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cheat sheet

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**Who lives here** Interior designer Georgie Marks, with her fiancé Ben Coombs, a lawyer, and their infant son, Miles.

**Style of home** A split-level mid-century beach house with interiors inspired by its coast and bush surroundings.

**Location** Victoria's Mount Martha, on the traditional lands of the Boon Wurrung/Bunurong people.

**🕒** The property was purchased in February 2020 and renovation work began a year later. It continued for nine months.



creative  
CRUSH

A Victorian designer never intended falling for a mid-century flip but being hands-on during the renovation thoroughly swayed her heart

**FACADE** The home's exterior palette includes custom green and soft grey colours as well as Black Pitch, all by Haymes Paint. Georgie celebrated the structure's mid-century spirit with a front garden that includes certain Palm Springs mainstays, namely cacti and light-coloured gravel sourced from Westernport Sand & Soil. Woodlands Landscaping created definition in the outdoor spaces with perfectly placed garden beds and local rocks. Georgie and Ben then did a lot of the softscaping themselves, adding hero plants such as Margaret River grass trees, barrel cacti, San Pedro cacti and agaves.



**A**s a busy interior and building designer working across Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula, Georgie Marks has a sixth sense for a property's potential. When she isn't designing for the clients of her studio, George Marks Design, she flips homes and isn't afraid to jump on the tools. "I love projects," she explains. "My version of a hobby is learning the skill of the built craft."

Her Modernist home in Mount Martha, where she lives with her fiancé, Ben Coombs, and their young son, Miles, was one of those hands-on projects that she never intended to move into.

On New Year's Day in 2020, Georgie wandered past a real-estate agent's window in Mount Martha and spotted a listing for an all-original mid-century shack located minutes from the beach. With its angled roofline, rafter ceilings and three bedrooms, the compact 1950s charmer got her mind racing.

She was living in Melbourne at the time, and Ben, a former Australian national team rower, was based in Canberra, but the duo were keen to invest in property together. By 9am the following morning, they had inspected the home and, by that evening, Georgie had redesigned the property to be a modern home. "After four hours, I had my first 3D model of the house, mostly designed as it reads today."

**ENTRY** (top) Georgie and Ben stained a Victorian-ash door from The Door Store and retained the existing frosted glass panel to keep the mid-century look. The floating shelf is Da Vinci marble, supplied by G-Lux, one of Georgie's favourite things in the build. Cut from one slab, the stone swirls with earthy tones that echo the location's gum trees and other greenery. "There are intense 'moments' like this, where the stone meets the view outdoors and acts as a reference to the green and brown undertones," she says. "It looked busy in slab format, but here it has a calm nature to it. The other colours in the home stem from that."

**"There was a lot of personal time invested in this home, and that's where much of the money was saved"**

GEORGIE MARKS, OWNER/DESIGNER

Describing the renovation as 'gentle', Georgie has reimagined the tired holiday house by working within the existing architectural shell. "I thought there was something really brilliant in the home's structure and what it was conveying," she says. "When we walked in, I was sparkling on the inside." That inner sparkle helped her see through five different kinds of carpet, faded lino floors, and even the ruffled nylon curtains in the original bathroom and kitchen, plus more. "Walking around the house was like walking up and down hills, and there were gaps between junctions the width of my finger. But it had a homey feel and beautiful views."

With its leafy outlook to the sea, the rear deck was a definite drawcard, but further inspection revealed it was pulling the house down. Investment in stabilising the building was "sadly, where a lot of the budget went", says Georgie, who adds that she and Ben were determined not to overcapitalise. "We limited the budget because we thought we were going to quickly pick up another project. We had to make sure every cost was measured against what we thought we could get for the home."

With construction delayed for a year by the pandemic, the Rowler Construction team began work in February 2021, and every surface of the home was either renovated or refinished. In order to keep costs down, Georgie spent her weekends and any



## lessons learnt

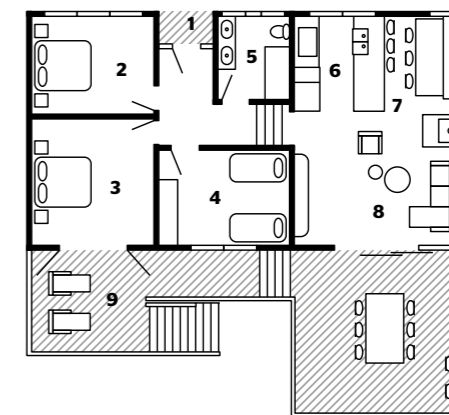
“We had to honour what was there”

GEORGIE MARKS, DESIGNER

“We went through about 14 different greens to get the exterior shade, and our final choice is very close to the original. Coming back to that colour and honouring what was already here was a big realisation. As designers, we often try to turn things upside down, but this home had its own character.”



**LIVING AREA** (both pages) Clean Scandinavian lines and a natural, muted palette hero the view from the sitting area. “It’s like living in a treehouse,” says Georgie. The VJ boards over the built-in cabinet are painted Haymes Eureka, a soothing shade of green. “I repeated the finishes and cabinetry throughout. The floor plan is compact, and doing things on repeat unifies the small spaces.” She designed the joinery using the same custom-stained Riverine timber from Porta and Da Vinci marble from G-Lux as the kitchen. Georgie bought the curtains from Etsy. Jordie sofa from Secret Sofa. LaForma ‘Gamer’ bouclé armchair. Slab coffee tables, Trit House. Magic rug in Ice, The Rug Collection. Marlo engineered timber floor, Australian Select Timbers. Artworks include (from left) a black totem sculpture from La Grolla, a painting by Lorna Ward Napanangka from Jila Arts, a sculpture by Mike Nicholls, a white artwork by Georgie and a Porus vase from Coastal Living. The deck is silvertop ash – a sunbleached look. Sienna wire stools, Chairforce. For similar outdoor table and chairs, try Castlery.



- 1 Entry
- 2 Bedroom
- 3 Main bedroom
- 4 Bedroom
- 5 Bathroom
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Dining area
- 8 Living area
- 9 Deck
- 10 Laundry/WC



**DINING AREA** The dining nook, with its built-in bench seating topped with custom tan cushions by Inform Upholstery, is soaked in light and has a barefoot, casual feel. Georgie and Ben made the dining table using a silvertop-ash board from Bunnings and steel tube legs from Apex. They also fashioned the pendant light shade with a basket from Coastal Drift. Custom cushions, Inform Upholstery. Selby chairs, Canvas+Sasson. Walls painted Dulux Whisper White. Artwork by Clare Dubina. **KITCHEN** (opposite, top) Removing a wall and reorienting the bench has really opened up the space. Key features are the Da Vinci marble benchtop from G-Lux, bleached oak cabinetry from Bella Decor, handmade Zellige tiles from Tiles of Ezra, and the ribbed Riverine beading from Porta. White Elysian kitchen tap, ABL Interiors. Xola pendant light, About Space. Olivia bar stools, GlobeWest. Magni ceramic vessel on bench, Luxury Clay Experiences. **FIREPLACE** (opposite, bottom) An N15 woodburner by Nectre keeps the entire living area toasty. Custom coat hooks, Etsy. Artwork by Georgie.



spare time putting, caulking, sanding, painting and landscaping – whatever the home needed. The savvy creative also trawled through catalogues of trusted suppliers and online retailers to find finishes, fittings and furniture pieces that were high quality and stylish but also affordable.

When the perfect element wasn't available at the right price, Georgie rolled up her sleeves again and got creative. The dining table is a slab of silvertop ash that she and Ben stained and attached to steel tube legs, and many of the artworks are painted by the designer. "It's a hobby I love," she shares. "In this project, I tried to really think about what the home deserved. It didn't need any big, loud moments." The interior palette is soothing, natural and subdued, the perfect complement to the beautiful bush-meets-beach neighbourhood. "A lot of those big, daring aesthetic decisions that I would typically make for clients couldn't be made here because the goal was to potentially sell it."

In August 2021, however, Georgie and Ben officially moved in, having fallen in love with the area and their refreshed Modernist gem. "It was the personal investment of time in the renovation and the fact that I feel really anchored here," says Georgie of her decision. "I love being connected to the water and the green surroundings, and business for my design studio has started to pick up really quickly on the peninsula."

Since the arrival of son Miles in May 2023, the couple have had their sights set on a larger family home. "But we are hoping to hold onto this place and rent it out so others can love it like we do," says Georgie. "It's so calming and easy to exist here." **10**  
 Georgie Marks is at [georgemarksdesign.com](http://georgemarksdesign.com) and [@georgemarksdesign](https://www.instagram.com/georgemarksdesign).  
 Rowler Construction is at [rowlerconstruction.com.au](http://rowlerconstruction.com.au) and [@rowlerconstruction](https://www.instagram.com/rowlerconstruction)



 good news

The home's energy efficiency was improved by updating the thermal properties of the glazing, installing insulation in the walls and floors, and plugging any structural gaps. In addition, the energy source was converted from gas to electric, and an electric vehicle charger was installed. There are plans to install rooftop solar and a battery.



**MAIN BEDROOM** (above) Though compact, this room feels spacious, light and connected to the outdoors, thanks to double doors opening to the newly extended deck. Walls in Dulux Whisper White bounce the light around, and layered bedding from H&M, Etsy and Hale Mercantile Co creates cosiness. For similar lights, try Cult Design or Trit House. On the deck is a cactus in a Sack pot from Kellock Pots & Planters. For similar sun loungers, try GlobeWest.

**BATHROOM** (opposite) Here, the look is mostly monochrome yet highly textural. Handmade Zellige tiles in Snow from Tiles of Ezra contrast with a dark trim painted in Dulux Bull Kelp, an olive hue that also frames the mirrors Georgie designed. Vanity in Riverine fluted timber from Porta, finished in Dulux Whisper White. Da Vinci marble top, G-Lux. For similar sinks and tapware, try ABI Interiors. Orb mirror wall lights, Lighterior. Towel rails, Linear Standard.

**BACKYARD** Before the redesign, only the area outside the living area had decking, but Georgie extended it across the entire back of the house so it now steps down to run along two of the bedrooms and give access to the backyard. A small powder room and laundry were installed under the house. "The place is small, but ideal for compact living," she says. The property also has a fire pit (not shown) from Milkcan and gathering around it is the perfect way for the family to finish a day of beach-going or bushwalking. Surrounding the pit is outdoor seating from Temple & Webster.



GREAT FINDS



**1** Carbo stool, \$903, Satara. **2** Natural stone surface in Lantern Green, POA, G-Lux. **3** Beyla scalloped pendant light shade, \$399, Inartisan. **4** Pikilyi Jukurrpa (Vaughn Springs Dreaming) original artwork by Mary Napangardi Butcher, \$850, Kate Owen Gallery. **5** Form No.269 original framed artwork, \$1700, Clare Dubina. **6** Nest bowl, \$189, Black Blaze. **7** Porus vase in Ivory Tall, \$740, The Foundry. **8** Lulu coffee table, \$799, Domayne. **9** Charred mango-wood sculpture, \$199.95, Temple & Webster. **10** Bree wool rug in Ivory and Grey Marble (230cm x 160cm), \$699, Miss Amara. **11** Ultra Premium low-sheen paint in Eureka, \$95.95 per 4L, Haymes. **12** Coastal Collection 'Marlo' timber flooring, POA, Right Floors. **13** Shannon three-seater and chaise vintage leather sofa, \$5190, Nick Scali. **14** Linen sheet set with pillowcases in Smoke Grey, \$490 for queen, Cultiver. **15** Urban Road bouclé ball cushion, \$69, Life Interiors.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: NONCI NYONI