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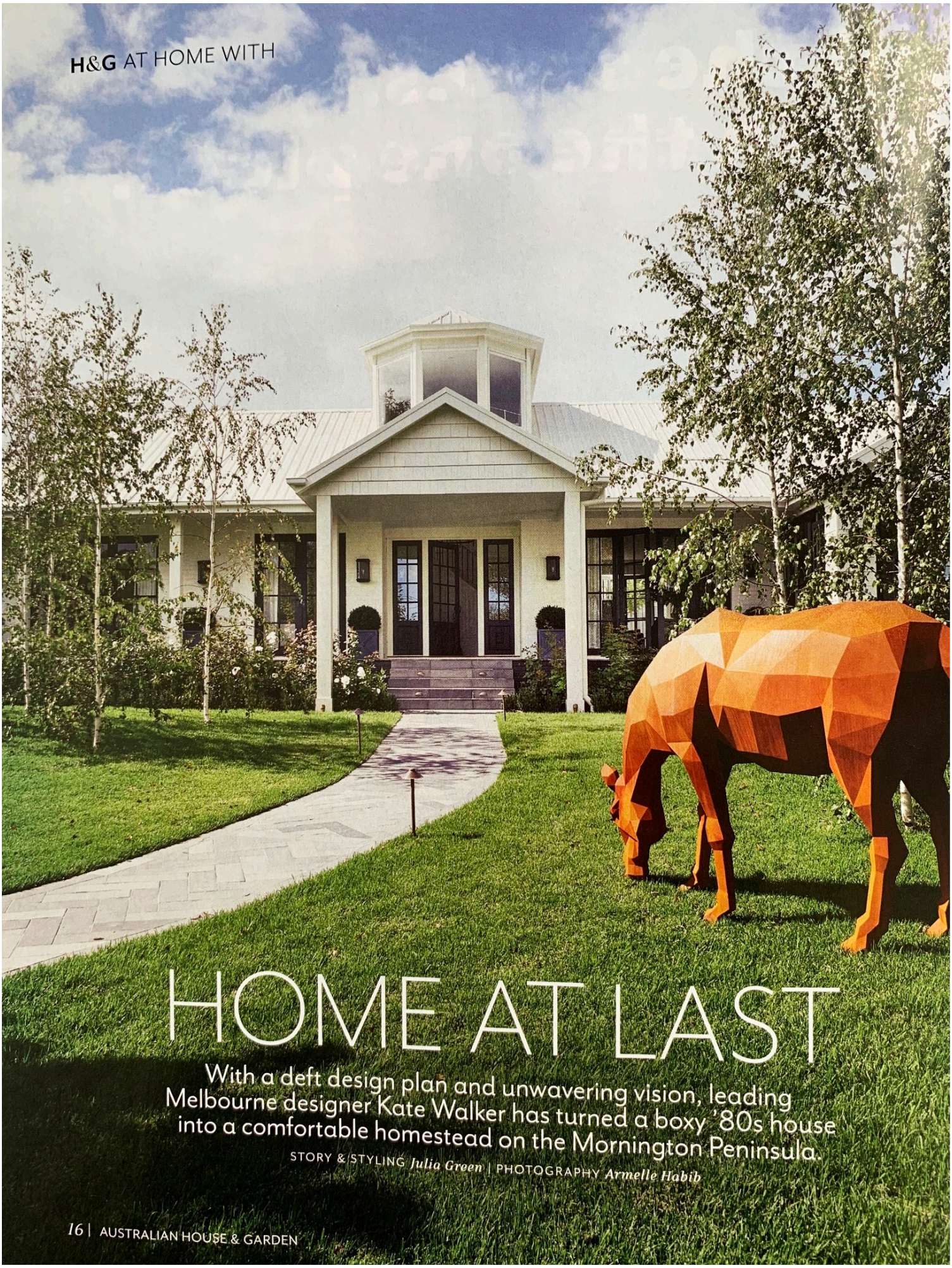


HOME AT LAST

With a deft design plan and unwavering vision, leading Melbourne designer Kate Walker has turned a boxy '80s house into a comfortable homestead on the Mornington Peninsula.

STORY & STYLING *Julia Green* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Armelle Habib*

'TO ME, MORE EXPENSIVE IS NOT NECESSARILY BETTER. I KNOW HOW TO SAVE MONEY AND WHERE TO SPEND IT.' *Kate Walker, owner*

ENTRY Soaring ceilings create a grand first impression. Parquet console table, Pottery Barn. Classic Ring one-tier chandelier, The Montauk Lighting Co. Door hardware, Domino Brass Fittings. Artwork by Zoe Young. **FRONT GARDEN** Stands of *Betula pendula* 'Moss White' (silver birch) grace a landscaped lawn by Blac Design. Corten steel horse sculpture by local artist Matt Hill. ▶

'I WANTED THE HOME TO FEEL PEACEFUL, AIRY, LIGHT AND BRIGHT WHILE BEING GUTSY, WARM AND INVITING. AND I MUST SAY I AM A FIRM BELIEVER OF #GREENISTHENEWBLUE.' *Kate*

FORMAL LIVING A hardy indoor-outdoor plant, the rhapis palm relaxes this living space. Custom sofa, ottoman in Kate Spade 'Lunch Date' fabric in Slate, and swivel armchairs in Kelly Wearstler 'Askew' fabric, all Sorrento Furniture. Metro side tables, Porcelain Bear. Custom wool rug by KWD. Pask Pharmacy floor lamp, The Montauk Lighting Co. Artworks by John Bokor.
FAMILY ROOM *opposite* Dutch Shipyard shelving from Restoration Hardware is home to a plethora of treasures, many sourced from Cromwell. A bank of family photographs justifies the name of this room. Giant Monopoly board. Restoration H
KWD ottoman covered in Mulberry Home Walton' wool fabric in Stone from Ellis

et to embark upon a full-scale renovation and extension to her much-loved Melbourne home last year, the universe threw Kate Walker – founder and director of KWD – a curveball when she was approached unexpectedly by a local agent ut selling her property, lock stock and barrel. Despite ot even being listed on the market, Kate found herself owing caution to the wind and bravely sold the home its contents, walking out with little more than her children and dog, and the clothes on their backs.

oon after, a poky 1980s yellow-brick house situated a generous block nearby appeared in her real-estate rch. While others saw an unattractive dated prospect, e's vision for the home was inspired. "People were ure of what to do with it, but as soon as I saw that Fline and the orientation, I knew exactly what how I ld attack it!" Kate named the property Beechwood.

he house, on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, had n on the market for some time until the sought-after igner snapped it up and undertook the enormous llenge of transforming it over a fast and furious 12 eks – the timeframe of the settlement. Family and nds called her crazy, but Kate had her eye on the prize nt from the word go. "They couldn't see the finish line ough my eyes," she recalls.

n ability to see beyond the obvious is what has helped ke Kate one of Australia's most coveted designers – chwood being just one example of her extraordinary on. But Kate is the first to admit that this project n't without its challenges and that there were many es along the way where she second-guessed herself. e KWD team stood behind me though, reminding me t this is what I do, and to trust my gut," she says.

nitial plans for the home were grand and included noving walls, increasing floor space and adding a ond storey. But operating on a limited timeframe that n't allow for council approval meant a quick rethink l, as it turned out, only a minor punch-out in the chen and laundry were required.

or Kate, it was about creating a functional floor plan l incorporating spaces to enjoy with her children, arlie, now 14, and 12-year-old Jemima. The KWD ethos creating a home to bring a family together was the ving force behind the renovation. "We used every gle square inch of the footprint, and while the house 't much bigger than my previous home, it's so much ▶

more functional and feels so spacious." Kate says. The house has a central entry foyer from which a staircase rises to small sitting room, part of the original structure. "It's a hangout for Charlie where he does his homework and chillaxes," say Kate. To the left are three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a family room. Behind the staircase is a sizeable laundry. To the right are several communal areas - living, dining, kitchen - then the main bedroom and ensuite. Verandahs wrap around much of the building and the manicured backyard has an enticing swimming pool, fringed by plants and the bushscape beyond.

The home is north-facing and every room enjoys a view of the garden, so it was only natural that the inspiration for the interior came from the home's surrounds. ▸

KITCHEN/DINING Jemima, Kate and Charlie in their practical cooking space. The island measures 1.7m x 2.2m and features a soapstone top. Two-pack polyurethane joinery by Gravina Cabinets and Interiors. Joe stools, Classic With a Twist. Darlana Linear pendant, The Montauk Lighting Co. Vases and dinnerware, Red Hill House and Til Foley. **LIVING** Shiplap lining boards cover the wall; there's a hidden door behind the fireplace that leads to the main bedroom. Rubelli 'Pila 47' chairs in a *faux bois* fabric from South Pacific Fabrics (left). Marcella high-back chairs (right), Cromwell. **ENTRY** *below far right* Italian oak flooring graces the communal areas, and moulding details add character to the walls. Sculpture, Cromwell.

MAIN BEDROOM *this page and opposite top left* Kate's retreat is calm and spacious. Canopy bed, Restoration Hardware. Adelboden table lamp, Bobbin bedside chest, Fiona chair and Strathraven dressing table, all Cromwell. KWD ottoman in a Kravet fabric from Elliott Clarke. Jan Kath 'Polonaise' rug, Cadrys. Sisal carpet. Lounge chair and footstool covered in GP&J Baker 'Ferns' fabric. **JEMIMA'S ROOM** The quirky Lee Jofa 'Hunt Slonem Hutch' wallpaper is a big hit. Alexander bed, Provincial Home Living. **CHARLIE'S BATHROOM** The check tiles – Square Charcoal Concrete in Doe Grey from Earp Bros – are a modern classic.

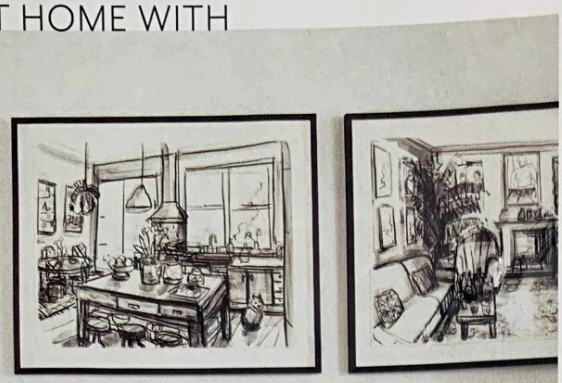
Kate worked alongside Peta Donaldson of Blac Design to bring her landscape-design vision to life, ensuring the natural shades of the exterior, such as sage green, grey, white and terracotta, were cleverly reflected as the palette inside. The striking result is tonally considered and celebrates a modern farmhouse aesthetic.Texture also played a key focus throughout the renovation, with aged materials, hand-chiselled tiles, brass tapware, luxurious flooring and a rich repertoire of linens specified for the fitout. Artworks were privately commissioned while chairs were reupholstered in bespoke fabrics - with every single detail and touchpoint thought through. However the hard finishes - namely the kitchen timber veneer two-pack joinery boasting visible woodgrain - inevitably stole the show, and the homeowner's heart.

Kate admits the greatest challenge for her with Beechwood was to practise what she preaches to her clients every day, and not include every single thing on her wish list. "I had to be clever with what I left out - and the things I didn't put in were actually my best decisions. I had to hone down on the style, hone down on my time and budget constraints, and get the very best specification within that framework, and I believe I achieved that." ▶

***KWD**, Mount Martha, Victoria; (03) 5974 1800 or katewalkerdesign.com.au.*

GUESTROOM A bedhead in Achillea Foliage linen fabric by Madder Cutch & Co and comfy soft linens are warm and welcoming. **LAUNDRY** Artwork in the laundry: a brave and beautiful move. Landscape painting by Debbie McKenzie. Custom tiles by Phoenix Stone. Siemens appliances. **BACKYARD** Pool by Aquacon. **BATHROOM** Manual Naveta Miel terracotto floor tiles from Earp Bros are perfect with the rich timber veneers. ▸

'THE SHINGLED PORTICO IS THE ONLY EXTERIOR ADDITION. THE DUTCH DOOR LEADS INTO THE MUDROOM.' Kate
THE PALETTE
Dulux Black Caviar (external doors)
Dulux Snowy Mountains Half (white walls)
Kate Spade 'Lunch Date' fabric (ottoman)
Dulux Currency Creek (kitchen cabinets)
Italian oak flooring



LIFE & STYLE

Kate shares some firsts and favourite things.

MY FIRST ADULT HOME was an old cottage in Malvern and I was so proud of it. I rented a room to one of my sisters to help pay the mortgage.
MY INTEREST IN DESIGN was sparked when I was a child. My father was in the tile industry and my mother was an interior decorator.
FIRST CAR? A red Ford Falcon, bought from my brother. **NOW?** A Land Rover Discovery. It fits all my KWD samples in the back and I'm constantly transporting extra children around the place.
I'M READING *Lovability* by Brian De Haaff, a primer in building a successful business.
MY ALL-TIME FAVOURITE MEAL is my mother's curried sausages with mashed potato.
DECORATING GURUS? I'm currently getting inspiration for soft furnishings from Kit Kemp and kitchen designs from Mick De Giulio.
MY NO. 1 SCENT is Coco Mademoiselle by Chanel.
NEXT SPLURGE? Another Matt Hill sculpture for my garden.
FAVOURITE COLOUR COMBO? I love blue and white. I also adore sage green.
I'M A HUGE FAN OF Australian artists including John Bokor (top left) and Debbie McKenzie (bottom left).
CURRENT FABRIC PASSION? Plaid! I love it for cushion covers and throws.
FLORAL FANCY? Margaret Merril roses.
NEXT HOLIDAY? I'm heading to New York and then to High Point Market in North Carolina to source furniture and have some girlfriend time away. I can't wait to experience Manhattan.
I'M FOLLOWING @kellywearstler. Her hotel design, wallpapers, lighting and furniture are incredible.
MY HAPPY PLACE IS the mountains. We spend every weekend over the winter season in Mount Buller, and try to get spend time in US alpine resorts in January.
I'LL NEVER TIRE OF shingles. I love them left natural or painted. It's the texture that I love. I adore a shingle roof, particularly for British Colonial designs. **H&G**

'I'M A BIG FAN OF AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS AND I'D LOVE ANOTH SCULPTURE FOR THE GARDEN.'