

## cheat sheet

**Who lives her** Anna, her partner, and their three children, aged 16, 13 and 11, plus Bob, a Samoyed, and one rabbit.

**Style of home** Tudor Revival brick residence in south-east Melbourne with four bedrooms and a 1990s addition at the back that needed reworking.

**🕒** The family bought the house 11 years ago and engaged their architect in August 2018. Building work took place between January and June 2019, and the house was fully furnished by October last year.

**💰** The budget for the renovation was \$200,000 (excluding furniture).



# eternal FLAME

While some homeowners leap at the chance to replace their old fireplace, a Melbourne family had other ideas

**LIVING** The starting point for the renovation was the beautiful marble fireplace, which was slightly out of place in the Tudor-style home. Architect Alexandra Ansari used it as her design cue for the home's glamorous look and colour scheme. Vittoria sofa in Sand Leather and Milou swivel chair, Coco Republic. Tables, Beeline Design. Custom Tretford rug, Gibbon Group. Framed Atelier CPH print and Sway floor lamp, Designstuff. Vessels (on mantel, from left), Pépité and Bungalow Trading.

PLANT STAND: JIN CORNER; VOYAGER INTERIORS; CUSHIONS: HYGGE LIV; THROW AND CANDLEHOLDER: DESIGNSTUFF; MARBLE TRIVET: TOPS BY DESIGN



**A** dark-red marble fireplace was the starting point for the six-month renovation of this home in south-east Melbourne. “I wanted to keep the old mantelpiece,” says the owner, Anna, who shares the four-bedroom Tudor Revival house with her partner and their three children. Luckily, their architect, Alexandra Ansari of Ansari Architects, also recognised the merit of what has remained the centrepiece of the reimagined space. “The fireplace looked pretty full-on when I first visited the house, with a red wall behind it and dark-brown joinery all around,” recalls Alexandra, “but it was such beautiful stone and I knew I could work with it.”

Though the home had served the family well for 11 years, it really needed an update. “From a functional point of view, the house was already large enough for a family of five, was within our preferred school area and still close to the CBD,” says Anna. It was well equipped, with a two-car garage, a swimming pool and good lawn area. However, its grand proportions and beautiful brickwork at the front highlighted what was lacking in an earlier renovation at the back, which had made the living spaces dark.

While they could have gone for a more extensive renovation, the family wanted to live there while the work took place, which partly determined the scope of works. At ground level, changes were made to the kitchen, bar and family area as well as the laundry and adjacent bathroom. Upstairs, the children’s bathroom was also gutted and refreshed. “The kitchen was the only area where I changed the plan,” says architect Alexandra, “but to keep costs down we agreed to keep the locations for the plumbing in the bathrooms and laundry as per the existing layouts.”

The functionality and light of the new open-plan kitchen, living and dining areas are impressive, says Anna, “I wanted a lot from what is fundamentally not a large space that faces south.”



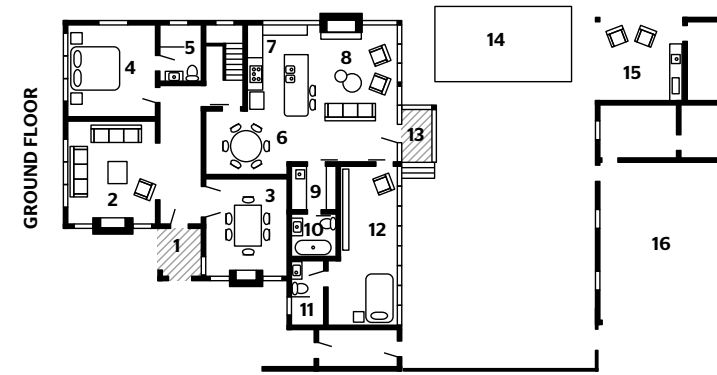
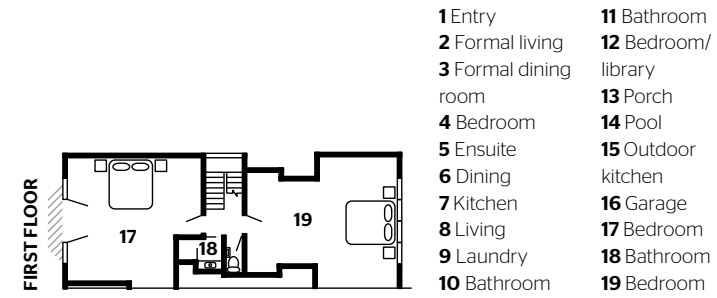
**KITCHEN** Owner Anna was keen on a grey-based colour scheme, which has been warmed up by dark red accessories and shiny items like the new Fisher & Paykel Quad Door fridge. Roxton stools and Markson dining chairs, Coco Republic. Ridge dining table, Beeline Design. Pendant light, Mark Douglass. Artwork by Stan Yarramunua.

BOWL (ON ISLAND), DESIGNSTUFF. GLASS VASE, TOP3 BY DESIGN





**STORAGE** Alexandra designed the cupboards to conceal as many appliances as possible while allowing extra light to flow in under the window bench. The cabinetry colours are Dulux Brume and Charcoal Light, with George Fethers & Co timber veneer in Oak Rift Swamp. Benchtop, Caesarstone Georgian Bluffs. **LAUNDRY** (opposite) Häfele Hawa Concepta pivot sliding hardware means the doors in this corridor retract back into the cavity. Appliances, E&S.



By installing skylights and reorienting the space, Alexandra managed to make it the airy centre of the home. “Before, it was pushed into a corner and really dark,” she says. But not now, as the space has been lightened and visually expanded with an elevated bench running along the window side of the kitchen and into an appliance cupboard. “This enables small appliances to be easily accessed and tidied away when not in use – a must with three children making smoothies and toasties at the same time.”

The fireplace in the living room provided a touchstone for all the new finishes and furnishings. “The inspiration for the herringbone floorboards in the main area against the fire mantel came from a Paris apartment,” says Anna. She and Alexandra searched endlessly to find a luxurious flooring solution with a reasonable price tag. This and the classic, neutral palette throughout now allows the fireplace to be the star of the show.

“I love marble, but I needed to source something a little more subtle for the kitchen,” says Alexandra, who opted for grey aggregate benchtops and joinery to match. Installing crisp white herringbone tiles in the ground-floor bathroom has provided yet another visual link to the living spaces.

While there are plans for more work down the track, the family couldn’t be happier with what’s been done so far. “I love all the renovated areas but I do have some favourite features,” Anna admits. These include the oak flooring, and the large island bench in the kitchen. The list continues into the bathroom (with its herringbone feature wall, large bath and wall light), the simple yet functional laundry, and the upstairs bathroom – “a triumph in meeting the needs of three adolescents in a small space”.

Alexandra is equally pleased with the design outcome, adding, “The end result really speaks for itself, both from an aesthetic point of view and just how well it serves the family now.” **10** *Ansari Architects, Northcote, Victoria: ansariarchitects.com.au*

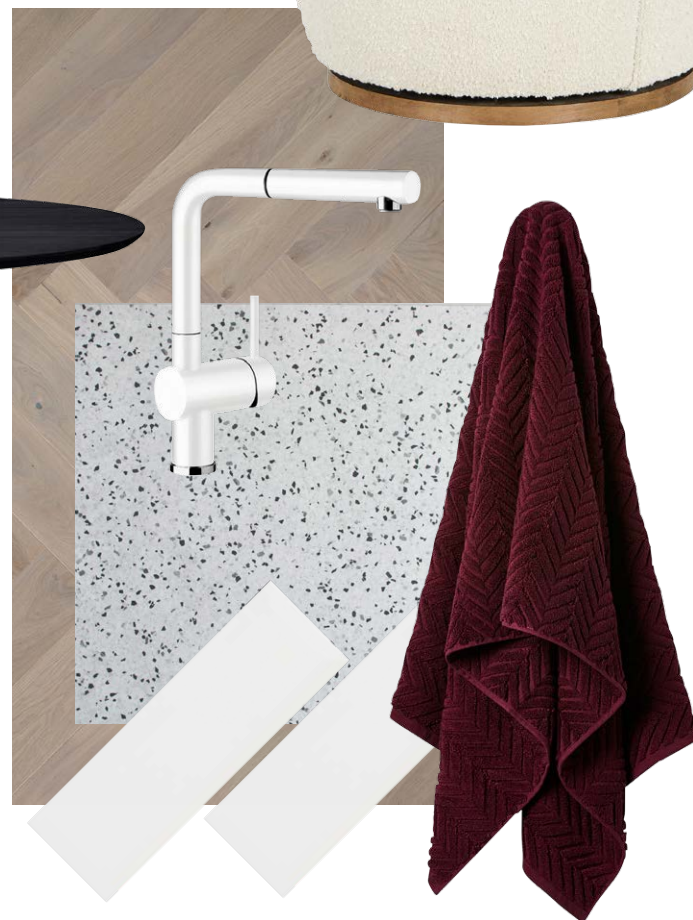
ACCESSORIES ON KITCHEN SHELVES AND BENCH, DESIGNSTUFF



“The inspiration for the herringbone floorboards in the main area [and the patterning of the bathroom tiles, above] came from a Paris apartment”

ANNA, HOMEOWNER





GREAT FINDS



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE** Franco dining chair, \$425, Coco Republic. Tully dining table, \$2185, GlobeWest. Middle Of Nowhere 'Fergus' small planter in Rust, \$35, RJ Living. Ferm Living 'Bendum' vase, \$169, Designstuff. Ascot Herringbone flooring, \$114.25 per sq m, Havwoods. *Ellipse A3* art print, \$99 (unframed), Urban Road. Milou Swivel armchair, \$1595, Coco Republic. Home Republic 'Mimosa' textured bath towel in Plum, \$39.99, Adairs. Bevelled white matt tile, \$44.95 per sq m, National Tiles. Redfern Terrazzo tile (600mm x 600mm), \$48 per sq m, Tile Cloud. Blanco kitchen mixer, \$929, Winning Appliances.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: NATALIE JOHNSON, TOWEL AND PLANTER, DESIGNSTUFF

LESSONS LEARNT

**“If you don’t move out when the builders move in, be prepared for more than a little interruption”**

ANNA, HOMEOWNER

“I didn’t enjoy living in the house during the renovation, mainly because I struggle with chaos, dust and sharing my bathroom with two teenage boys! We lived in the front part of the house and all five of us used the main ensuite. I cooked our meals outside on the barbecue and set up a mini kitchen with microwave and fridge in the hall.”



**BATHROOM** (this page and opposite) In this practical space off the laundry are white wall and terrazzo floor tiles from National Tiles. Custom vanity and shelf are George Fethers & Co timber veneer in Oak Rift Swamp. Roca basin, Reece. Custom mirror. The bath is the Posh Domaine design from Reece and the black 'circle' on the wall is a vintage-style light by Mark Douglass. Taps, Brodware.