cheat sheet

Who lives here Sarah Vidotto, a health educator; her husband Peter Vidotto, CEO of the Sailing Club Leisure Group; and their children: Tilly, 18, Lloyd, 17, and Ruby, 14; plus rescue dogs Ollie, who was adopted in Vietnam, and Max, who came from the Soi Dog Foundation in Phuket.
Style of home A Victorian villa that's been restored and extended.
Location Brighton, Melbourne, on land traditionally owned by the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation.
Construction began in July 2019 and finished in November 2020.

After years living and working in Vietnam and Thailand, the Vidottos moved back to Melbourne with a relaxed Southeast Asian sense of style

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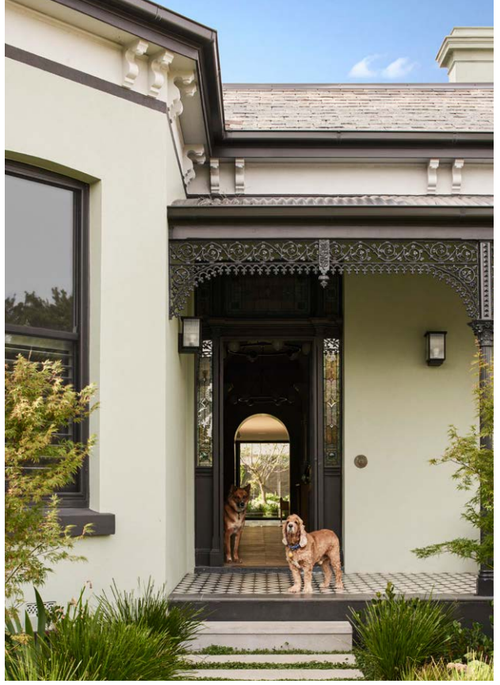
CIRCLE BACK

GARDEN (both pages) Eckersley Garden Architecture created the landscape design. The couple had asked for a round, sunken outdoor lounge area and fire pit after including them in some of Peter's Vietnamese development projects, as well as their house in Phuket. "We found them to be very social; people are just drawn to them," says Peter. "Whenever we have guests for dinner and the fire's going, we invariably end up sitting out there after the meal is finished. And it's a magnet for people taking photographs — everyone wants to get their photo taken there!" Behind the lounge, handmade Kolumba ceramic bricks from Denmark's Petersen Tegl are laid in a horizontal stretcher bond pattern to create a textured wall. "It's subtle yet unique," says Peter. In the shaded eating area are an Ossa concrete table and bench seat with Lyon armchairs, GlobeWest. Cushions, Inform Upholstery + Design.



What do you do when you're renovating a property as a couple and have vastly different interior styles? It's a problem many people face. The answer for Sarah and Peter Vidotto was to find a house that could accommodate both of their tastes – her desire for an older home rich in period detail, and his love of modern, cutting-edge design.

After many years of living in Vietnam – where Peter established the iconic Sailing Club beach bar in Nha Trang in 1994 – and then Phuket, the Vidottos decided they wanted to return to Peter's hometown of Melbourne in 2018 so their three children could finish their schooling in Australia.

For Welsh-born Sarah – who met Peter while backpacking in Vietnam – finding a heritage house was important. "I really wanted a home with some history," she says. "In Asia, I'd always lived in newer properties and, being British, I guess I was hankering to live in something older." They started house hunting from Phuket, narrowing their online search to the bayside suburb of Brighton. "Pete is a beach person and we also wanted to be on a train line to the city so the kids could get around easily," Sarah explains. They had spent time in the area on trips back to Australia, so when they spotted a Victorian villa for sale in a street they were familiar with, they jumped at the chance to buy it, despite not having seen it in real life. "We just asked friends and family to visit and film it for us, so it wasn't really a problem," she says.

The 1880s house also ticked some boxes for Peter, despite his love of modern design. Having built an innovative stone and glass house for the family on a cliff in eastern Phuket – as well as other development projects in Vietnam – he could see there was room at the rear of the property to accommodate a modern extension that reflected his tastes. "I realised that the house having a heritage overlay was going to slow the project down a bit, but otherwise the house solved a lot of problems between

good news

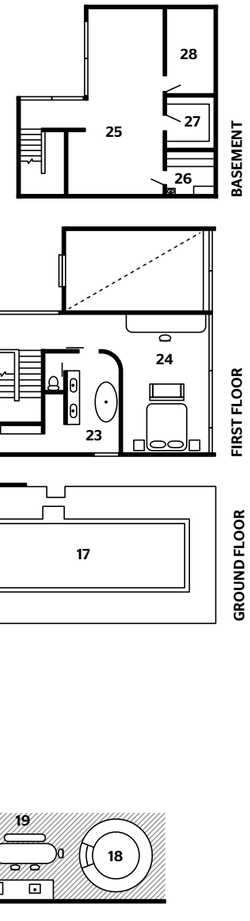
The house's environmental features include solar panels on the roof, an underground rainwater tank in the backyard and double-glazing on all the new windows and glass doors.

MAIN LIVING AREA (above) "In this double-height, open-plan space," says architect Berit Barton, "your eye is immediately cast to the garden, where a hard and soft landscape interacts with the interior through a shared finishes palette of timber and concrete." A Jardan 'Valley' couch introduces more curves and, perhaps more importantly, enough space for the whole family to relax. **EXTERIOR** (opposite) The front of the house was restored to its former glory with a new wrought-iron fence, a more formal garden and new paintwork in Dulux Ramona, a greyish green. "We put a lot of thought into the exterior colour as we didn't want to do white or grey because everyone does that," says Sarah. "We decided on green but, as we were overseas at the time, had to rely on video footage of the seven samples that had been painted on the outside. We just had to go for it and hope we'd got it right. Luckily, we really love the colour."

"In Asia, a lot of kitchens tend to be in separate rooms so I'm really enjoying being in an open-plan space and not missing any of the action" SARAH VIDOTTO, HOMEOWNER

KITCHEN/DINING AREA The room's centrepiece is the oversized marble island bench and its striking curve on the dining side. "We saw the stone as an opportunity to continue the grand curvaceous forms that are found within the original architecture, both inside and outside the home," says Berit. The same natural stone was used as a splashback and teamed with cabinetry in a timber-look veneer. "Ultimately, I was after something that was practical and didn't show fingermarks because I didn't want to be cleaning it constantly," says Sarah. To recreate the indoor/outdoor lifestyle that the family enjoyed in Phuket, she says the dining space was designed with receding doors that completely open up the space. "It's perfect for entertaining because everyone can spill out into the garden. The Christmas after we moved in, we had about 24 people in that area." Dining table and chairs, Jardan. Paperclip pendant light, Anna Charlesworth.

1 Entry
2 Sitting room
3 Media room
4 Bedroom
5 Bedroom
6 Bedroom
7 Ensuite
8 Powder room
9 Bathroom
10 Laundry
11 Sunken garden
12 Kitchen
13 Dining area
14 Living room
15 Guest room
16 Guest ensuite
17 Pool
18 Sunken lounge
19 Outdoor dining
20 Mud room
21 Garage
22 Walk-in robe
23 Main ensuite
24 Main bedroom
25 Gym
26 Sauna
27 Cellar
28 Store



Sarah and I [in terms of what we wanted]; it was the perfect compromise, really," he admits.

To help them create their Australian dream house, the couple engaged Melbourne-based architecture and interior-design practice Pleysier Perkins, following a recommendation from a friend. They wanted to reinstate all the original period detail of the house (such as ceiling roses and the hall's archway) and tackle the dodgy 1970s lean-to extension with its sauna-style wooden panelling. In contrast to the original house, Peter and Sarah hoped the new extension and back-garden landscaping would bring a little bit of Phuket back to Melbourne via a seamless connection between indoors and out.

"The Thai-inspired garden was an integral part of our conversations from the beginning," says Pleysier Perkins' studio director Berit Barton. "Peter and Sarah showed us photos of their home in the hills of Phuket and we were fascinated how it sat in the middle of the jungle with the pool hovering on the edge of a cliff. We didn't have that dramatic landscape and topography, so we needed to create our own Melbourne version."

Now complete, the modern two-storey extension houses a main bedroom on the upper level, with a kitchen, living, dining, mud room and laundry on the ground floor. In the basement is a gym, sauna and cellar. There's also a guest wing, which is accessed via a sunken garden. "Even when you are inside, there's always a visual connection to the garden," says Berit. "The kitchen/meals/living area is literally surrounded by green – the main garden, the sunken garden and [what I call] the morning garden, which also gets sunlight during the day."

A key part of the resort-style backyard is its sunken lounge and fire pit, inspired by a similar design the family had in Phuket. It sits under a curvilinear concrete canopy that sweeps around one side of the garden, providing both protection and architectural interest at once.

Berit and interior designer Georgie Marks – who was then working at Pleysier Perkins but now has her own company – worked closely with Peter and Sarah on the house's design and interior palette. "We love colour and wanted to be brave," says Sarah. "Georgie helped us to come up with a palette that we loved. I particularly like the pink tones in the front sitting room. I knew Pete wouldn't go in there much without a TV to watch sport on, so I thought I might as well make it a very feminine room." (The pink is actually a custom colour by Haymes Paint that Georgie painted on a wall in her house during her own renovation, just so Sarah could see how it looked.)

Peter and Sarah finally moved into the house in November 2020, after a struggle to get back to Australia due to Covid flight caps. "We were bumped off seven flights, so it was pretty stressful," says Sarah. Since then, and perhaps because of their efforts to get home, the family of five (or seven, if you include their beloved rescue dogs) have relished their new life.

"The first year in a new house always feels a bit like Christmas, doesn't it?" says Peter. "The kids are happy, we're all happy." ■

Pleysier Perkins is at pleysierperkins.com.au and @pleysierperkins.
The project's builder was TCON at tcon.com.au

SITTING ROOM (this page and opposite bottom) A front room was on Sarah's house-hunting wishlist and she loves this elegant, calm space. "I wanted something similar to what these rooms were used for back in the Victorian era. It has an open fire and no technology, so it doesn't appeal to all members of the household," she points out. "I love the pairing of the rouge Domo sofa with the Jardan chairs – it's ideal for intimate entertaining, or a Negroni before dinner." Tables, GlobeWest. Bench cushions, Inform Upholstery + Design. Flo floor lamp, Life Interiors. Four-lamp circle pendant, Anna Charlesworth. Ira rug, Loom. **MEDIA ROOM** (opposite top) In comparison to Sarah's room, the room next door is very much Peter's domain. It has a more masculine, moody feel. Blue modular sofa, Jardan. Grey walls, Dulux Dieskau. Ceiling, Dulux Pacific Line. Branchflower pendant, Giffin Design. Artwork by Ben Sheers, through Otomys.

"We stripped the house back to its original state and disovered there were eight layers of wallpaper on the walls, the first of which was hand-painted" PETER VIDOTTO, HOMEOWNER

MAIN BEDROOM (this page and opposite top) Timber battens and Tesrol Likewood 2D+ laminate in Genuine Oak were crafted by SM Creative Kitchens. A beautiful Jardan sofa sits at the foot of the bed. Artworks above bed and near desk by Greg Wood, through Otomys. Small square artwork by Georgie Marks. **MAIN ENSUITE** (opposite bottom) The bathrooms have a darker, monochrome palette with different shades of charcoal tile used throughout. "These rooms have skylights so they are not dark, but the moodier effect is quite striking," says Sarah. **HALLWAY** (opposite centre) The transition from the old part of the house to the new extension is marked by a painted steel archway with a step in White Fantasy stone from Artedomus.

lessons learnt

"I wish we'd used different pavers in the backyard"

PETER VIDOTTO, HOMEOWNER

"I love the look of concrete but, in hindsight, we probably shouldn't have used the concrete pavers in the courtyard. They look great but they're very porous so, even though they are sealed, if anyone drops any food or drink out there, it soaks into the pavers and is very difficult to remove. If we could do it again, I'd probably go for a bluestone tile, which is a lot more durable."

GREAT FINDS

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: CORINA KOCH

CLOCKWISE (from top left) *Morning Dew* drop-shadow framed **print** by Beach Lane Art, $380, Hard To Find. Loom 'ZM Flower' **rug** (233cm x 305cm), Koskela. Kelly upholstered **armchair** in Wildflower Elk Velvet, $3406, Jardan. Montegro honed **marble** in Grey, POA, Artedomus. Boyd **floor lamp** in Black Ace, $2301, Jardan. Eggshell acrylic interior **paint** in Baby Doll, $135 per 4L Porter's Paints. Grove marble **dish** in Forest Green, $49.90, RJ Living. Valley three-seater **sofa** in Luna Oregano, from $8995, Jardan. Luxury velvet **bolster cushion** in Tobacco, $69.95, Aura Home. Bzippy 'Wiggle' **vase** in Tangerine Ice, $1000, Jardan. Kuru **bowl** in Grey, $139, littala. Ossa oval concrete outdoor **dining table** in White, $3925, GlobeWest.