

HOME STYLE



LOUISE SURETTE



It took Kate Walker seven years to secure her dream home. Now she's finally making it her own.

Worth the wait



Photos:
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Artworks:
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WHEN Kate Walker found her dream home, she had to wait seven years before she could finally call it her own. But the long wait and subsequent effort involved in bringing it back to its former glory were well worth it.

For a time, Ms Walker even lived next door, admiring the 1930s sandstone home's potential from a distance and loving that it was one of the original homes in the area.

"I put it out there into the universe," recalled Ms Walker, a designer, of her dream to live in the home. "I'm a big believer in that. It may have taken seven years but it happened."

Ms Walker, who lives with her two children, Charlie, 12, and Jemima, 10, moved from Armadale to Mt Martha on the Mornington Peninsula 11 years ago.

She went on to try out a number of different homes in various pockets of the area, but when the home she had been coveting finally went on the market 18 months ago, she jumped at the chance to own it herself.

With a large garden to attend to, Ms Walker made that her first priority, creating a classic English garden with defined sitting areas that could follow the sun.

"The local community is so lovely, they would knock on the door and say how much they loved what I'd done," she said, adding the home was in the older section of Mt Martha on what was a former golf course.

While the garden took five months in total, the interior renovation was turned around in a quick six weeks, with Ms Walker rallying her troops including trusted tradespeople and her interior designer sister, Amy Spargo of Maine House Interiors.

The home was dark and heavy with green carpet and drapes in every room, but looking past that, Ms Walker admired the stucco plaster walls, original schoolhouse windows and french doors.

"I couldn't wait to sink my teeth into it," she said of the renovation. "On the first day I took ownership, I went over and started ripping the carpet out myself. I'm not a DIYer, but I couldn't wait to see the floorboards underneath, which I then had polished up."

Ms Walker and her sister made the perfect creative team, having come from a family whose livelihood has been immersed in design. Their father is a successful ceramic tile merchant, while their mother is talented at interior design. Meanwhile, Ms Walker owns her own hard-finishes design and consultation company, KWD.

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Stripping the house back and returning it to the way it was meant to look was Ms Walker's primary focus.

As for the interiors, she and Ms Spargo took great care curating the look so it was both a comfortable family home but also had a highly designed aesthetic.

She described the look as part British colonial and part Chinoiserie, with a nod to American east coast style. The dark furniture is beautifully offset by lots of white and blue, including the front door.

"I love blue, it is a very calming colour and makes it a very serene home," Ms Walker said. "I've always collected blue and white china since I was a young girl."

Ms Walker combed garage sales and Ms Spargo researched the Gumtree website, looking for pieces that would stand the test of time and look like they had always been in the home.

Further renovations are planned for next year, which will give the family more space, including a new kitchen, living and dining wing.

"There are only three of us living here, but I am focused on making every single space in the home usable," she said. "The extension will be a seamless addition to the existing structure."

For now, however, the trio is happy to enjoy time together, especially on the weekends.

"The weekends are all about building Lego or jumping on the trampoline," Ms Walker said. "Just doing mum things and really decompressing after the week. We really do take the foot off the accelerator on the weekend."

katewalkerdesign.com.au



Postscript

WITH KATE WALKER

What do people comment on the most when they visit your home?

Visitors always comment on the garden. It was really important to me the design of my property started at the front gate. People also comment on my blue front door, which has become quite a statement.

Your most treasured pieces?

They are beside my bed: my children's baby books with a lock of their hair and their first teeth and all those special mementos. Also, my grandmother's knitting that she was still working on the day before she died.

Do you have a favourite room?

My bedroom. I love the sun streaming in through my window in the morning and being able to look out across the garden. The shade of blue on the walls is so calming and I love being surrounded by my most personal, favourite things.

Your best bargain?

I have found some amazing pieces at local garage sales including a vintage roll-top desk for \$100 and a gorgeous sideboard that was about \$50.

Biggest luxury?

Rugs are my indulgence. I consider rugs art for the floor. That's what I invest in.

What does home mean to you?

Home is a sanctuary. It's built on layer upon layer of memories and a collection of pieces we love. I am proud of my home. It's an extension of me. It's a space full of positive energy, a sacred environment, and it is a safe haven for my children and me.



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