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# Walking on sunshine

This bold Mornington Peninsula property takes more than its name from a secluded bay in Florida Keys.

By Amy Campbell  
Photographed by  
Armelle Habib



**THIS PAGE** designer and homeowner Kate Walker in the dining area of this Mount Martha home, Baxter **dining table** and Lodge **dining chairs** upholstered in Hermès Dune **fabric** from Boyd Blue; Westwood English Gold **hurricane lamp** (on mantelpiece) from Cromwell; Ralph Lauren Home Cara Sculpted **pendant light** from The Montauk Lighting Co.; Tunstall sisal **rug** from KWD & Co.; **artwork** by Zoe Young. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the backyard pool area, original **bench** in Dulux Cooks Beach **paint**; Tectona 1800 **sun loungers** from Classic With A Twist; custom **patio umbrellas** from Lynch's Window Fashions; pool in Amano Ice Blue Glossy **mosaic tiles** from Klay Tiles and Facades; Miami marble **pavers** from KWD & Co.; **landscape design** by Plume.  
*Details, last pages.*







**THIS PAGE** in the living area, Gypsum marble **coffee table** from Coco Republic; **bowl** (on coffee table) from Boyd Blue; Cire Trudon **candle** from Smoke & Vanilla; Karen Morton porcelain **sculptural rings** from Greenhouse Interiors; giraffe **figurine duo** (on mantelpiece) from Cromwell; **curtains** in James Dunlop Kyoto Snow fabric from Lynch's Window Fashions; Tunstall sisal **rug** and custom silk **rug** from KWD & Co.; Aerin Benit Sculpted **pendant light** from The Montauk Lighting Co.; *Mystery in the Making* **artwork** by Georgie Wilson from Greenhouse Interiors.





**T**here are properties that look straight out of Slim Aarons' iconic *Poolside Gossip* series, and then there's Biscayne. So it's fitting, if not a little coincidental, then that the name of the whitewashed home was inspired by one of the renowned photographer's favourite destinations to shoot: Florida.

Yet ensconced on a quiet street in the sleepy hamlet of Mount Martha on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, Biscayne couldn't be more geographically distant from the Everglades if it tried. The holiday state-of-mind however can be felt in each and every detail.

"It's got that resort feel," says designer and homeowner Kate Walker. "It almost feels like compound living. You come through the private gates, they close behind you, and you really do feel like you're transported someplace else."

Where other buyers found the home's orientation off-putting — built to maximise the view at the rear of the block, the 'back' of the house actually faces the street — Walker saw immense potential.

"It was a challenge. The backs of houses aren't normally as pretty as the front," observes the designer and founder of her eponymous studio, Kate Walker Design. "But I was immediately drawn to the colonial aesthetic; the home had all the hallmarks of that design style, and it became all about articulating those features.

"We closed in the old verandah and extended the front entrance to make it a real focal point, and we looked a lot at connectivity between inside and outside. With the landscape design, it became about creating outdoor rooms, similar to how all of these different moments and experiences can be contained within the grounds of a hotel."

Walker purchased the house with the intention of sharing it with her two teenage children. But then she met her partner, Anthony, and suddenly, Biscayne's occupancy doubled in size — two of Anthony's children also spend time at the home.

"We're a bit of a Brady Bunch," says Walker. "It's been interesting because I didn't design it for all of us. But going from a house of three to six people, what's saved us has been those outdoor spaces." To help illustrate this, she recalls a vignette from the weekend prior. "It was the most beautiful, sunny August day, and two of the kids were in the pool — which is ridiculous! Another was playing on the tennis court, and another was with us, stoking the outdoor fire. It really made me stop and think: these different experiences outside are what connects us to the home."

Inside, it's the kitchen — and the island, specifically — that forms the nucleus of the home. The stately slab of Amazonia marble plays host to a school lunch production line and brekkie on the run in the mornings before it transforms into a homework bench from 4pm. By dinner, meals that are cooked in a palatial Ilve Majestic oven are served and devoured on the island's surface.

Likewise, the bar also tends to change personalities as the day progresses. "The coffee end of the bar gets opened in the morning, and closed as the day goes on. And then come five o'clock, the 'bar' bar gets opened. It's like a little speakeasy, and we might have a drink with friends — Covid allowing," says Walker. "But yes, we move right along!"

This sense of exuberant energy extends throughout the entire home and up the stairs — a custom-made candy-coloured runner infuses this passageway with a sense of whimsy. In the powder room, a flock of pink-and-white herons dance along the walls (the wallpaper is Gucci, but it might as well be an artwork) while in the main ensuite, a bench-like basin stand that doubles as an exquisite piece of furniture subverts the notion of conventional joinery.

But it's the art collection that gives Biscayne its sentimental value. A special commission by Australian artist Craig Parnaby

that hangs in the den depicts Walker and her family splashing around at the beach, while a trio of works by Brooklyn-based artist Wayne Pate, whom the designer has been following for some time, hangs in the entrance foyer.

"When it came to this home, I really wanted to showcase how far we could take the design. And because I was my own client, I really had carte blanche to do that," muses Walker.

Having bumped the entire family in, is she happy with the end result? "I am," she says resolutely. With a laugh, she quickly adds, "it was all well and good until the bill came in."

Would she call Biscayne her dream house? "Honestly, I don't think I can have one," she admits. "I'm forever searching for new projects, and I'm so passionate about finding homes and bringing out their full potential. It works for our family now. If this last year has shown us anything, it's that things can change. But we're living in the moment, and it's perfect for us right now." **VL**

[katewalkerdesign.com.au](http://katewalkerdesign.com.au)

**THIS PAGE** on the upstairs landing, Julie Neill Alberto single-tier chandelier from The Montauk Lighting Co.; Sapphire Blue mirror from Cromwell; custom carpet from KWD & Co.; *The Second Flowering (August's Orchids)* (2019) artwork by Sally Anderson.





**THIS PAGE** in the main ensuite, **tapware** and custom Hawthorn Hill **stand basin** from The English Tapware Company; custom **mirror** from Outlines; Wideboard Biscayne European Oak **flooring** from KWD & Co.; Julie Neill Lucia Medium Tail **wall sconce** and Aerin Benit Wall Washer **wall sconces** (in hallway) from The Montauk Lighting Co. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the kitchen-dining area, custom **bench table** in Amazonia stone from Gladstones Granite & Marble; custom **stools** from KWD & Co. and Sorrento Furniture, upholstered in Vallan **fabric** in Sage from Elliott Clarke; **candelabras** from Lucy Montgomery; glazed green **bowl** and plaster **bowl** from Brownlow Interiors; Farmers Doors weathered oak **joinery** installed by DMA Kitchens; splashback in Zellige ceramic **tiles** in White Matt from National Tiles; Kew **handles** in Acid Wash Brass by Hepburn Hardware; Ilve Majestic **oven**, Qasair **rangehood** and Fhiaba **fridge**, all from Winning Appliances; Mauviel copper **stockpot** from Williams-Sonoma; Kelly Wearstler Bayliss **table lamp** and Cleo **pendant lights** from The Montauk Lighting Co.; *A Single Rose (2020)* **artwork** by John Bokor.



“I was immediately drawn to the colonial aesthetic... and it became all about articulating those features” KATE WALKER





**THIS PAGE** in son Charlie's bedroom, **throw** from Polite Society; **cushions** in Lee Jofa St Tropez Print fabric, enquiries to Elliott Clarke; Jeffery Alan Marks Green Oaks **pendant lamps** from Boyd Blue; Ionian Sea Linen **wallpaper** in Tide from Ralph Lauren Home, enquiries to Designers Guild; **rug** from KWD & Co. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the downstairs powder room, Perrin & Rowe **tapware** and The Water Monopoly Paris **basin on stand** from The English Tapware Company; **vanity** in Cosmopolitan quartzite; Villeroy & Boch Architectura 2.0 **toilet** from Argent Australia; **mirror** from Nicholas & Alistair; Suzanne Kasler Juliette **table lamp**, Ralph Lauren Home Ella Woven Flush Mount **ceiling light** and Kelly Wearstler Melange Pill Form **wall sconce**, all from The Montauk Lighting Co.; Heron print **wallpaper** from Gucci; straight-cut Rosso Verona and Portagallo marble **flooring** from KWD & Co.











**THIS PAGE** in the laundry, Miele washing machine and dryer from Winning Appliances; tapware and Acquello sink from The English Tapware Company; Copacabana honed quartzite splashback from KWD & Co.; Lady '79 lamp by Sarah Nedovic Gaunt; Botticino and Bardaglio tumbled marble cobblestone flooring from KWD & Co.; commissioned artworks by Edward Pope. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the rear terrace, Tectona 1800 sofas and footrests from Classic With a Twist; Stripes cushions from Lucy Montgomery; ceramic vase by Giacomo Alessi from Fenton & Fenton; Ayere Cascais cups and tray from Greenhouse Interiors; gazebo in Dulux White Cloak Half paint. *Details, last pages.*



