# NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

HAVING SPENT YEARS ADMIRING THE ARCHITECT-DESIGNED HOME LOCATED ACROSS THE ROAD FROM THEM, A YOUNG MELBOURNE COUPLE FOUND THEMSELVES THE PROUD OWNERS OF IT AFTER AN IMPULSIVE AUCTION BUY

WORDS **MEGAN MORTON** STYLING **LUCY FEAGINS** PHOTOGRAPHS **JOHN LAURIE**

**(This page)** Art pieces – such as tribal African sculptures and Andy Warhol's *Jackie III* – reflect the couple's eclectic interests. "We're obsessed with Australian photography," says Rick of Rosemary Laing's *Groundspeed (Red Piazza) #4* **(opposite page, top left)**, which has pride of place above the Knoll sofa. On the fireplace, prints by Nicola Kast sit under a 1950s Serge

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The Wayne Gillespie home in Melbourne's Prahran East, known affectionately as the Squash Court, was secured by Kate Beadle and Nick Condon under unusual circumstances. While living across the road in a double-fronted Victorian house, they had long appreciated the home's angular beauty from a distance. But it still came as a complete surprise to find themselves in the midst of an auction one Saturday morning. Having gone out to walk the dog, they returned home the new owners.

"We didn't really intend to, but couldn't let it pass us by," explains Kate, "there will this incredibly iconic house with incredible bones left falling under the radar." Wayne Gillespie was one of the most prolific residential architects in the inner Eastern Melbourne area during the 1970s to the 1990s, and what made the property so covetable is that is was once Wayne's own residence. For Nick and Kate, experienced renovators who have undertaken seven major projects within 14 years, it was love at first site. "Wayne's homes were characterised by a modern aesthetic, with well-proportioned, light-filled areas, closely integrated with outdoor spaces," says Kate.

A spiral staircase gave the house its 70s signature, while floor-to-ceiling windows framed the beautiful view of the adjacent parkland. Perfect bones, solid foundations and loads of potential – but the property was in desperate need of updating. Fortunately Kate, a photographer turned serial renovator and Nick, a managing director of DDB advertising agency, could see through the home's obvious misgivings.

With their son Oliver on the way, the couple decided to endure some serious short-term extensions rather than stringing out the inevitable with cosmetic enhancements. Both design lovers with a vision for the house, Kate took the role of project manager where Nick left off after the initial redesign. Kate says the successful relationship is based on understanding one another's individual strengths. "Nick has a real talent for building design whereas I'm more at home with interior design and decoration," she says. Do they ever lock horns? "Of course, there is always heated debate, but the outcome is usually better for it in the end!"

With a shared aim to have the new building end sympathetically with

the original structure, they managed to add another 70sqm of space and have the whole rebuild done in about nine months. Kate was on-site daily (with their new son in tow), and she cites it as a busy time but worth the effort. "There are even some shots of baby Oliver sitting on the studwork while I worked with the builder," she says with a laugh.

Kate designed all of the internal spaces, including the kitchen, bathrooms and cabinetry, and implemented a daring dark colour palette. Avoiding an otherwise stark and cold atmosphere, Kate's dark impulses have been extremely successful, largely thanks to the light-flooded rooms they appear up against. "Dark timber veneer, paint, carpet and floorboards and a warm grey stone floor tile achieved a subdued yet inviting look," she says.
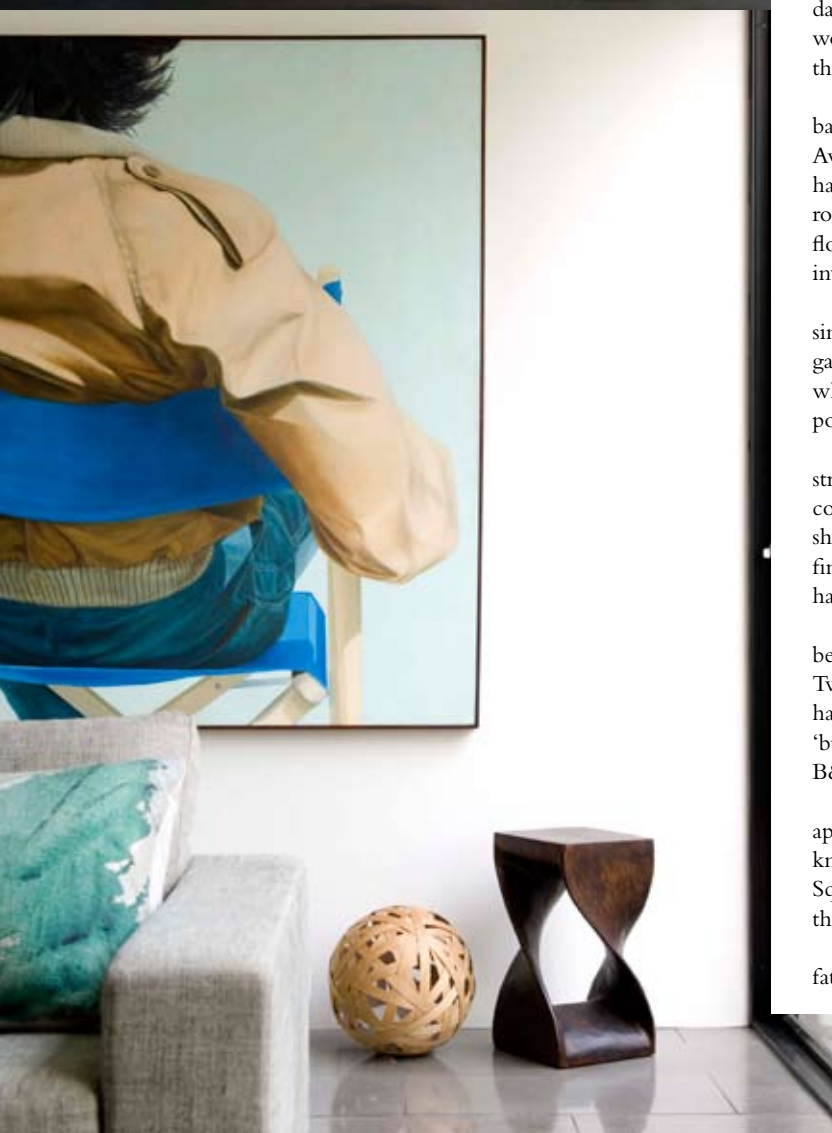
The two courtyards, also designed by the couple, are based on a simple approach. Sawn bluestone paving, chanticleer pear trees, gardenias and star jasmine result in an incredibly elegant area at the rear, while the ornamental front courtyard holds a unique cast-iron furnace pot filled with duckweed.

A general consistency in the design she likes, made decorating fairly straightforward. "It meant that all of our existing furniture complemented the new house and nothing new was needed to buy," she says. This meant all of the budget could be allocated to the built-in finishes and fittings, allowing the couple to splurge without fear of having nothing left for furniture or other decorative appointments.

Existing pieces include a 10-seater dining table from Zuster, Cassina's beautiful Bellini Cab dining chairs, a family sofa by Lounge.net.au and Twist timber stools from Hermon & Hermon. Other classic pieces that have been in all of the couple's homes, and are a case in point for 'buying better and buying once', include iconic pieces by Eames and B&B Italia.

Working with such strong architecture requires delicate interior appointments. So when the homeowners, who have distinctive tastes, know the house intimately, the result can be remarkable. What the Squash Court house proves is that sensitive amendments can bring out the best in the old when in the right hands.

Did they ever expect they would secure the house at the auction that fateful night? "Not at all, but these things have a way of happening with

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# In Detail