

**FACADE** The spruced-up heritage facade gives little hint of the light and modern spaces beyond. Bijmat Sand porch tiles, Earp Bros. **HALL** The light-filled hallway features revitalised original arches and mouldings. Limited-edition print by Annelie Vandendael, Studio Gallery. Conehome Arch pendant, Laal. Sesame engineered-timber floorboards, Made by Storey (throughout).



# BIG HEARTED

Thanks to an inspired renovation, this little cottage in inner Melbourne is brimming with ingenious design features that deliver huge impact.

STORY *Chris Pearson* | STYLING *Mikayla Rose* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Dylan James*



**G**ood things come in small packages, as Stephanie Lombardi, the new owner of this 1870s semi in Melbourne's inner north, has discovered. When she found the freshly renovated cottage on the internet, all the hard work had been done by interior designer Mikayla Rose of Heartly, who had packed the home full of smart design features.

"As soon as I walked in, I could feel the beautiful soul and energy that Mikayla created, its warmth, its light-filled spaces and openness," says Stephanie. "With its practicality and attention to detail, it had a strong sense of serenity and calmness. Every aspect of the makeover felt perfect."

For Mikayla, it was a chance to explore her creativity without any parameters set by clients. "I love working for clients, but wanted a project where I had the design freedom to really make the site work hard to deliver a highly practical and beautiful building," says the designer, who bought the rundown cottage in 2019.

She had been quick to see its potential. Apart from the proverbial good bones, it's located in a peaceful patch of the inner city, with the road closed to through-traffic and a tree-lined nature strip running along the centre. "It must be one of the most beautiful streets in Melbourne," says Mikayla.

On a site of only 100 square metres, the original two-storey cottage had a typical terrace layout consisting of three small bedrooms off a long hallway. But, atypically, it had a laneway to one side. "That right of way allows ▶

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*Mikayla Rose, interior designer*

**DINING** The built-in seating is both a space saver and an irresistible place to linger. Bench seats finished in Laminex PureGrain Oyster Grey. Custom leather cushion in Ascona leather, Pelle Leathers. Custom dining table, Joel Elliott Furniture. Maggie chairs, Jordan. Artwork by Belynda Henry. Code Charlie Tango pendant, Nightworks Studio. Curtains in Mokum Kansa Stonewash, Life By Shades. **KITCHEN** Drawers are neatly concealed behind hinged doors for a crisp finish. Mair vase, Country Road. Evenex veneer joinery in Deep Grain Oak, Elton Group. Perla Argenta marble benchtops and splashback in Yohen Border YBI tiles, Artedomus. Yokato kitchen mixer, Brodware. Appliances, Fisher & Paykel. Hoop Deep downlights, Dusk Down Up wall sconce and 75 Caliber surface can lights, all Est Lighting. Easy VJ 100 ceiling cladding, Easycraft.

**LIVING** A void with a skylight directly above the living area ensures the space is bathed in natural light. Artwork by Kerry Armstrong, Studio Gallery. Wilfred sofa and knot ornament, both Jardan. Cushions, Adairs. Raft stools, Great Dane (discontinued). Bowl, Dinosaur Designs. Artwork in hallway by Kirra Jamison.



light to enter on three sides, a feature most inner-city terraces do not enjoy,” says Mikayla. But a fiddly layout wasted that valuable light. The living room at the end of the hallway was separated from the courtyard by the kitchen and bathroom in a clumsy extension, the former connected to the outside through just one set of french doors. Meanwhile, the surfaces looked tired and dated. Mikayla’s plan? “To reimagine the unique cottage as a serene three-bedroom, 2.5-bathroom home, with the original building linked to a double-storey extension by an internal bridge.” And to honour the building’s heritage in the process.

That awkward addition was demolished and the home extended at the rear to create an open-plan space on the lower level. An original window on the upper floor was cut down, its brick lintel retained, to fashion an entry to the new structure across an internal bridge linking old and new. This bridge also produced a void for a skylight to illuminate the spaces below.

A bedroom was sacrificed – amazingly, the original house had four postage-stamp-sized bedrooms, including one upstairs – to accommodate a shower room, powder room, mud room, laundry and feature shelving. A ladder-and-rail system accesses elevated storage that utilises space at ceiling level. The kitchen features crisp timber joinery concealing integrated appliances, discreet inner drawers and a comprehensive pantry. Meanwhile, built-in seating in the dining area – with handy storage underneath – is dual purpose. “With the steel bifolds open, the dining space is completely connected to the courtyard and the seat becomes both indoor and outdoor,” she says.

The materials palette, kept to a minimum to ensure continuity and “a feeling of calm”, includes oak joinery and flooring, a rendered original brick wall and a V-groove ceiling in the living room. “It is a nod to the original tongue-and-groove ceiling,” says Mikayla. “The open-plan space is beautifully layered, with textured surfaces such as this and the brickwork adding visual interest to pared-back neutrals.”

But there is a little quirk we don’t see, also preserved for posterity. “When we removed the lath and plaster from the old brick walls, we discovered ornate stencilling on the brickwork,” says Mikayla. “We had to cover it to fulfil the design, but it is still there, safely preserved under the new linings.” The makeover also revealed a bricked-in archway, now preserved as part of the rendered wall in the living area. “I love how the original brick external wall is now an internal historic feature of the home,” she says. “There are so many things I love about this place, including the bridge and the view of the sky from the living area below. And the mud room works really hard to deliver the practicality required of modern-day living, including loads of storage in spaces that would normally be underutilised. Then there’s the indoor/outdoor built-in seating, with its sweet little marble plinth and, of course, storage within the bench itself...”

All that storage was a major drawback for Stephanie, who includes it in a long list of her favourite aspects. “But I especially love how the historical facade has been woven into the new elements,” she says. “You can feel the story of the cottage as you move through it.” ▶

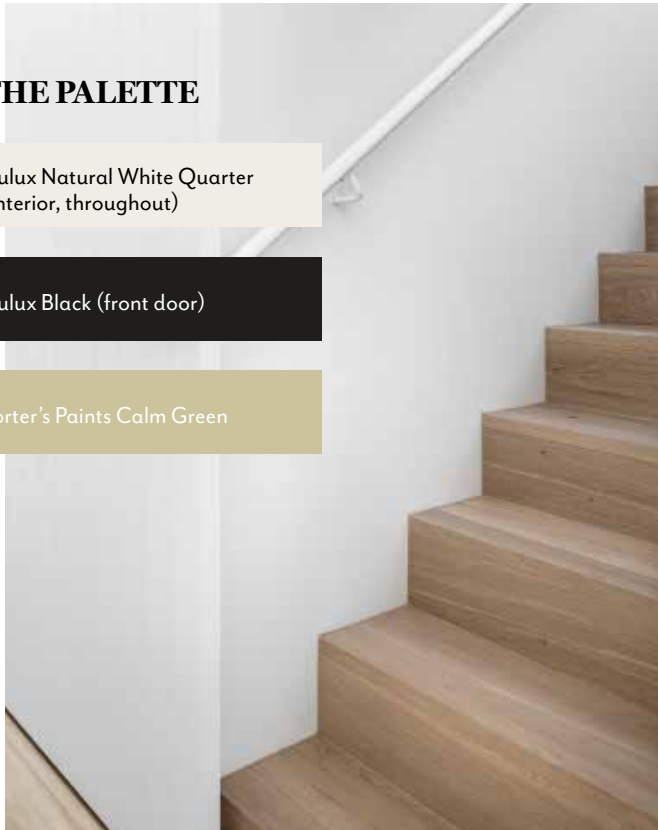
*Heartly, Abbotsford, Victoria; 0447 006 449 or [heartly.com.au](http://heartly.com.au).*

**THE PALETTE**

Dulux Natural White Quarter  
(interior, throughout)

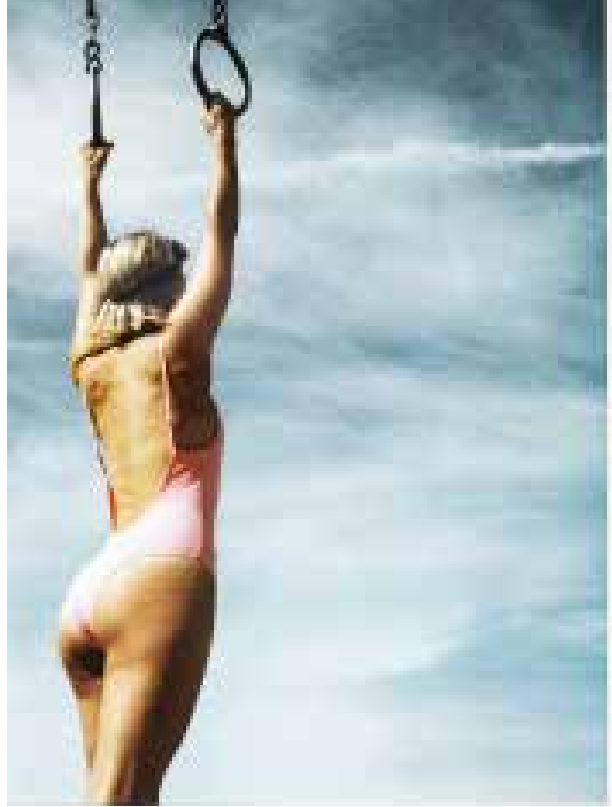
Dulux Black (front door)

Porter's Paints Calm Green



**HALL** *Top left* A sliding door to the laundry is a great space saver in the compact hallway. **LANDING** *Top right* Side table from Bloomingdales. Perla Argento marble tiles, Artedomus. **WALK-IN WARDROBE** *Above right* Shelves in Evenex Deep Grain Oak, Elton Group. Wardrobes in PureGrain Tornado, Laminex. Leather pulls, MadeMeasure. Curtains, Life by Shades. **MAIN ENSUITE** *Above left* Nuances floor tiles and Inax 'Sugie Hanten' tiles, Artedomus. Yokato tapware, Brodware. Custom vanity with Perla Argento benchtop and splashback. **MAIN BEDROOM** Feltex Chatsworth carpet, Godfrey Hirst Carpets. Limited-edition print by Annelie Vandendael, Studio Gallery. Nook bed, Jardan. Muuto 'Around' side table, Living Edge. Swedish Ninja 'Oh My' mini glass sculpture, The Cool Hunter. Dane vase, Country Road. ►

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.



“YOU CAN FEEL THE  
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MOVE THROUGH IT.”

*Stephanie Lombardi, owner*



**EXTERIOR** Charred timber cladding from Eco Timber is the perfect complement to the streamlined rear of the building.



**THIS IS THE LIFE**

Having just moved in, Stephanie has been quick to make her new home her own. "I love having coffee on the bench seat around my dining table as the light streams in," she says. "When the steel doors are open, I simply swing my legs around and the bench seats become an outdoor lounge. And I sit with my back up against the wall, stretched out along the seat!"



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**THE SOURCE**

*Contemporary pieces with a nod to tradition help create calm and comfort.*



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Produced by Saffron Sylvester.

1 Lola James Harper 'The Woody Office of Daddy' candle, \$79, Libertine Parfumerie. 2 Luca occasional chair, \$1995, Coco Republic. 3 Articolo Lighting 'Indi XL' double pendant light, \$7095, Est Lighting. 4 Australian House & Garden 'Newrybar' breakfast cushion, \$59.95, Myer. 5 Lemonade borosilicate glass tumblers, \$99/set of 4, Maison Balzac. 6 Platino Wide Board engineered-oak flooring, from \$113.85/m<sup>2</sup>, Choices Flooring. 7 *When the boat comes in* artwork by Tanith Kershaw, \$5000, Ninbella. 8 Australian House & Garden 'Norco' throw, \$79.95, Myer. 9 Oberon 'Eclipse' coffee table with marble top, \$3105, Globe West. *For Where to Buy, see page 188.* **H&G**