

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Kate Walker changed her plans many times until she found the right formula for reviving a tired bungalow

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EXTERIOR
Kate's monochrome palette has replaced the house's uninspiring yellow brick veneer, creating a smart look. Door frames in Black Caviar by Dulux. Doors, 3D Windows & Doors. Klismos classic sofas, Restoration Hardware



SWIMMING POOL
A raised wooden deck overlooks the pool. 'The aim is to introduce vines across the roof for plenty of shade,' says Kate. Carmel Chaise loungers, Restoration Hardware; upholstered in Paul Bangay's Farmhouse Stripe in Pepper fabric, Elliott Clarke

For seasoned interior designer Kate Walker, renovating her own home was a timely reminder that simplicity and restraint often produce the most uplifting results. When she first saw her Eighties bungalow in Mount Martha, a seaside suburb an hour southeast from Melbourne, the temptation was to virtually tear down the yellow brick-veneered ‘ugly duckling’ and start again. But she thought better of it.

‘The first round of plans was very grand, pushing out walls, increasing floor space and creating a double storey, but it quickly became evident that town planning would be involved and that the cost was outside my comfort zone,’ says Kate. ‘Instead, I chose to work within the confines of the building’s footprint, playing with the space. I knew that clever design could prompt a total metamorphosis.’

Gone are the cream brick-finish, wind-out awning windows and narrow door frames. In their place are full-height windows framed in striking charcoal, an altered roof line and painted and bagged brickwork. ‘I wanted a modern farmhouse style that was light and airy but also utilised every inch of space,’ says Kate. ‘That meant being clever with elements that I left out, which resulted in some of my best design decisions.’

Previously home to an elderly woman and her carer, the building had featured two kitchens. Kate knocked out one of them, turning the space into a bedroom and en suite for her daughter Jemima, 12, while her son Charlie, 14, has an adjacent bedroom. ‘Reworking the space was intuitive,’ reflects Kate. ‘One side of the house accommodates the children’s rooms, the middle caters to living and eating, and my suite is at the other end of the building. There’s a sense of flow.’

Unsurprisingly, given her profession, Kate was exacting when it came to the renovation. ‘A build of this nature might usually take six months, but we did it in 12 weeks,’ she says. ‘I had a bee in my bonnet about how

I wanted the kitchen to function and so we reworked it at least 12 times. I used to advise clients not to have a sink in the island, but I’m a convert – I love being able to chat to the children while I’m at the sink.’

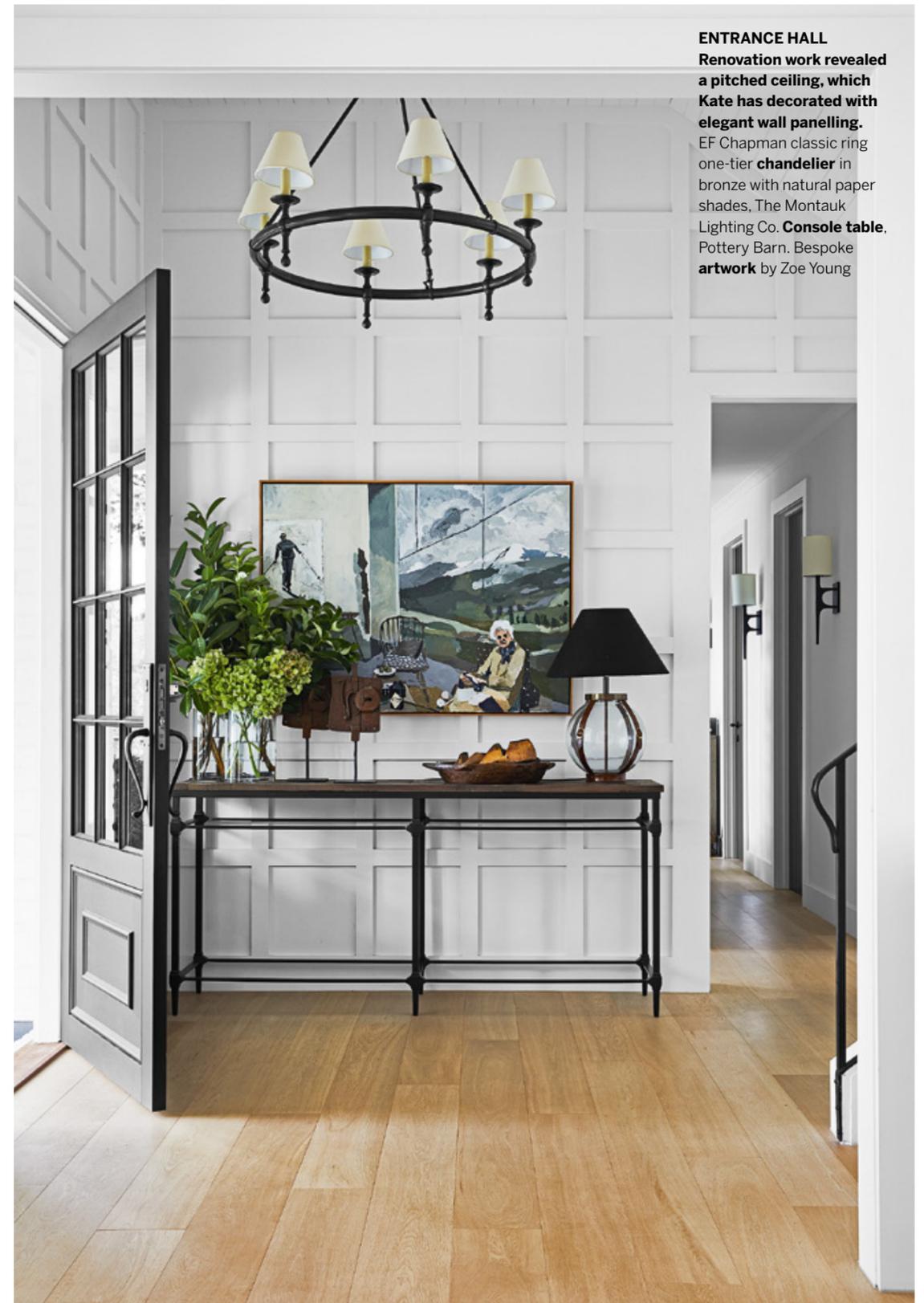
The renovation also unveiled some surprises such as the additional roof space in the hall, which now accommodates a first-floor study. ‘We didn’t know it existed,’ says Kate. ‘It was only when the ceiling was demolished that we realised we could create that height, and we added panelling to make a feature of the space.’

When it came to texture and colour, Kate turned to nature for her inspiration. ‘I designed the garden before the interiors because the generous plot with its rural aesthetic was an integral reason for buying the house,’ says Kate. ‘The building faces north and I knew that every room would have a sunny view of the garden. So, with simple monochrome acting as an anchor, I’ve paid homage to Mother Nature via shades of green, grey, white and terracotta.’

Kate favours a ‘perfectly imperfect look’ so aged finishes were the order of the day. Every detail has been considered, from the sisal carpet in the bedrooms and the terracotta tiles in Kate’s bathroom, to the grain of the olive-hued timber-veneered kitchen cabinetry and the hand-aged door hardware. Texture plays a leading role, including shiplap panelling in Charlie’s room, pattern-laden headboards in bedrooms and smart stripe and check fabrics in the living area.

‘This was a new aesthetic for me, but one that suits the building,’ says Kate. ‘When I approach the house after a long day at work, I feel that “ahhhh” moment. As a family, we sit around the island, chatting and watching the silver birches in the garden change from soft green to vibrant orange and yellow in the autumn. That’s when I know that going back to the drawing board so many times has paid off handsomely.’ 🍷

■ KWD, katewalkerdesign.com.au



ENTRANCE HALL
Renovation work revealed a pitched ceiling, which Kate has decorated with elegant wall panelling. EF Chapman classic ring one-tier chandelier in bronze with natural paper shades, The Montauk Lighting Co. Console table, Pottery Barn. Bespoke artwork by Zoe Young

SITTING ROOM
A trio of framed convex mirrors creates a bold contemporary feature.

Pisces mirrors and classic glass and bronze column lamps, both Cromwell. French panel media console in black oak drifted, Restoration Hardware

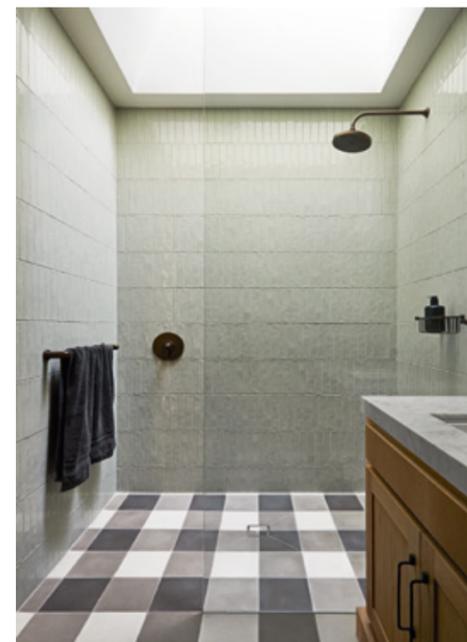


SITTING ROOM
Kate used black and white as an anchor, adding notes of burnt orange for a colour pop.

Sofas, Sorrento Furniture for KWD. Armchairs in Askew in Ivory/Onyx by Kelly Wearstler for Groundworks. Bespoke rug, KWD. Charcoal artwork, John Bokor



KITCHEN
 Timber units in a soft green finish were inspired by the silver birch trees in the garden. **Cabinetry** in Currency Creek by Dulux. Darlana lantern pendant **light**, The Montauk Lighting Co. Joe counter **stools**, Vincent Sheppard at Classic with a Twist



ENTRANCE HALL
 Enhanced by a simple balustrade, the stairs lead to the building's only first-floor room, a tranquil study. Diver **sculpture**, Cromwell. **Walls** in Dulux's Snowy Mountains, mixed to quarter strength

GUEST BEDROOM
 'My previous home had a blue-and-white scheme, but this place demanded a softer palette,' says Kate. **Headboard** in Achillea Foliage Large in Slate, Madder Cutch & Co. Brass **wall light**, Portobello Home

BATHROOM
 A skylight illuminates the chequerboard flooring, which adds flair to this otherwise simple space. **Floor tiles** in Charcoal Concrete, Grey and Dove Grey, all Earp Bros. **Wall tiles** in Aria Sage, National Tiles

CHARLIE'S BEDROOM
 Shiplap boarding in a deep-grey tone creates a cocooning feel. **Panelling** in Dulux's Oolong. Tan leather **headboard**, Portobello Home. Pyper **table lamp** and Morgan **sideboard** in Black, both Provincial Home Living

INSPIRATION



KATE'S BEDROOM
A mix of fabrics is unified by a palette of soft neutrals. The four-poster bed and shutters add a graphic contrast.
Rug: Cadrys. French iron canopy bed, Restoration Hardware. Bobbin bedside chest: Adelboden lamp in Rust and Fiona chair in Chesterton Taupe, all Cromwell