

In fine FORMS

This Melbourne family's light-filled townhouse unfurls around a dramatic spiral staircase.

STORY & STYLING JUDY OSTERGAARD
PHOTOGRAPHY DEREK SWALWELL

SIDE COURTYARD / "I wanted the pool to be strongly connected to the house," says owner and architect Martin Friedrich. Laser-cut aluminium panels screen out the wall of a neighbouring home. Pool tiles, Moorabbin Tiles. Bluestone pavers, Apex Stone.

FRONT COURTYARD / Louvres make a style statement at the front and improve privacy at the rear. Glass sliding doors, Alfa Glass & Aluminium. Door handles, Designer Doorware. Landscape design, Jack Merlo Design.

FOR WHERE TO BUY, SEE PAGE 186.

This is the life

"This is a fantastic house to entertain in," says Claire. "We've thrown some great parties here. Martin's 40th birthday was a pool party that saw people still in the pool til the early hours, along with a floating Esky." And everyday living is just as enjoyable. "Martin has thought of everything with his design. He parks his car in the basement garage after work and selects a bottle of wine from the cellar on his way up the stairs to the living area."



Architect Martin Friedrich and his wife and practice manager, Claire, rarely do things by half measures. So when it came to building a home for themselves and their family – which now includes son Ariel, four, and his baby sister, 22-month-old Vivienne – they decided to build two townhouses side by side. The idea was to live in one and sell the other.

After a long search, they found a suitable block with a wide frontage in a bayside Melbourne suburb. The existing house was a 1920s bungalow in poor repair, which made way for the two impeccable contemporary homes that now occupy the site. "The style of the new townhouses is minimalist modern luxury," says Claire. "They are bright and white, with clean lines, palm trees and a tropical-style pool."

Step inside and the eye is immediately drawn to a freestanding spiral staircase, crowned with a circular skylight that floods the interior with natural light. "Martin has always been inspired by the grand stairways and ramps of the 1930s, such as those of the Guggenheim in New York," says Claire. "He wanted the stairway to be the central focus."

The staircase curves up from the basement, which contains a home cinema, gym and storage space, a wine cellar and parking. At ground level, the space opens up to a study and informal living room on one side; on the other is a light-filled kitchen, living and dining area with glass doors that slide back to bring the outdoors in.

"The main living area is where we spend most of our time. It's the heart of the home," says Claire. "We love entertaining, although with two kids we find it's more weekend lunches and early dinners." ▶

INFORMAL LIVING / Family time for Martin, Claire and Ariel. Custom-made sofa, Furniture Inspirations. Zebra Ebony throw, Craft Enterprises. Rug, Meizai. Artworks by Sarah Crowest.
Designer buy: Arne Jacobsen Egg chair, \$9700, Cult.
COURTYARD / With alfresco seating as well as a barbecue and outdoor speakers, the scene is set for entertaining. Table and benches, Myer. **FOR WHERE TO BUY, SEE PAGE 186.**

THE PALETTE

*Dulux
Whisper White*
interior, throughout

*Dulux Deep
Walnut*
bathroom vanity

Add a dash of

*Haymes Paint
Texas Yellow*

Fun & functional

"I love open-plan living where everyone can be doing something different, inside or outside, but be together in the same space," says Claire. Adults and children experience this home in their own ways. For Ariel, the staircase is an excellent place to play with toy cars, while the mirrored kitchen splashback is obviously designed for pulling funny faces during casual meals at the bench. Features such as a home cinema and pool are drawcards for all ages.

FEATURE PLANTS

FRONT COURTYARD
California fan palm
(*Washingtonia
filifera*)
SIDE COURTYARD
Clumping bamboo
(*Bambusa textilis*)
BACKYARD
Portuguese laurel
(*Prunus lusitanica*)

'Friends often sit on the stools at the kitchen bench, chatting away with a glass of wine while we prepare a meal.' Claire Friedrich

DINING / above and opposite The custom-made table has a stained-ash top that ties in with the low-mounted shelving and kitchen bench, both in Pietra Grigio marble from The Marble House. Eames Eiffel chairs, Living Edge. Tall Rajasthani vessels (on shelf), Spice Trade. Fruit bowl, Globe West. Pendant light, About Space. Artworks by Sarah Crowest.
INFORMAL LIVING / The Arne Jacobsen Egg chair from Cult is a modern design icon, but Ariel still prefers the floor for playtime. Artwork by Sarah Crowest.
Designer buy: European-oak floorboards in Otta, \$164/m², Tongue N Groove Flooring. **FOR WHERE TO BUY, SEE PAGE 186.** ►



‘Surprisingly, a round staircase can be more compact than a straight one.’ Claire

STAIRCASE / Ariel directs traffic on the sculptural staircase. Timeless Classic plush-pile carpet in Silver Grey, Tuftmaster.

MAIN ENSUITE / The elegant joinery was designed by Martin and constructed by Touch Wood Cabinetry. Bench-mounted basins, Paco Jaanson. Floor tiles, Signorino Tile Gallery. Vertical strip lights, Home of Lights.

Smart buy: Track wall basin mixers, \$554/each, Caroma.

MAIN BEDROOM / Little Vivienne snuggles in Mum’s arms. Bedhead and valance in macrosuede from BQ Design. Bedside table, Tantra Mirrors. Lamp, MRD Home. Grey throw and Florence Broadhurst print pillowcases, David Jones. **FOR WHERE TO BUY, SEE PAGE 186.**

◀ The kitchen was built for entertaining, too, featuring a large island bench, two ovens and a butler’s pantry. “Friends often sit on the stools at the island bench, chatting away with a glass of wine, while we prepare a meal,” says Claire.

Continuing up the spiral stairs, there are three bedrooms on the top level, each with its own bathroom. The main bedroom suite overlooks the 11m pool at the rear of the property. Built on the northern boundary, the pool required additional piers for structural reasons. Rather than making the pool narrower to fit these in, Martin used the piers to support a long underwater ledge where bathers can sit, talk and listen to music via outdoor speakers.

Since the owners planned this build to make maximum use of the site’s dimensions, privacy and screening had to be carefully considered at every stage. Exterior vertical louvres offer privacy for both occupants and neighbours. A laser-cut aluminium screen has transformed the high side wall of a neighbouring home – “If you can’t hide something, emphasise it instead,” says Martin – and long mirror panels have been installed on the fence at the rear of the courtyard, hiding the view of the house beyond. “An added benefit,” says Martin of the mirror treatment, “is that it also reflects our beautiful new house.” **H&G Martin Friedrich Architects, St Kilda, Victoria; (03) 9380 7709 or www.mf-arch.com.au. Builder: 1186, Brighton, Victoria; matt@1186.com.au.**

