

Escape to THE CITY

A couple from the country set up the ultimate city sanctuary in Perth as a family base and as respite from busy farm life.

STORY *Carli Philips* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Jack Lovel*

EXTERIOR Bluestone crazy paving from Eco Outdoor winds around the front garden, past a Fatboy 'Attackle!' dog-shaped garden bench from Arrival Hall. Front door painted Dulux Namadji®. Facade painted Wattyl Designer White. Timber bench stained Feast Watson Black Japan. Fern Living cushion, Arrival Hall. Pots, Evergreen Collective.

During the week, Michelle Barrett and her husband Kieran sweat it out at their family farm near Esperance, WA, about 100km from so much as a supermarket. “We wanted a place to retreat to in the city,” says Michelle, the owner of this “Perth pad” and also the founder of interior design studio Frank & Boyd. “We wanted a place for when we are in Perth on business or visiting the kids,” says Michelle of the couple’s adult daughters Emma and Eadie, who live in the house full-time.

A deceased estate on a double block, the house had excellent bones but wasn’t exactly the lock-and-leave property Keith had in mind, especially given that the large garden would require a lot of maintenance. However, Michelle’s commitment to replanting with hardier species and the house’s proximity to a train line (meaning an easy commute to the football) eventually won him over.

The timing coincided with the Covid pandemic and, at the time, Michelle was studying a Bachelor of Design nearby away. However, they took all the Covid delays in their stride. “I bought a new mattress and gave it a ‘student renovation’ with some Marketplace finds. But truthfully, we didn’t mind,” she says. “It bought us some extra time so we could get a sense of how we would use the property. It also allowed us to save up some money to pay for it!”

Two years later and they were ready to renovate. They engaged Kate Fitzgerald, founder of architectural practice Whispering Smith, whose “low-fuss, pragmatic and down-to-earth designs” they admired. “Kate is originally a farm girl and understood what we were looking for in terms of a refuge in the city... [and] how important it was to honour the home’s heritage,” says Michelle. “Kieran is in the paddock so often and works really hard, so it was important to create a place where we could relax.”

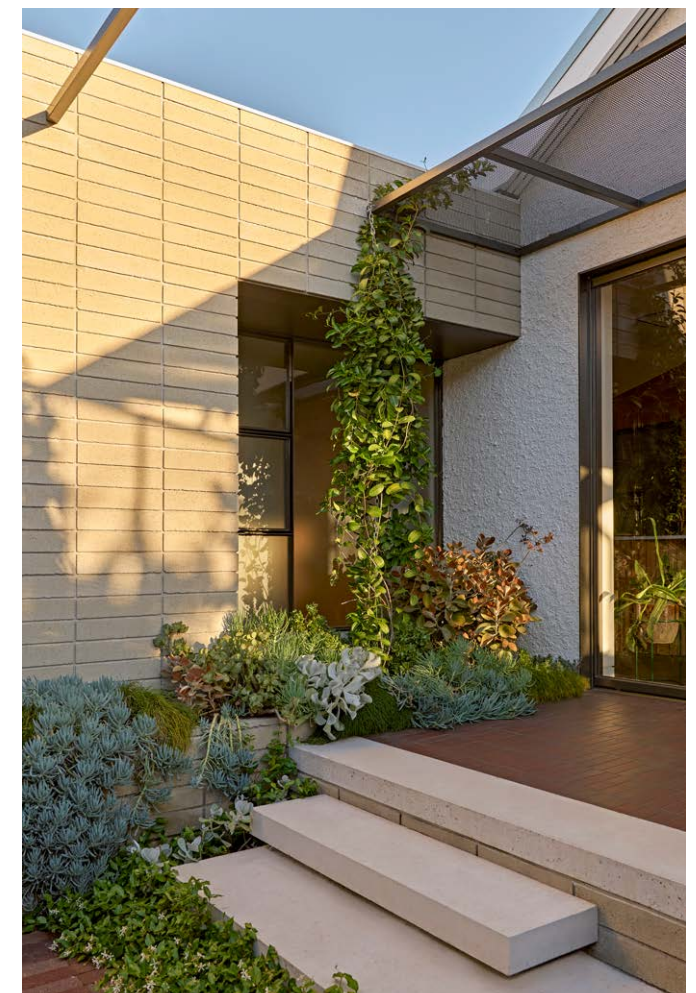
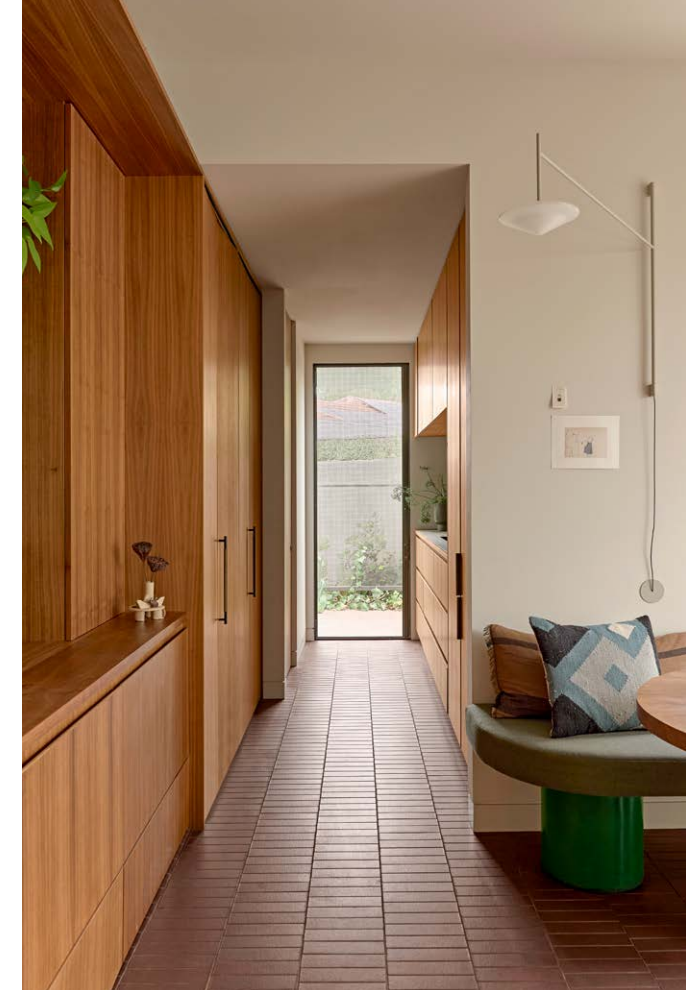
The couple were only the third owners in 100 years and had to contend with a 1960s renovation with a significant lack of storage. Despite this, the high ceilings and ornate features had a beautiful feel. Kate’s fresh eyes and respect for the home’s bones helped map out the ground floor to avoid a second storey, which neither of them wanted. ►



KITCHEN Joinery in walnut timber veneer. Island benchtop in honed Riviera quartzite, Bernini. ‘Dita’ stool, Grazia&Co. Fisher & Paykel cooktop and ovens, Winnings. Ceiling light, Vibia. Artwork (left) by Lisa Sorgini. Console, Facebook Marketplace. Succulent artwork by Georgia Pricone. Custom dining table, Classy Joins. ‘TBC2’ chairs in Saddle Tan Leather and Pearl White, Dowel Jones. Floor in Inax ‘Fabe’ tiles, Artedomus. On the island ‘Junto’ cup, Normann Copenhagen. Fruit and bowls by Michelle Barrett.



DINING Michelle made the dining banquette base in the couple's farm workshop and painted it White Knight Forest Green. Custom dining table, Classy Joints. 'TBC2' chairs in Saddle Tan Leather and Pearl White, Dowel Jones. Banquette upholstered in Warwick Fabrics 'Augustus' fabric in Willow, The Upholstery Shop. 'Tempo' wall light, Vibia. *On shelves* Vases, Bonnie and Neil and ceramic sculpture by Michelle Barrett. Bowl on book by Peta Armstrong Ceramics. *Ad Hominem* artwork by Matthew Wright. 'Sponge to Go' portable outdoor table lamp, Nordlux. Floor in Inax 'Fabe' tiles, Artedomus. **COURTYARD** Walls in GB Masonry bricks, Brickworks.





“It’s like a high-end swanky retreat, which is exactly what we were after.”

MICHELLE, DESIGNER/OWNER

She utilised the existing footprint and added a simple extension, which satisfied the couple’s requirements. Michelle took over the interior design once the floor plans were complete, but stayed in touch with Kate on occasions when they hit a snag.

To the left of the entry, the charming sitting room has been soaked in a custom deep teal colour by Dulux to enhance its traditional features, especially the original fireplace. Opposite, a guest bedroom with a pressed tin ceiling has remained intact. The main bathroom and two more bedrooms – one hiding a small annexed study with repurposed stained glass – feed off the wide hallway. “The girls decided what rooms they wanted and I dealt with them like clients. We spoke about their favourite colours and what made them happy.”

A steel-framed glass pivot door marks the transition between the original home and the rear addition. Maximising the northern aspect, Kate designed the kitchen-dining to completely open it up and added a few steps down to a sunken garden. “The beautiful thing about the Perth weather is that you can practically live outdoors and we wanted to embrace that. There’s far less flies compared to the farm so we didn’t need screens, which means the floor-to-ceiling glass feels like we’re outside even if we’re in the kitchen.”

Beyond is the new stacked brick extension featuring a plant-filled open ensuite with access to the private rear garden with outdoor shower. “We built the bedroom at the back so the girls could have full run of the front of the house,” says Michelle. “It’s like a high-end, swanky retreat, which is exactly what we were after.” ▶

Whispering Smith: whisperingsmith.com.au.

Frank & Boyd Design: [@frank_and_boyd](https://www.instagram.com/frank_and_boyd).

Talo Construction: taloconstruction.com.au.

MBJ: [@mbjbuildingandlandscapes](https://www.instagram.com/mbjbuildingandlandscapes).



LIVING Walls painted Dulux custom colour. Artwork by Elle Campbell. Vintage Artifort chair. ‘Dit’ side table, Normann Copenhagen. &Tradition ‘Pivot’ lamp, Cult. Vessels, heirlooms or vintage finds. White vase, Clay Canoe. Rug, Yellow Earth Australia.
KITCHEN Opposite top Artwork by Lisa Sorgini. **LAUNDRY** Benchtop and splashback in Inax ‘Sugie’ tiles, Artedomus. Joinery in walnut veneer and timber. Wall light, Vibia. Missoni towel, Winnings. Tapware, Faucet Strommen.



LIVING Walls painted Dulux custom colour. Artworks by Elle Campbell, Arite Kannavos, Hannah Nowlan, Chelsea Gustafsson and Marisa Veerman. Vintage Artifort chair. Side table, Normann Copenhagen. &Tradition lamp, Cult. 'Carmen MKII' chair in Kelly Wearstler 'Graffito', Arthur G. **BEDROOM** Curtain in Warwick Fabrics 'Malabar' in Seaglass, Window Studio. Artwork by Brett Anthony Moore. **HALLWAY** Hall rug, AU Rugs. 'Osso' chair, Mattiazzi.



THE PALETTE

Dulux Namadji®
(front door)

White Knight Forest Green
(dining banquette)

Dulux Edvard



Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.



EMMA'S BEDROOM Artwork by Melissa Boughey. Vintage floor lamp. 'Willow' bedhead, OZ Design. Bed linen, In Bed and Bed Tonic. Side table, roadside find. 'Roxy' chair in Zepel 'Fontaine' in Oat, Arthur G. Cushion, Empire. **ENSUITE** *Opposite top left* Walls in Inax 'Biyusai' and 'Sugie Series' tiles, Artedomus. Shower head, Faucet Strommen. *Top right* Walls in GB Masonry bricks, Brickworks. Vanity in Oxytech Environmental Green. Benchtop in honed Riviera quartzite, Bernini. Basin, Johnson Suisse. Tapware, Faucet Strommen. **MAIN BEDROOM** Artwork by Ben Crawford. Bed linen, Aura Home and Fern Living. 'Chub' stool, Fearon. 'Ellis' ottoman, Grazia&Co.

THIS IS THE LIFE

"The sunken outdoor lounge area was all about creating a 'snug' where we could relax as a family, enjoying the morning sun and sitting by the firepit in winter," says Michelle. "It's a pretty low-maintenance garden and given Perth's almost Mediterranean climate, it's become like an additional living space. Kieran got his wish for a walk-in cool room and it's one of the first things he likes to show visitors."

COURTYARD Short wall and barbecue in GB Masonry bricks, Brickworks. The courtyard is paved in bricks salvaged from the building site. Frank & Boyd custom outdoor table in Interpon Asteroid Pearl, Wilding Welding.

1

**THE SOURCE**

Strike a balance between restrained and vibrant interiors, by choosing colourful pieces that spark joy.

4

3

2



6



8



9



5



7



10



Produced by Marissa Foye.

1 'Fink' bowl in Blue, \$199.95, Make Designed Objects. 2 'Pia' floor lamp in Sage Green, \$349, Life Interiors. 3 Plantino 'Native Landmark' engineered timber flooring in Spotted Gum, POA, Choices Flooring. 4 Colorscope by Cadrys 'Elements' rug in Green (300x200cm), \$2349, Freedom. 5 'Earth 220' dining table in Oak, \$2699, Ellison Studios. 6 'Grove' marble dish, \$119, Citta Design. 7 Florabelle 'Sloane' ceramic vase in Sand, \$69.95, Myer. 8 'TBC2' chair, \$860, Dowel Jones. 9 Greg Natale 'Ponti' cushion in Burgundy, \$180, The Iconic. 10 *Dust and Dirt II*, 2024 artwork by Pamela Honeyfield, \$1500, Defiance Gallery. **H&G**