

BRIGHTER DAY

Drawing on her eye for interiors and art, Keren transformed a gloomy Federation property into a sunny and stylish home for five

STORY KATRINA O'BRIEN STYLING STEPHANIE POWELL
PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON WHITBREAD



An open rear extension and lush kitchen garden (opposite) gave Keren and Ash's previously poky abode the fresh and airy feel they craved. In the light-bathed dining space (this page), a much-loved Coco Republic table the couple bought years ago - chosen for its rustic timber top and decorative iron legs - forms a beautiful centrepiece. "I had to draw that table into the plans!" recalls architect Nadine Nakache. Replica Emeco 'US Navy' chairs provide an urban contrast to the country-style piece, which doubles as a craft station for the couple's three daughters. >

KITCHEN (this page & opposite, top) With its streamlined design and relaxed vibe, this kitchen is one every chef would be happy to work in. "It's so functional and breezy," says Keren. "I look out at the kitchen garden, and I can walk out and pick my herbs and vegetables." Integral to the design was the expansive workbench and above-head storage in Dulux Natural White satin-finish polyurethane, bookended by a pantry and fridge. "I have the pantry at one end, so when I'm cooking and the kids or Ash want to come and get something, they don't have to walk past me and get in my way," explains Keren. "I had the same idea for the fridge." A splashback of subway tiles from Teranova adds a traditional note, while a pair of chic enamel pendants from Zaffero (opposite) work with the space's lofty proportions.



WE LOVE

Style underfoot

A floor runner of gorgeous concrete tiles is an inspired touch, acting as both a foil for traffic and a design statement. "It's aesthetic and functional," explains Keren, who selected the Moroccan 'Zaragoza' encaustic tiles, \$120/sqm, Teranova; visit teranova.com.au.

Late on a sunny Sydney afternoon, there are not too many places a visitor would rather be than in this inviting home. As sunlight pours into its welcoming heart through disappearing doors and high windows, warm details begin to emerge. A rustic exposed brick wall is the backdrop to an entrancing blue painting created by Keren, the clever and artistic homeowner, while a lovely rustic wooden baker's bench defines a kitchen that blends a coastal aesthetic with modern chic design. "I love sitting here on one of these kitchen stools; I've got a bird's-eye view of the garden," says Keren, who shares her home with her husband Ash and their three daughters, Amber, 14, Sophie, 11, and four-year-old Ally. "It's light, it's airy, it's an intentionally calm space. It's not always calm, but the intention is there!"

This sense of light and airiness didn't always feature in the expansive Federation property, located by a laneway in a quiet cul-de-sac, just a short walk to the beach. "The front door was in the alley and it was really dingy," recalls Keren, a landscape architect turned interiors consultant. "When I walked in, I thought, 'Oh, yuck'. Then I walked upstairs and thought, 'Okay, I can work with this!'" The proportions of the upstairs rooms and the original detailing had instant appeal, but it was the potential for sunlight and open spaces that really drew in Keren. "The large trees and the sound of the birds gave it a real feeling of privacy and peace," she says.

As soon as the family took ownership, Keren called in architect Nadine Nakache, with whom the couple had worked on their previous home. Nadine and Keren came up with a plan to knock down the rear of the building to create the beautiful open living space with an easy outdoor connection. A new, generously proportioned upper-level parents' retreat was also devised. "But, despite having two downstairs bathrooms, the kids come up every night," says Keren. "We'll have two in the bath and one in the shower or brushing teeth. It's become everyone's retreat." Which is exactly the way this busy mother-of-three likes it.

With its beachy boho vibe and abundance of personal pieces – most notably Keren's own striking art – this home is all about family, and thanks to the clever separation of the girls' bedrooms up front, the living space at the back, the parents' retreat above and a rumpus room downstairs, it suits everyone. "There's enough space, diversity and levels in the house to move around and we're never on top of each other," explains Keren. "This is our peaceful plot in the middle of the busy city and it works. I love coming home – I crave coming home."

LIVING ROOM (right) Exposed bricks from the original bedroom wall provide a textural focal point in the living room, but they were quite the point of contention between Keren and her builders. "The builders wanted us to render and paint it. They said, 'It's too rustic, it's going to look grotty and dirty,'" she recalls. "But I don't like things to look brand new." A comfy couch the family has owned for years is adorned with Loft cushions in blue and taupe hues that echo the two oil-on-linen artworks by Keren, *Blue Whale* and *Desert*. "I didn't think blue was my favourite colour, but I actually love it," muses Keren. Two industrial 'Riva' copper pendants from Zaffero complete the rustic vibe. >



"A love of landscapes, colours and the earth inspires my art" ~ Keren



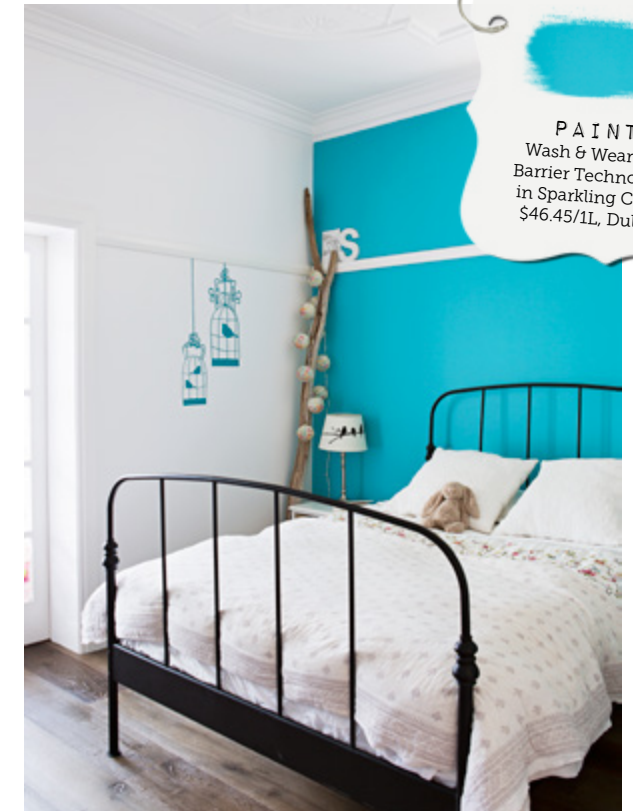


MASTER BEDROOM A stunning landscape by Keren provides calming colour above the neutral Jordan bed, topped with a pretty Sally Campbell throw. Two glass drop pendants from Ici Et Là either side of the bed are an elegant alternative to lamps, freeing up valuable space on the West Elm bedside tables. "I hate bedside lamps; I hate the cords and knocking them over," says Keren. "These lights are beautiful."

BEDLINEN
 'Avignon' French washed linen duvet cover in Indigo, from \$395/single, White Home.



"It's quite a neutral house, so it's nice to break it up a bit" ~ Keren



PAINT
 Wash & Wear 101 Barrier Technology in Sparkling Cove, \$46.45/1L, Dulux.



ENSUITE (top left) Cement tiles from Teranova make this all-white bathroom an instant stunner. "I love the Moroccan influence, the intricate textures and patterns," says Keren. A recessed shelf above the bath keeps toiletries to hand. **SOPHIE'S ROOM (top right & bottom right)** A too-cute birdcage decal from The Wall Sticker Company was a serendipitous colour match to the vibrant wall - "I chose the wall colour with Sophie and when I pulled the decal out of the box, they were exactly the same colour," says Keren. Sophie's treasured trinkets are displayed in an antique printer's tray, salvaged from Keren's aunt's house. **AMBER'S ROOM (bottom left)** "My daughter Amber is obsessed with France so this is her piece de France," says Keren. An antique bed, Pottery Barn lantern, Sally Campbell throw and Eiffel Tower wall sticker (find similar on Etsy) complete the Parisian theme. >

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KITCHEN Designed by Keren and built through Stone Pony, the baker's-style bench is a clever alternative to a more domineering kitchen island. "We didn't want a big solid island that said, 'I'm a kitchen', because it's such an open-plan space," explains Keren. 'Tractor' stools from Freedom look like they were made for the piece.

INSIDE STORY

Who lives here?

Keren, an interiors consultant; her husband Ash, a financial risk consultant; their daughters, Amber, 14, Sophie, 11, and Ally, four; and Jack the labradoodle.

What is the appeal of renovating?

Keren: "I love aesthetics and I always buy things for the home before clothes for myself. I once bought a light before we had even demolished a house! I have a design background – I used to be a landscape architect – and I also paint. I have a passion for design, materials and finishes."

Did it take a while to decide on those tiles in the bathroom and kitchen?

"A long time. I carried about 12 options around in the boot of my car for six months. I'd line them up and take photos of them. It got down to three and I'd keep them nearby so I could see them all the time. Eventually I said, 'Yes, we'll keep this one.' There was a bright blue one but I thought we might get sick of that."

Best bargain?

"I've always loved Belfast sinks but they are two-and-a-half grand, so I went to Ikea and bought a \$300 version of it for the kitchen."

Do the girls take after you in the way they decorate and style their rooms?

"They have their own unique styles, and they certainly like to ask and learn. I try to teach them about not wasting – buying second-hand, recycling, using things we have and not replacing them just for the sake of it."



A gorgeous garden is within easy reach of the kitchen, while a courtyard of recycled bricks makes a lovely sunny sitting spot.

PLANS

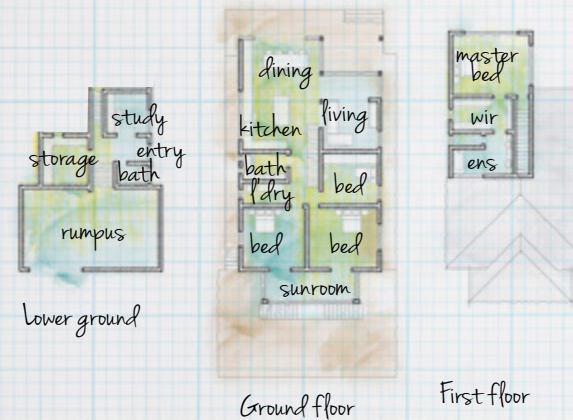


ILLUSTRATION KENZIEDESIGN.COM



Keren's own artistic creations add colour to the home's neutral canvas.