







rchitect 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-monthold Vivienne – they decided to build two townhouses side by side. The idea was to live in one and sell the other.

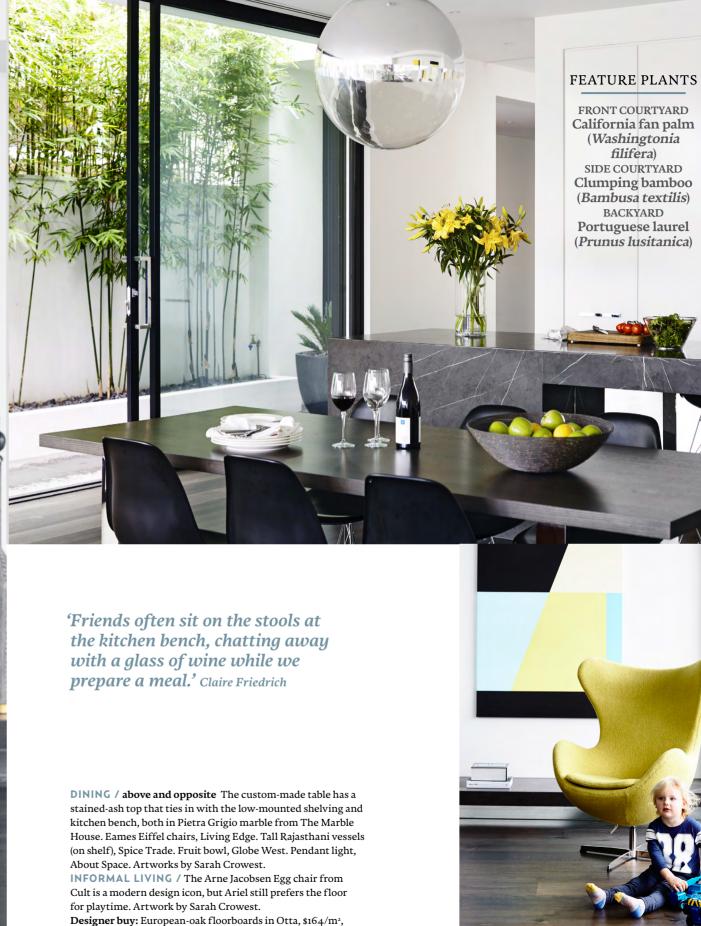
After a long search, they found a suitable block with a wide frontage in a bayside Melbourne suburb. The existing house was a 1920s bungalow in poor repair, which made way for the two impeccable contemporary homes that now occupy the site. "The style of the new townhouses is minimalist modern luxury," 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."





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**

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