOR ARMCHAIR, CULT LEATHER CUSHION, COUNTRY ROAD

## DESIGN IT.

While Kate and Andrew were keen to restore all of the period features in the front part of the house, simplicity was the key in the new extension. "They wanted it to be very contemporary and as simplistic as possible, in a minimal way," remembers Tom. "Our first proposal was slightly more architecturally challenging, but they slapped that one down pretty quickly so we simplified and pared everything back."

Tom's design converted one of the four bedrooms in the original part of the house into an ensuite while the new extension houses a further bedroom, bathroom, laundry and a study for Andrew, as well as a large open-plan kitchen, living and dining area.

"The kitchen is the real heart of the home. We positioned it in a spot where Kate could effectively control the house and keep an eye on the boys from her island bench; whether they are in the living area or the pool," adds Tom.

Clerestory windows positioned at the highest point of the extension flood the space with that all-important light. "It's quite beautiful in winter, in particular, when the sun streams in," says Kate.

She and Andrew mulled over how much to spend on heating and cooling but in the end decided to go with the "full package" of hydronic heating and air conditioning. "It cost a fortune, but it's so comfortable – the house is 22° C, all year round," says Kate.

Ultimately, she says they wanted their house to be comfortable, practical and timeless. "As much as I can appreciate a highly-designed, architectural home, we were designing a house for a young family with two little boys and two large dogs," she says.

## bathroom

A 'Bardiglio' stone vanity top from Signorino Tile Gallery echoes the kitchen's marble. The hydronic heating system heats the floor and towel rail, while a black roller blind ensures privacy.

## master bedroom

One of the original home's four bedrooms was turned into a master suite with the addition of a walk-in wardrobe and ensuite. Herman Miller 'Bubble' pendant from Living Edge.



## DO IT.

Trying to renovate and add a new extension to a 130-year-old house can often be problematic, but Tom says the build went smoothly. "It's a beautiful house that was actually standing pretty strong which was great, because I've worked with some doozies," he says. Despite never having renovated, Kate didn't find the process stressful, although admits she and Tom occasionally "buted heads along the way".

"I'm pretty good at making decisions and have quite a strong view on most things," she smiles. "But it was a great experience and we are still good mates. And our builder Shane [McGrath] was amazing."

The arrival of the couple's second baby, Oliver, during the early stages of the build forced Kate to be proactive with decision-making. "I wanted to lock in as much as possible before the birth so I didn't have to make decisions with baby brain," she remembers.

The couple were ecstatic to move into their new home. "We were more than ready for a grown-up house," says Kate. "We love it and feel so fortunate to live in such a beautiful home. I now understand the addiction to creating something of your own; I loved watching every step of the process and reflecting back on it gives me a real kick." **10**  
Visit Tom Robertson Architects at [tomrobertson.com.au](http://tomrobertson.com.au). See more of builder Shane McGrath's work at [Built By Luxe builtbylux.com.au](http://Built By Luxe builtbylux.com.au).



## exterior

"Our outdoor area makes it easy to entertain," says Kate. Friends visit for a barbecue and, after swims and outdoor showers, "the kids go home in their jammies!" The King Cove sofa is from King Living.

## lessons learnt

"We did initially think about having a combined butler's pantry and laundry that the kids could walk through from outside, leaving their dirty footy kit in the laundry before emerging in to the kitchen, relatively clean, and decided against it. But now we realise it would have been a good idea" **KATE, HOMEOWNER**

## pool and deck

The 3m x 7m fully tiled pool is surrounded by blackbutt timber decking, stained grey, which also clads the storage bench seat at one end. The showerhead, found on eBay, was teamed with copper piping. Greenery is provided by citrus trees in enormous pots underplanted with dichondra, along with a ficus vine (near the shower) which Kate hopes will eventually cover the brick wall.

POOL BUILT BY IN-THE-SWIM. INTEGRATED BARBECUE, BARBECUES GALORE. (ON SOFA) CANAIS CUSHION IN MEDIUM GREY BY BUREL MOUNTAINS FOR FIGGOSCOPE-CURATES

