

DECK The soaring ceiling over the living area creates a backdrop for owners Will and Lauren to entertain outdoors. **LIVING AREA (opposite)** Light floods the home thanks to a wall of glass doors.

CLEAR VISION

Through phone calls and Skype, one expat couple found an architect to work on their modest Melbourne cottage. In the end, it was their teamwork and trust that led to the contemporary family house they call now call home

CHEAT SHEET

Who lives here? Will, a lawyer; his wife Lauren, a consultant; their baby girl, 11-month-old Matilda, Clive the cat and Daphne, a Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever.

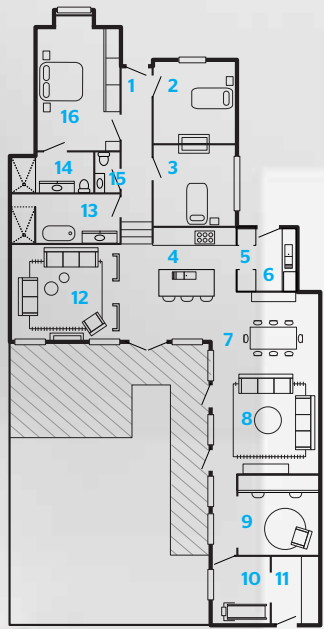
Style of home: A freestanding Edwardian worker's cottage with a contemporary extension.

⌚ Although the couple was living abroad, design began in 2009. Work started in 2011 and was completed that year.

\$\$\$ The home's renovation and extension cost over \$500,000.

OPPOSITE: TABLE AND CHAIRS, TAIT, TAIT.COM.AU. THIS PAGE: STOOLS, PIERRE + CHARLOTTE, PIERREANDCHARLOTTE.COM. 'VIADUCT' CUSHION, SOUTHWOOD, (03) 9077 5474. HAY 'DOT' CUSHION, CULT.CUL.TDESIGN.COM.AU. 'KELCOO' STONEWALL CUSHION, MODERN TIMES, MODERNTIMES.COM.AU. PLANTS AND FLOWERS (THROUGHOUT), KATIE MARX FLOWERS, KATIEMARXFLOWERS.COM.AU

WORDS **CARRIE HUTCHINSON** STYLING **MARSHA GOLEMAC** PHOTOGRAPHY **BROOKE HOLM**



- 1. Entry
- 2. Bedroom
- 3. Bedroom
- 4. Kitchen
- 5. Pantry
- 6. Laundry
- 7. Dining area
- 8. Living area
- 9. Study/bedroom
- 10. Exercise room
- 11. Store
- 12. Sitting area
- 13. Bathroom
- 14. Ensuite
- 15. Powder room
- 16. Master bedroom



OPPOSITE: PHOTOGRAPH, BROOKE HOLM; MENU 'FLIP' STOOL AND SOLIDOS ESPADRILLES, SAFARI LIVING, SAFARILIVING.COM.AU; 'SERENGETI' RUG, ARMADILLO & CO.
ARMADILLO-COCOM, HAY; TEATOWEL, CULT, CULTDESIGN.COM.AU. THIS PAGE: ARTWORKS BY MARCUS HOLLANDS, MARCUS HOLLANDS.COM

KITCHEN (opposite) Polished aggregate floors and the Caesarstone-topped island are examples of the clean tones seen throughout the house. Muuto 'The Dots' timber wall hooks and oak cabinetry add warmth to the cool space.

DINING AREA A cluster of Mud Australia porcelain lights mirror the home's simple elegance.





DINING AREA (opposite, left) Architect Claire Cousins sits at the table made by Will's father. **BATHROOM (opposite, right)** Originally designed in a darker grey, the bathroom now has a lighter scheme, as suggested by Clare. **SITTING AREA** Comforting textures are drawn in through the Jordan 'Cleo' velvet sofa and the Tretford goat-hair rug, the bolts of blue hitting it off with the Laelie Berzon painting and Jieldé lamp.



Being on the other side of the world when planning a renovation is possibly not every couple's idea of a good time. For Will and Lauren, who'd moved to the Middle East for work, the process wasn't nearly as complicated as it might have proved.

"When we knew we were going to come home, we engaged an architect so that we could get the renovation started as soon as we got back," explains Will. The pair did their research, interviewed a number of architects over the phone and via Skype, and finally teamed up with Clare Cousins.

"She was very reassuring," recalls Lauren. "This was a process we'd never been through before, so we were quite nervous about it. We didn't know what our set budget was or what we could include in the scope of work. But she understood what we liked really quickly – I think we have quite similar tastes."

The couple were under no illusions, however, that this was a huge undertaking. They'd bought the house – a typical freestanding weatherboard cottage in Melbourne's inner north – with a view to renovate but with no set timeframe. "It was just a box with a hallway down the centre and rooms off either side," remembers Will. "It wasn't until we'd lived in it for a while that we realised just how run-down it was."

Clare's focus on retaining the original features and feel of the home won the couple over. As Will explains, though, their brief to her was very open: "We wanted four bedrooms and a house we'd live in for at least 10 years. It was as basic as that really."

The design process, which included a lot of correspondence between the United Arab Emirates and Australia, took place over the course of almost a year. As far away as Lauren and Will were, there were very few bumps. When work commenced, just after they'd returned home, it was equally smooth sailing for the most part. There were some issues with the the original chimneys and

the magic 3

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THIS HOME'S DYNAMIC DETAILS 1. 'Subway' matt tile, \$35/sqm, Onsite Supply & Design, onsitesd.com.au. 2. 'Designed' timber veneer in Biscotti Crown, from \$84.26/sqm, Laminex, laminex.com.au. 3. 'Quad' brass cabinet handle, \$40, Designer Doorware, designerdoorware.com.au.

THE MAGIC 3 PRODUCT SOURCING: JOSEPH GARDNER OPPOSITE: ARTWORK BY LAELIE BERZON, LAELIEBERZON.COM



MASTER BEDROOM (left) A Hans Wegner 'Plank' chair is Matilda's bedtime story spot. Textural wall-hangings (above) make the space feel a little more cosy and add interest to the white walls.


SITTING AREA (opposite) Lauren and Will's uncluttered approach to decorating gives the home a calm feel and elegant look – perfect to enjoy from the comfort of a Hans Wegner 'J16' rocker.

the house needed to be completely restumped, reconfigured and replastered but, even when these problems occurred, Lauren and Will wanted to honour the process they'd undertaken with Clare.

"There were a few things that affected the budget, but we just ended up coping it," says Will. "We'd spent such a long time in the design process, we were keen not to strip things out or compromise."

The result is a stunning family home featuring a neutral palette with raw timber a star element. Clare assisted with interior design choices as well, helping to choose furniture such as the sofas. The remaining pieces are a combination of iconic classic designs, a much-loved dining table made by Will's dad and items collected from overseas. "In Dubai, we were living in a small apartment and didn't have much stuff," says Will. "This is a four-bedroom home, so it's still a work in progress in terms of adding furniture."

What was the original building is now the sleeping zone, with three bedrooms, a bathroom and an ensuite. A couple of steps lead down into the extension. It's configured in an L shape and here you'll find the living area, combined kitchen, dining and living space, a study, gym and storage area, as well as the deck. The glass walls have doors at intervals instead of working as bi-folds. The cypress pine used in the framework is carried through to a feature wall around the fireplace in the sitting area.

This is where the family, including baby Matilda, spends much of their time – it's their favourite room in the house. "At night, sitting in there with the lights on, the fire going and a glass of red wine, it's just so relaxing," says Lauren. "It's like a sanctuary." 

For more details on Clare's work, visit clarecousins.com.au.

3
great
finds



TEXTURED RUGS 1. Fiona Lynch 'Field No.1' rug, \$3750, Angelucci 20th Century, angelucci.net.au. 2. 'Polka' rug, from \$480, Something Beginning With, somethingbeginningwith.com.au. 3. 'Serengeti' entrance mat, \$130, Armadillo & Co, armadillo-co.com.

3 GREAT FINDS' PRODUCT SOURCING: JOSEPH GARDNER. THIS PAGE: (LEFT) ARTWORK, KRISTINA KROGH. WALL-HANGING AND JAPANESE TEA CUP SAFARI LIVING, SAFARILIVING.COM.AU. BLANKET, KATE & KATE, KATEANDKATE.COM.AU. (RIGHT) WALL-HANGING BY MARYANNE MOODIE AND ARTWORK BY ELLIE MALIN. MODERN TIMES, MODERNTIMES.COM.AU. CUSHION, SOUTHWOOD, (03) 9077 5474.



star performer

 Cypress pine was used for the window frames, structural mullions and cladding on the home's northern and western facades. Its natural tone complements the neutral scheme of the home.