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THE HOMES MAGAZINE FOR MODERN LIVING

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Summer lovin'

It may be small, but thanks to its ingenious design, Clare and Ben's multifunctional home makes family living a breeze

Photography – Armelle Habib
Styling – Julia Green
Words – Luke Tebbutt

Home profile

THE OWNERS Architect Clare Cousins, her builder husband Ben Pedersen and their daughters Ginger, six, and Ivy, three.

THE PROPERTY A three-bedroom single-storey Edwardian house in Melbourne, Australia, extended and renovated to give the family two living rooms, an open-plan kitchen-diner, a walk-in pantry, utility room and two bathrooms, one of which is en suite. The garden has a separate two-storey extension with a garage, bathroom and a flexible studio space, currently used as a spare bedroom.

GARDEN

'The garden wraps around the house and provides light and outdoor access to those rooms in the middle,' says Clare. The deep overhang also ensures the living spaces are shaded from the harshest of the summer sun.

GET THE LOOK Eckersley Garden Architecture created the garden. Charlotte Rowe Garden Design could devise a similar courtyard style. These are Vela chairs by Studio Hannes Wettstein for Accademia, available in the UK at Skandium. For a similar log footrest, try French Connection Home.



SWIMMING POOL

Every corner of Clare and Ben's home is designed to maximise function and, in the case of the pool, fun. Tucked up against the back wall and the garage, it takes up just 3 x 6m, but makes an immeasurable difference to life at home.

GET THE LOOK Compass could install a swimming pool like this. Turn to Design News on page 101 for more details.

Quality not quantity

— that's what really matters. So says architect Clare Cousins of the small, but perfectly formed Melbourne home she shares with husband Ben Pedersen and daughters Ginger and Ivy. Thanks to her clever use of space, with a nip here and a tuck there, they've managed to extend a traditional Edwardian home on a narrow plot in order to pack an awful lot of function into its now 200 sq m footprint.

The project, undertaken by builder Ben, included reworking and extending the living space to replace a previous extension, which had a veranda and French doors cluttering the connection with the garden. 'We shunted the kitchen back a little to create space for a walk-in pantry and a utility room that opens on to an outdoor airing room,' says Clare. They also fitted a built-in desk and bar into a wall next to the dining space, which can be concealed or revealed with a perforated screen. Simple yet ingenious changes that make family living a comparative breeze and mean Clare or Ben can catch up on emails, but still be with the children. 'It's not about having lots of space — it's just about having well-organised space,' says Clare. 'Our desk only takes up a couple of metres, but it does the same job as a whole room.'

The new extension also gives them two living space options — one overlooking the garden and another to the side of the kitchen, where mess is more easily hidden from view. That area makes a great playroom for Ginger and Ivy and also works as a more cosy place for watching movies at night. 'It's a real luxury having two living spaces, but for a growing family like ours,

MAIN LIVING ROOM

A built-in bench stretches the length of the living room, doubling as a display surface and seating space, with room beneath to stow objects. 'I like to incorporate things with multiple functions in a house,' says Clare.

GET THE LOOK The white glazed bricks are by Euroa Clay Products in Melbourne. Head to tilestop.co.uk for tiles like these. The chopping board and ceramic vase are vintage — try Twentytwentyone for an oversized chopping board and The White Company for a similar vase.



it's great. It gives us different spots to retreat to,' says Clare.

The house is also designed to grow with the family, with a separate two-storey extension at the back of the garden, which has a garage and a flexible studio space on top. Currently used as a spare bedroom, it could easily evolve into an office or teenage den in the future. And the paved garden by Clare's uncle, landscape designer Rick Eckersley, provides a compact lung of space between the two additions. 'It works well, because the girls can ride their bikes there and do laps around the tree, while being safe and contained,' says Clare. 'And on a hot day, we'll all jump in the pool before dinner, then eat outside, so it's become a focal point for us to reconnect in the evenings.'

'I think it's important for a home to give you that sense of respite,' adds Clare of the house, which from the front, shows no sign of the private paradise contained beyond. 'People are surprised at how detached our house feels from the street.'

Clare refers to her home as a robust retreat and the materials reflect this. There are no fancy wallpapers or fussy finishes here — just simple bricks on the walls and sturdy concrete on the floor. 'Given the amount of use the house is getting, we wanted hardy surfaces. There's nothing too precious here,' she says.

This urge to celebrate materials, rather than mask them, also chimes with the modernist masters Clare looks up to (she's a big fan of America's Case Study Houses) and should see the addition last much longer than the one they tore down. 'I hope we've built something that will still look good and be useful in 50 years,' says Clare. 'My hope is that future owners won't have to change it too much. Or at least, not until after I'm out of sight.'

See more of Clare's work at clarecousins.com.au

MAIN LIVING ROOM

Clare and Ben spent ten months building the extension and used durable, family-friendly materials throughout, such as concrete flooring, bricks and timber on the ceiling. 'If we had a white ceiling, I think the space would have felt too stark,' says Clare.

GET THE LOOK The rug is custom-made by Loom in Melbourne. Etsy does similar rugs. The leather sofa is a custom design by Temperature Design in Melbourne. Head to Cassina for a wraparound sofa like this. This is the Glo-Ball T table lamp by Jasper Morrison for Flos.



DINING ROOM

Curved glazing makes it easier to move around this corner of the house, which is one of the main junctions, sitting between the kitchen, the two living spaces and the garden. 'If that had been a hard corner, we'd need more space to navigate around it,' says Clare. 'By rounding it off, it feels more human and usable.'

GET THE LOOK The table is from Mark Tuckey in Melbourne. Find a similar table at Benchmark. These are the 209 bentwood chairs by Thonet, available at Nest.



*'I get a lot of enjoyment
out of how the space
functions to make
family life easier'*

KITCHEN

Rounded corners make the kitchen more child-friendly, while charcoal-coloured bricks and cabinets along the spine wall streamline the look and define this space as a work zone. 'With the dark colour, the wall and cabinets read as one volume, then the pale kitchen island reads as another volume and they become objects that you navigate around,' says Clare. **GET THE LOOK** The charcoal glazed bricks are from Euroa Clay Products in Melbourne. Try grestec.co.uk for similar. The island was custom-made from bleached American oak and Calacatta marble, and the kitchen cabinets were made bespoke from charcoal-stained American oak with powder-coated handles. Find a recommended carpenter through ratedpeople.com. These are the Albert bar stools by Massproductions – Twentytwentyone stocks this design. The tap is by Dornbracht. This is a Bertazzoni oven.

BAR →

'The bar was Ben's idea,' says Clare. 'We met working in hospitality while we were students, so he's always been great at mixing a drink.' It's lined with brass tiles – one of the home's few decorative flourishes – which Clare originally used in a shop project.

GET THE LOOK For similar tiles, try *Walls and Floors*. The ceiling light is from Masson For Light in Melbourne. Try netlighting.co.uk for similar. Giles Miller Studio could custom-make a perforated metal screen like this.

STUDY ↓

Clare and Ben built a study into a side wall of the extension, with a screen to open it up or hide it away. It means they can catch up on work, but still be near the children and vice versa – the children will be able to do homework and go online in a semi-supervised space when they get older.

GET THE LOOK The desk and cabinets were custom-made from bleached American oak. The shelves were custom-made from painted folded steel. Find similar at *Aram Store*. This is the *About A Chair* by Hee Welling for Hay.



Home truths

WHAT TYPIFIES SUMMER FOR YOU? Home-made ice lollies. The whole family is addicted.

WHAT WOULD YOU CHOOSE AS YOUR SUPERPOWER? Patience. For both work and home and, generally, in life.

IN ANOTHER LIFE, WHAT WOULD YOUR DREAM CAREER BE? The same as what I do now! I guess that means something!

WHAT'S OVERRATED IN LIFE? Business travel. It may sound glamorous, but believe me, it's not!

AND WHAT'S UNDERRATED? Receiving handwritten notes. Beats social media any day.

WHAT SHOULD EVERY VISITOR TO MELBOURNE DO? Take a drive down the Great Ocean Road – it's a great introduction to this fabulous city.

DESCRIBE A TYPICAL DAY AT HOME? Crazy mornings, with everyone getting ready. But the pool brings us together again in the evening – if it's hot, we'll all jump in for a swim before dinner.

FAMILY BATHROOM →

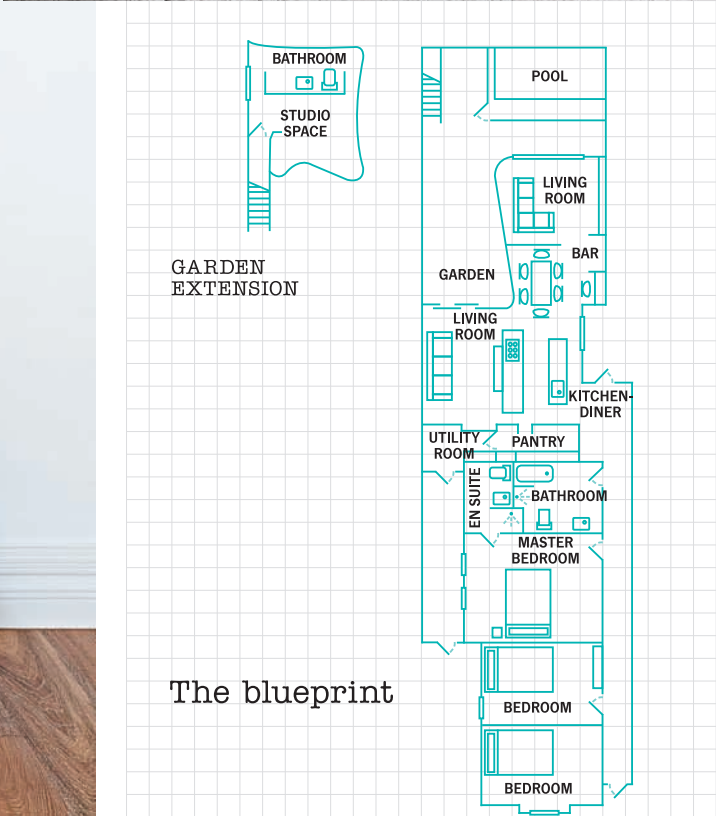
Vertical tiles accentuate height in the bathroom and a basin with an integrated towel rack helps keep the walls clutter-free.

GET THE LOOK The white glazed ceramic wall tiles are from Signorino Tile Gallery in Melbourne. Fired Earth does similar tiles. This is the Pressed Glass wall light by Tom Dixon. The washbasin is by Pozzi-Ginori. CP Hart has a good range of washbasins with towel rails. The bath is by Duravit. For a shower like this, try John Lewis.

GINGER'S BEDROOM ↓

Vintage furniture works a treat in children's bedrooms, creating a nostalgic feel. Here, Ivy rests in Ginger's room on a wicker chair that belonged to Clare as a child. Brightly painted school lockers are used for storage and a large-scale vintage world map adds decoration.

GET THE LOOK These Fifties English school lockers with mahogany handles came from Codename Tom in Melbourne. Try Junk Deluxe for vintage lockers. For a supersize world map, try the National Geographic Store.



The blueprint

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MASTER BEDROOM

The bedrooms are in the period part of the house at the front and required little more than new flooring and painting. With more room at the back, Clare and Ben have been able to add an en-suite bathroom to their bedroom, tucked neatly into the space behind the main family bathroom next door, with the showers back to back.

GET THE LOOK The bed is from Jordan in Melbourne. Find a similar design at sofa.com. The flooring is made from smoked limed oak. Find similar at Victorian Woodworks. The bed linen and yellow throw are from Country Road in Melbourne. Head to H&M Home for similar. Here, a Stool 60 by Artek – available at Aram Store – is used as a side table. This is the Studioilse w084t2 light for Wästberg, available at Twentytwentyone.

‘For me, home is
a place where you
need a sense of
serenity and sanctuary’



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