

the real deal

Creating a sanctuary that reflects your personal style and life experiences takes time and patience



WORDS RACHEL WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY JADE CANTWELL STYLING AMBER LENETTE



EXTERIOR (opposite) Owner Stefanie and her dog, Lotte, enjoy the home's indoor-outdoor flow. The custom steel-framed arch window and doors are by Skyrange. Frames finished with Porter's Paints Industrial Lustre in Quarry. **LIVING AREA** (this page) Stefanie has a very eclectic style. She bought the Joe grey linen sofa from MCM House and the Verellen beige sofa on eBay. Mark Tuckey 'Oxo' coffee table and Beni Ourain Moroccan rug, both Facebook Marketplace. Antique leather trunk, bought at a flea market in Paris.

cheat sheet

Who lives here Stefanie and Glenn Crawford with their son, Ollie, who's 18, and rescue animals Lotte, a kelpie cross, and Diego, a grey tabby cat.

Style of home A modern Dutch-style barn with subtle wabi-sabi influences.

Location St Kilda in Melbourne, the traditional land of the Kulin Nations.

🕒 The build, including a month-long hiatus due to lockdown restrictions in 2020, took about 11 months.

KITCHEN Many luxe materials were chosen for this area. The cabinetry is finished in Limewash Elm, an Evenex Sincro surface by Elton Group, and the Laminam Calce XL benchtops in Bianco are through Signorino. Moroccan Zellige splashback tiles in Dust from Tiles of Ezra. Sussex 'Scala' pull-out sink mixer in Living Tumbled Brass, Reece. Secret Stone porcelain floor tiles in Mystery White, Signorino. Pure bar stools in Black, Aspen Commercial Interiors.

HALLWAY (opposite, top) At the bottom of the helical staircase is a wooden display cabinet that was bought secondhand and painted Dulux Domino.

DECOR DETAILS (opposite, bottom) All birthday gifts from Stefanie's friends, the teapot, silver tray and candlesticks were sourced from European antique markets. "I'm lucky to have friends with such good taste!" she says.



In an age where social media-led trends reign supreme, meditation teacher Stefanie Crawford's thoughtful approach to interior design stands out from the crowd. Her home reflects her unique personal style and champions objects and ideas gathered over time. An interior designer in a former life, Stefanie has design sensibilities that were shaped by a European childhood and intrepid adult life. Her choice of timeless over transient has given the Crawford family an idiosyncratic home that is so much a reflection of the owner's aesthetic, you couldn't recreate it if you tried.

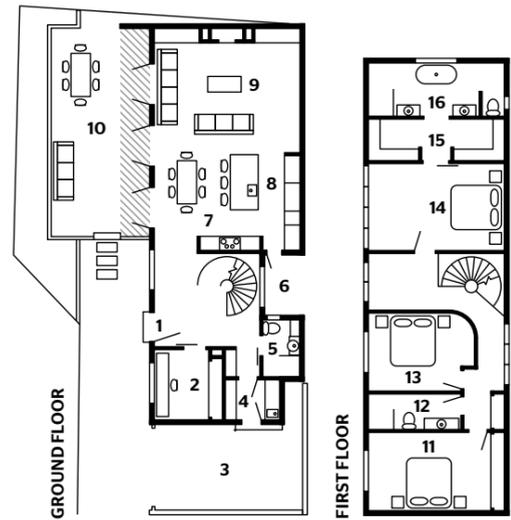
Stefanie, who now also works as a psychosynthesis coach, lives in the St Kilda house with her husband, Glenn, and son, Ollie. "Building my own home from the ground up has always been a personal dream," she says. "Having the freedom to bring my ideas to life without limitations was a true privilege."

The house is built on an irregularly shaped block that's squeezed in behind a row of apartments, a heritage-listed Methodist church, and several conventional cream-brick dwellings, one of which Stefanie and Glenn used to own. Sitting directly behind their old home, the site of their current one is only accessible via a long and narrow laneway.

Despite its obvious drawbacks, the overgrown and unloved site slowly cast its spell on Stefanie, who used to furtively explore it while searching for her cat, who, it would seem, was also drawn to the site. Unphased by the lack of access and large, unruly trees, Stefanie says, "The land held a peculiar charm for me. I felt transported to a different world, far removed from the hustle and bustle." So, when the chance to buy came up, Stefanie pounced, sensing its potential for transformation into something truly special.

Once the land was purchased and the design phase underway, Stefanie approached architect Susi Leeton, whose work she'd long admired. "We met 20 years ago," says Stefanie. "I playfully told her that one day she'd be designing my home." Susie brought Stefanie and Glenn's vision to life while maximising space on the challenging site. "We envisioned a hidden oasis with a distinctly European and eclectic vibe. Susi, who's known for her mastery of curves and helical stairs [which were part of the plan] was the perfect choice for us."





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|---------------|---------------------|
| 1 Entry | 9 Living area |
| 2 Bedroom | 10 Courtyard |
| 3 Carport | 11 Bedroom |
| 4 Laundry | 12 Bathroom |
| 5 Bathroom | 13 Bedroom |
| 6 Courtyard | 14 Main bedroom |
| 7 Dining area | 15 Walk-in wardrobe |
| 8 Kitchen | 16 Ensuite |

Given free creative rein by Glenn, Stefanie drew inspiration from each phase of her colourful life. “Building our family home was a culmination of years of inadvertent research,” she says. “Every experience I encountered has shaped the design, creating a space that incorporates the essence of my journey.” Growing up in The Netherlands, Stefanie travelled the world as a model in her late teens and early twenties, living in Paris and New York. “It was a period that profoundly influenced my passion for interior design,” she says. Inspired by the vibrancy of those global centres of art, she decided to study interior design in Australia and was settled in Melbourne by her late twenties.

“My experiences as a fashion model exposed me to diverse aesthetics. The handmade Zellige tiles in the kitchen, for instance, were inspired by a trip I took to Marrakesh,” she says. “Additionally, spending months in Japan introduced me to the concept of wabi-sabi, influencing my appreciation for imperfection and transience.” Overseas influences are clearly visible in every detail, from the Tuscan-style rendered walls to the old Dutch steel window that illuminates the ensuite.

“Most of our furnishings are secondhand treasures from flea markets in Europe, local auction houses, Facebook Marketplace, Gumtree, and other unique shops,” says Stefanie. “Some of my favourite pieces, like the 17th-century French armoire and early 1800s large golden mirror from a German manor – both in the home office – were items I found online.”

While Stefanie scoured the internet for bargain buys, Glenn, who is general manager at Harnest Constructions (part of the Mazzei Group), took charge of the build. “That ensured a relatively seamless process,” she says, admitting that although the home is well built and just as she imagined, its true success lies in being a sanctuary and workspace where she hosts various meditation courses and runs one-on-one coaching sessions. “Our house is not only a sanctuary for our family, it’s a communal space for a broader community.”

Susi Leeton is at susileeton.com.au and [@susi_leeton_architects](https://www.instagram.com/susi_leeton_architects). Harnest Constructions is at harnest.com.au



MAIN BEDROOM Along one wall is a Louis XVI beige lacquered day bed that Stefanie was lucky to find on Facebook Marketplace. Circa 19th-century French gilded mirror, Leonard Joel Auctions. Assorted cushions, West Elm. **DINING AREA** (opposite, top) Designed by Piero De Martini for Cassina in the 1970s, the La Barca dining table was sourced from Gumtree. The 170 Dining Chair design in American oak is by Takahashi Asako. Moooi ‘Non Random D71’ pendant light, Space Furniture. Westbury Textiles ‘Antique Linen Sheer’ curtains in Ivory, made by Window Workshop. **LIVING AREA** (opposite, bottom) The leather wingback chair and small landscape are from Leonard Joel Auctions. Sideboard, House of Orange. Large artwork by Kathryn Ryan.

“My inspiration draws from a deep passion for finding unique and interesting items – I do not follow trends”

STEFANIE CRAWFORD, OWNER/INTERIOR DESIGNER





good news

Stefanie chose a limewash paint in a pale grey Bauwerk colour called Amsterdam for its subtle patina and eco credentials. Made without solvents or synthetic additives, the product is also anti-bacterial and humidity regulating, resulting in superior indoor air quality delivered with an ultra-light footprint.

BEDROOM A Mandra oak bed from Life Interiors was perfect for this space. Vintage teal and orange Indian kantha, Etsy. European linen sheets in White, West Elm. Terrazzo side table, Facebook Marketplace. Retro lamp, salvaged from Glenn's former office. Photographic art print by Kara Rosenlund.

ENSUITE (opposite) A massive industrial Dutch window from Fossil Vintage "brings beautiful northern light and a unique personality", says Stefanie. Kaskade 'Aveo' stone bath and Sussex 'Scala' tapware in Living Rustic Bronze, Reece. Window finish, Porter's Paints Industrial Lustre in Quarry.





MAIN BEDROOM (top left) This serene space features another artwork by Kathryn Ryan. Antique brass lamp, eBay. Heavyweight rustic linen sheets and duvet cover in Ivory, House of Baltic Linen. Linen lantern in Ivory, Marigold Interiors. Engineered-oak floorboards, Havwoods. **BATHROOM** (above) Ural Bone wall and floor tiles and Code Tesla horizontal tiles in Taupe, both from Integra Surfaces, do the heavy lifting design-wise. French oak wall-hung vanity and concrete basin, both custom. Caroma 'Forma Invisi' WC, Reece. **STUDY** (below) Handpicked furniture pieces include this Empire-style French armoire from Gumtree, an antique gold mirror out of a German manor house from eBay, and a mid-century chair bought on Facebook Marketplace (reupholstered in Lovely Ochre velvet by Warwick). Rug, Leonard Joel Auctions. **GARDEN** (opposite) Crushed marble gravel and olive trees accentuate the European feel. Semi-smooth Tuscan render, painted Half Rubble by Porter's.





ALFRESCO Stefanie in her outdoor oasis with Lotte and Diégo. A recycled factory mirror sourced from Facebook Marketplace elongates the narrow space, while festoon-style lights and a Creswick teak extension table from Jati create an ideal set-up for relaxed entertaining.

lessons learnt

“Building is a creative process that requires patience and flexibility.”

STEFANIE CRAWFORD, HOMEOWNER
Stefanie says she learnt to accept the things she didn't have control over, which in her case was Covid lockdowns and the longer-than-expected town-planning process. She says crystal-clear communication and transparency are essential for a smooth-running project.

GREAT FINDS



1 Sausalito armoire, \$3999, Pottery Barn. **2** Elteart *Girl With A Pearl Earring* framed art print by Johannes Vermeer, \$123.23, Amazon. **3** Allefra diamond-pattern wool rug, from \$1099, Miss Amara. **4** Rembrandt ornate wall mirror, \$279, Temple & Webster. **5** Gareth Ashton 'Byron' freestanding stone bath, \$5319, Harvey Norman. **6** Pull-out kitchen mixer in Antique Brass, \$626, Yabby. **7** Evie table lamp, \$279, Paola & Joy. **8** Wing leather armchair, \$2199, Schots Home Emporium. **9** Tempur 'Odense Hybrid' mattress, \$5099, Domayne. **10** Holland wool throw in Navy & Brown, \$149.99, Adairs. **11** Retreat fabric sofa in Slate, \$2999, Freedom. **12** Vidaxl wooden treasure chests, \$137.07 for set, House of Isabella. **13** Woodstyle coffee table in Light Brown, \$771.68, Hardtofind.

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