

BARDON, QLD

taking shelter

A weatherboard facade shields a mid-century-inspired house designed to protect and nurture its inhabitants

cheat sheet

WHO LIVES HERE Leah and Samuel O'Connor with their two small children and a golden retriever named Napa.

STYLE OF HOME A renovated early 20th-century structure with a subterranean cellar/media room.

LOCATION Inner north-west Brisbane, on the traditional land of the Turrbal and Yuggera people.

TIMELINE Ten months from purchase in September 2022 to completion in late July 2023.

KITCHEN/DINING "Architect Tim Stewart is known for his expertise in creating stunning homes that pay homage to the architectural ethos of the 1950s and 1960s," says Leah. Expansive windows, exposed structural elements, modern storage solutions and a minimalist palette infuse the space with contemporary functionality. Stairs, polished concrete with a terrazzo effect. Freado piccolo oak flooring, Tongue & Groove.



Creating a safe haven for their young family was the guiding light for Leah and Samuel O'Connor, owners of this mid-century marvel in Brisbane's inner north-west. "As the founder of a luxury home-care brand, I've spent a lot of time thinking about the concept of 'home'," says Leah. "My philosophy is this: your home is your space, your refuge, your sanctuary."

When the busy working couple – then with just one child under two – started looking for a long-term family home in 2022, they knew it had to be fuss-free. "Neither my husband [who works as a private equity investor] nor I have a handy bone in our bodies," jokes Leah. "We were previously living in a Queenslander, which was really beautiful, but it needed more love and care than we had the time or skills for."

After searching unsuccessfully for months, the couple met a builder in the early stages of construction on a home they quickly realised was 'the one'. "While we'd been keen to find a property that was already complete," says Leah, "this house, and the team building it, ticked every one of our boxes, so we decided it was worth the wait."

Moving the family in with her mum for 10 months while building was underway, Leah enjoyed the unexpected freedom of being able to choose a bespoke palette and finishes. "Buying at that stage of the build gave us the opportunity to change the interior and exterior finishes to suit our style," she says. "The original scope was a moody and dark aesthetic, so I said to the builder, 'Anywhere that's black, make it white.'"

Inspired by the glamorous Calile Hotel in nearby Fortitude Valley, Leah admits to being a neutral lover through and through. "I've always said my blood runs beige," she muses. "I was inspired by the Calile's neutral



ENTRANCE "While the cottage retains its heritage facade, the structure was completely gutted and rebuilt," says Leah. A custom storage unit offsets VJ panelling in Dulux Natural White and a framed print by Bonnie Gray. **DINING AREA** (opposite, top) Leah beside the stunning table she designed and had made in Italy with the help of the team from Franca Studio. "The table is made from Calacatta Viola marble and can seat 12," she says. "It's a work of art!" **BUTLER'S PANTRY** (opposite, bottom) Polytec Melamine cabinetry in Tasmanian oak makes for a highly functional space. Crystalline-silica-free Adamina benchtops, Caesarstone. Tapware, ABI interiors. Wall-hung artwork by Jai Vasicek.



colour palette in the communal areas, and colourful designs in the suites.” Emulating a similar scheme, Leah chose light colours and low-contrast materials in the living areas, and bolder colours with interesting details in the bedrooms, bathrooms and underground cellar.

More than just a backdrop for family life, the thoughtful, monochromatic interiors she’s created double as an ideal setting for Leah’s company, *Domenica Formulations*, to shoot beautiful images. “I knew I wanted to use the home as a photoshoot location for my brand,” she shares. “With the possibility of extending that opportunity to other brands in the future.”

While Leah relished the chance to experiment with the finishes, fixtures and fittings, she and Samuel were both happy to be spared the headache of conceptualising the layout. Designed by Brisbane architect Tim Stewart, the home came as a ready-made package that fit the young family’s needs to a tee. “Our previous home had bedrooms and living areas spread across two levels, which wasn’t the most practical set-up with young children,” she says. “Moving into this home has been one of those rare moments where reality has surpassed expectations.”

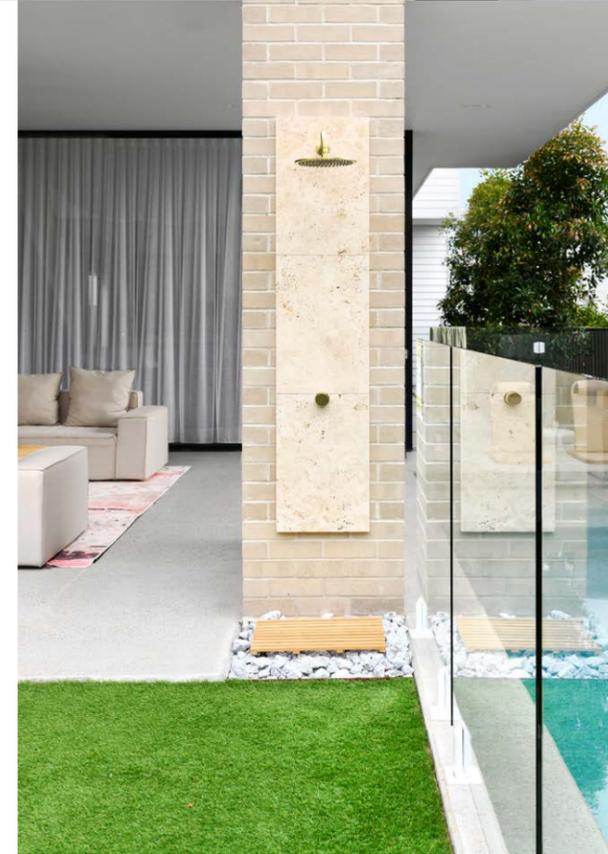
Embarking on the hunt for a family home is rarely streamlined, but for the O’Connors, success lay in maintaining a singular focus. With crystal-clear priorities, every decision along the way became easier to navigate. “[The ideas of] comfort and sanctuary have been at the heart of every decision we’ve made,” says Leah. And it seems for their kids, those decisions have created a tangible sense of love and warmth.

“My daughter often asks to stay home and play, rather than going out,” Leah adds. “I love that this is her favourite place, as much as it is ours.” **10**

See timstewartarchitects.com.au and [@timstewartarchitects](https://www.instagram.com/timstewartarchitects); jmccs.com.au and [@jmccconstructionsolutions](https://www.instagram.com/jmccconstructionsolutions). *Domenica Formulations* is at domenicaformulations.com

POOL AREA (top) “I can be in the kitchen and see out to the pool, which is important with young children,” says Leah. Pool design by Tim Stewart, with a Naked fresh-water pool system. For similar outdoor furniture, try the Alohra Coogee beach chairs at Freddy’s. **LIVING** (opposite) “Our furnishings were influenced by the style of the home,” says Leah. The Nubrik ‘Artisan’ bricks in Aurora seen throughout are from Brickworks. Float sofa in Piccolo, Ellison Studios. Monaco coffee table, Coco Republic. Framed print by Brittany Ferns.





good news

Making the most of life in the Sunshine State, Leah and Samuel chose to install a 10 kWh solar panel system to harness the sun's energy. On average, their panels generate 60 kWh a day in summer, and 40 kWh in winter – enough to offset the energy they draw from the grid and reduce their bills considerably.

CELLAR/MEDIA ROOM (this page, top left and opposite) "Without a doubt, this is our favourite spot in the house," says Leah. Both wine lovers, she and Samuel enjoy hosting friends in the subterranean den. Dulux Lush Hosta panelled walls are complemented by a green and cream Asti Terrazzo benchtop from Anterior XL. Sanctuary white accent chair, Lounge Lovers. Ottoman, Domayne. The dark green sofa is a reupholstered Ikea piece. Throw cushions, Weave Home. Integrated wine fridge, Grand Cru. Rug, Miss Amara. Print over sofa by Slim Aarons. **OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING** (top right) Two outdoor Elio Junior modular sofas from MCM House make for a relaxed setting. Timber coffee table, MCM House. Skyler tray in Bayleaf, Provincial Home Living. Gaia Ivory multicolour rug, Ruggable. **BACKYARD** (above) An outdoor shower right next to the pool creates an easy transition. The shower head is a Sola design in Brushed Brass from ABI Interiors.



“I NAMED THE HOME AMADO, WHICH MEANS ‘LOVED’. THAT IS HOW I WANT OUR FAMILY AND THE PEOPLE WHO COME INTO OUR SPACE TO FEEL”

LEAH O’CONNOR, HOMEOWNER



ENSUITE (this page and opposite, bottom left) A neutral-lover’s paradise, this bathroom is defined by its splashback of Marrakech matt tiles in Biscuit from National Tiles. The terrazzo benchtop is SoftShell and the Carrara marble floor tiles are Wintersun, both from Fibonacci. Delfina light, Enlightened Living. **BEDROOM** (opposite, top left) “I saw the bedrooms as an opportunity for colour and fun,” says Leah. The Petals wallpaper in Cream is by Milton & King. Linen bedhead, McMullin & co. Scalloped lampshade, Soffle. **LAUNDRY** (opposite, top right) Softly partitioning the wash space is a wall of half round dowels in Dulux Natural White. **BATHROOM** (opposite, bottom right) An Artemis mirror in Brass from Life Interiors puts the focus on the vanity. Green Asti terrazzo on benchtop, sourced from Anterior XL.



1 Alva armchair in Byron Oyster with White Frame, \$1799, Ellison Studios. **2** *La Tienda De Coco* limited-edition print, from \$300, Brittany Ferns. **3** Array 137cm DC fan with Light in White, \$399, Beacon Lighting. **4** French flax-linen quilt-cover set in Natural Thick Stripe, \$370, I Love Linen. **5** Artemis mirror, from \$469, Middle of Nowhere. **6** Petals wallpaper in Cream, \$255 per 10m roll, Milton & King. **7** Clay cotton beach towel, \$110, Købn. **8** Sanitising surface spray, \$39, Domenica Formulations. **9** Vellah dining table in Calacatta Viola, \$8800, Casa Blanco. **10** Cable wool rug in Calico (1.7m x 2.4m), \$2200, Armadillo. **11** Statton fabric-covered ottoman in Lily White, \$999, Domayne. **12** Fiore linen-blend chenille cushion in Ochre, \$89.95, Weave Home. **13** Float velvet four-seater sofa in Avalon Piccolo (brown), \$6999, Ellison Studios.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: KATE LINCOLN

LESSONS LEARNT *"Always sample your choices"*

LEAH O'CONNOR, HOMEOWNER

"The greatest joy I experienced during this project was making bold decisions with colours and finishes that bring life and vibrancy to our home. One key lesson I learned is the importance of sampling every element, no matter how confident you feel with online sample cards and colours. In our kids' bathroom, I didn't sample the tile and it ended up being purple rather than the biscuit colour I had envisioned. It was a costly mistake, and now I find myself avoiding that room."



BEDROOM A feature wall of Porter's Paints French Wash in Himalayan Salt with a Papyrus base creates visual texture. The carpet is chunky loop Cortino in Custard Cream from Victoria Carpets. Audrey scallop table, McMullin & co. Artwork by Layla Andrews, through Clo Studios.