

HIGHER *calling*

Renovating in the shadow of a century-old fig tree challenged Brisbane architect Stewart Smith to search for sunlight above the canopy.

STORY *Rachel White* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Alanna Jayne McTiernan*

REAR GARDEN “We wanted a minimalist design that prioritised texture and thoughtful articulation of spaces,” says Peter, the owner. The exterior is clad in James Hardie fibre cement sheets and timber battens painted Dulux White Calm. Sir Walter Grange grass provides a soft, lush contrast to the pool area’s hard surfaces.

A seamless blend of old and new, this recently renovated Queenslander was a study in symmetry and balance for local architect Stewart Smith of Smith Architects. “It was about trying to find a way to respect two things,” says Stewart. “The first was the original Queenslander at the front, the second was this really beautiful but imposing, 100-year-old fig tree out the back.”

Starting with the home in original condition, Stewart took a sympathetic approach to restoring the Art Deco frontage and existing internal spaces, preserving features such as leadlight windows, arched facade and stucco

finishes. This character is not easy to come by in this inner-Brisbane suburb filled with pre-war houses.

“The house hadn’t been loved for quite a period of time, so a major portion of work was restoring it,” says Stewart. “We wanted to respect the original architecture by leaving it in position rather than raising it.”

Owners Peter and Kayla - who live in the home with their children, Joseph, seven, and Estelle, five - were in favour of preserving as much of the original home as possible, both as a way of honouring the unique heritage and as a cost-saving measure.

“The more you can keep of an existing house, the less you’re spending on construction, which gave us more ▶

KITCHEN When selecting the interior palette, Stewart chose Dulux White Calm for the walls with soft green accents in Dulux Spiralina. Kitchen joinery in Polytec Amaro Matt, Dynamic Cabinetry. Splashback tiles, Amber Tiles. Pendant lights, Lumen8. Franke ‘Olten’ kitchen mixer in Stainless Steel, Reece. Appliances, Miele. Artwork in butler’s pantry is a WPA National Park poster, originally painted by Robert Decker. Lithograph by Lenore Dupree. European oak flooring in Graupa, Tongue & Groove.

THE PALETTE

Dulux White Calm
(exterior and interior walls)

Dulux Spiralina
(kitchen joinery)

Dulux Duralloy Terrain

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.



“The most rewarding part has been seeing the spaces come to life.” KAYLA, OWNER



to invest in the extension and the pool, which were high on Peter and Kayla’s list of must-haves,” says Stewart.

The original part of the home now seamlessly connects to the contemporary extension, thanks to subtle cues referencing the home’s heritage roots in the modern addition, which create overall harmony. “We haven’t copied the Art Deco style, we’ve just referenced some design elements, especially some of the softness that you get in an Art Deco space,” says Stewart. The arch shape, typical of that historical style, is carried into the kitchen/pantry space, and playfully turned upside-down in the bathroom with the curved mirrored shaving cabinets.

When it comes to the lack of natural light, the new extension takes care of this with a series of thoughtfully appointed high windows and lightwells capturing sunshine from above the fig tree’s long-established canopy. “The high volume we created in the dining room was an attempt to capture light,” says Stewart. “The fig tree, while beautiful, sits to the north of the site and would naturally block light into the house if it wasn’t for the creation of this volume at the core of the extension.” An elegant solution, the high windows ensure the lack of direct sunlight isn’t noticeable in the space, while the family enjoys their bright home and the fig tree happily lives on for another 100 years. ▶

LIVING This page and opposite bottom Curtains, Cuchi. ‘Okina’ pendant light in Dark Terracotta, Klay Life. Tretford ‘Roll’ carpet in Larch. Custom bookshelf, Dynamic Cabinetry. Lithograph by Lenore Dupree. **REAR EXTERIOR** Opposite top left The 10kW solar system by Springers Solar harnesses the Queensland sun, while white powdercoated sun hoods from Heka Hoods offer protection from the elements. **KITCHEN/DINING** Opposite top right Isabella the Maltese Terrier enjoys the indoor/outdoor flow. Dining table and chairs, Freedom. Outdoor table and chairs, Remarkable Outdoor Living. Outdoor pavers, Amber Tiles.

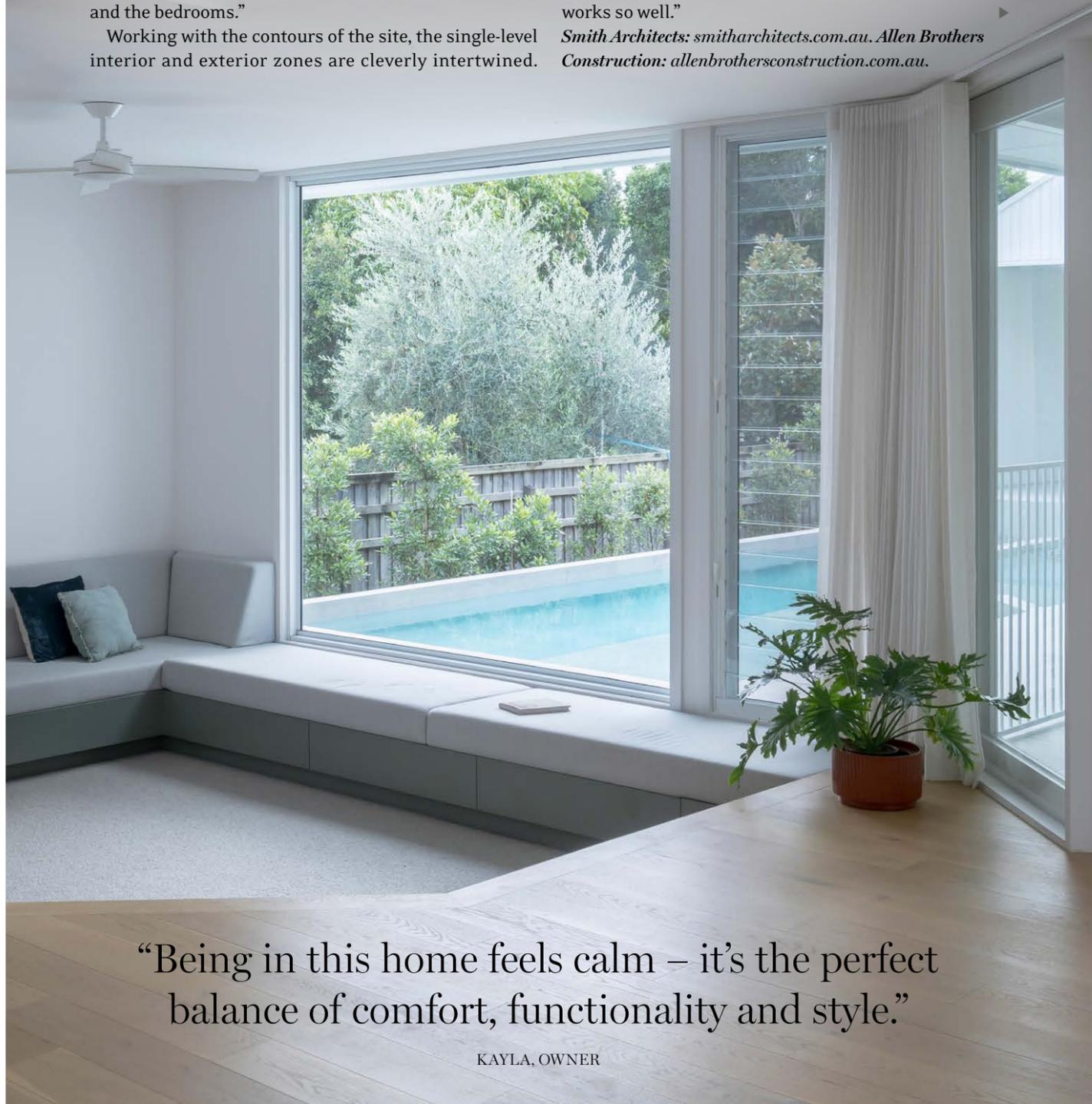
A response to what was one of the “most challenging aspects of this project”, Stewart’s extension also made it possible to create an intuitive flow from the front door to the back fence, something that was important to Peter and Kayla. “Our brief to Stewart was all about creating a home that felt connected, functional and, above all, welcoming,” says Peter. “We wanted the home to have a seamless connection between the living areas, the yard and the bedrooms.”

Working with the contours of the site, the single-level interior and exterior zones are cleverly intertwined.

“We used the pool to help achieve a large, level landscaped space on a steep site. There’s no level change or barrier between the living and outdoor spaces,” says Stewart.

The finished home is a success that elevates the everyday on all fronts. Kayla says, “The most rewarding part has been seeing the spaces come to life. When we have 16 neighbourhood kids comfortably gathered in the sunken lounge ... it’s such a satisfying feeling knowing the design works so well.”

Smith Architects: smitharchitects.com.au. Allen Brothers Construction: allenbrothersconstruction.com.au.



“Being in this home feels calm – it’s the perfect balance of comfort, functionality and style.”

KAYLA, OWNER

THIS IS THE LIFE

“My favourite part of the home must be the pizza oven, which was built by Dennis Benson,” says Kayla. “We had the pleasure of hosting Dennis and his wife while he crafted the oven; the whole process was special.” She fondly recalls son Joseph working with Dennis and evenings spent sharing food and stories. The tales Dennis shared were “as rich and enduring as the oven”.



OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING Framed by the imposing fig tree, the outdoor dining and pool area was a key inclusion for Peter and Kayla. “Ultimately, our goal was to create a home that felt relaxed and inviting, that reminded of a coastal lifestyle,” says Peter. Pool and spa designed by Smith Architects. Pizza oven, Dennis Benson. **LIVING** The sunken lounge is connected to the outdoors through large, fixed aluminium windows from Bradnams, and ‘Altair’ louvre windows from Breezway Australia.

EXTERIOR The restored Art Deco facade creates a warm welcome for Kayla, Peter and their young family.



THE SOURCE

Create a sense of space and light with a focus on modern minimalism.



Produced by Andrea Healy.

1 'Potter DS' pendant light in DS White (180cm), from \$2875, Anchor Ceramics. 2 'Hat Mono' pendant light in Brick Speckle, \$1120, South Drawn. 3 'Trellis' rug in Natural & White (240x170cm), \$900, Armadillo. 4 'Normandy Twist' occasional chair in Rye and Sky Aluminium, \$1350, GlobeWest. 5 Nobili 'Flag' pull-down sink mixer in Chrome, \$850, Reece. 6 'Megan' dining chair, \$599, Domayne. 7 Cork square side table in Stripe Mint, \$479, Bonnie and Neil. 8 'Amalfi' timber flooring in Tovere, POA, Carpet Court. 9 'Umi' velvet bench in Sage cord, \$859, Life Interiors. 10 Kartell 'Geen-A' floor lamp, \$1575, Space. H&G