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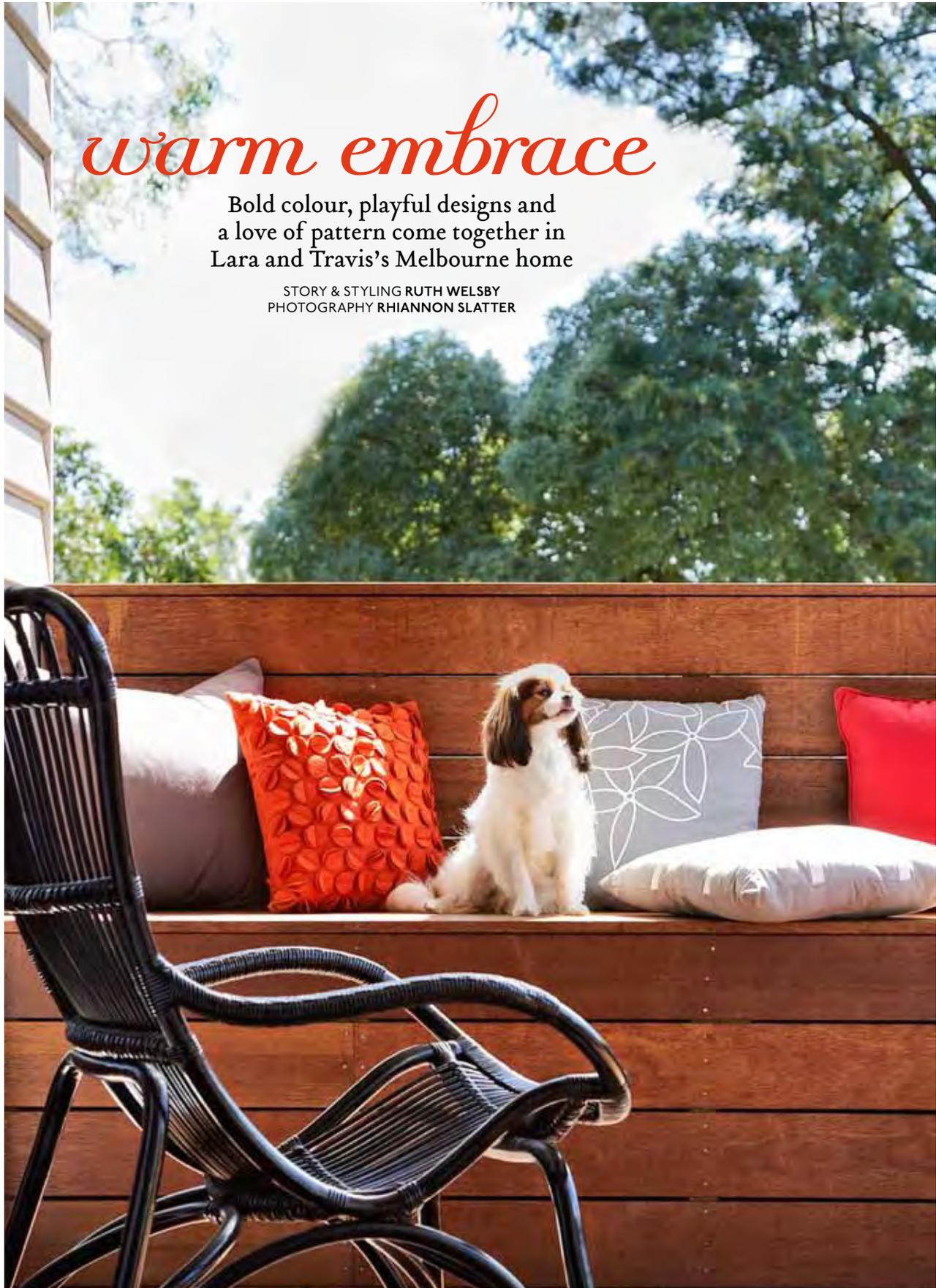
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warm embrace

Bold colour, playful designs and a love of pattern come together in Lara and Travis's Melbourne home

STORY & STYLING RUTH WELSBY
PHOTOGRAPHY RHIANNON SLATTER

DECK Wrapping around the northern and western sides of Lara and Travis's home, the generous wooden terrace leads out from the living area, creating a relaxing outdoor space that the couple can enjoy with their children, Alexander and Grace. Protected by the roof line from the sun's glare, a long, built-in bench offers plenty of room, even for Pyper the Maltier.

LIVING AREA Lara wanted an airy open-plan living area. "We were running out of space and desperately wanted a comfortable family home that had enough room for everyone," she says. Interior designer Carolyn had to fight to get Lara and Travis to agree on its north-facing position. "It didn't make sense to us, but we conceded and are now eternal converts to north-facing rooms," says Lara. A collection of orange and black cushions, sourced from Retail Therapy ID, on a grey-toned Plush sofa creates a cosy seating zone, while a Roy Lichtenstein print adds personality. >



inside story

Who lives here?

Lara, who works in marketing; her husband, Travis, a national manager for an electrical manufacturer; children Alexander, nine, and Grace, seven; and Pyper the Maltalier (Maltese cross King Charles cavalier).

What do you love about your home?

Lara: "The way it unfolds as you walk through it. I like the fact that it's not all revealed as soon as you open the front door – you see snippets of what's to come."

Any decorating influences?

"I love what I call, 'American Hamptons', a style that's full of colour, decoration and texture, yet has structure and order."

What's your favourite feature?

"One of my most loved pieces is the leadlight window in the main bathroom. My mother made it for me from scratch for my birthday and it is the perfect combination of pattern and colour."

Top tip for novice renovators?

"Get the help of a professional and make sure they understand your needs and tastes. Also, learn to trust them; we thought we knew what we wanted but Carolyn would often persuade us to try different things, and she was right."





It was **only** a matter of time before Lara, her husband, Travis, and their two children, Alexander and Grace, outgrew their 1950s weatherboard cottage in Melbourne's east. Luckily, they'd anticipated this outcome, and cleverly purchased their home on a large parcel of land. "We couldn't afford to extend the house at first, but we purposely chose a large site with the future in mind," explains Lara.

What Lara didn't anticipate was that when the time came to renovate, she would have a trusted friend and former colleague to help her. Lara was the director's secretary at an interior design firm when would-be interior designer Carolyn Burns-McCrave applied for work. "She diligently harassed me for a chance to work at the company," recalls Lara. "Her persistence paid off; we became the dearest of friends."

Now running her own interior design company, Retail Therapy ID, Carolyn seized upon the chance to reinvent her friend's tired cottage, turning it into a relaxing four-bedroom abode. Planned and renovated over two stages spanning five years, the single-storey house gained a substantial living space, carved out of the home's sizeable rear garden. "Lara and I share very similar design sensibilities, so I began the project with some handy insider knowledge," explains Carolyn. "She was also very trusting, allowing me to play with her space and push her design boundaries."

Carolyn set to work, adding two bedrooms, a light-filled living area, a serene main bathroom and covered rear deck, which would later be transformed into a generous home office. "Carolyn had great foresight in her designs, allowing room to extend again, if we need more space," says Lara; the study is a case in point. During the second phase, the open-plan kitchen also received a revamp with mirrored cupboards and tactile engineered stone benchtops, and the remaining interiors were reinvigorated in bold colours and patterns. "The house used to feel cold and uninviting, so we warmed it up with layers of pattern and interest," says Lara. "I'm a huge fan of mixing classic elements with contemporary pieces and throwing in unusual twists, like the oversized Moooi floor lamp, which is always a talking point."

Lara's passion for colour is evident throughout her home, from the hallway's moody tones to the sitting room's elegant olive green. In the open-plan living and dining area, Taubmans Kid Skin is used to great effect. "We spend most of our time here, so it was important the dominant colour was easy on the eye and complemented our furniture," she explains.

"Creating our perfect family home has been such a wonderful experience, thanks to Carolyn," says Lara. "We're so grateful for her friendship and expertise. We couldn't have done it without her! It's been exciting, hilarious and tiring all at the same time."

SITTING ROOM One of Lara's favourite spaces, the sitting room has an air of playful elegance and includes her biggest splurge, the Moooi 'Paper' floor lamp from Space. "I see it as an investment piece – well, that's what I told Travis," she says with a laugh. Styles are deftly combined with considered pieces – such as the Plush sofa, custom cushions and ottoman from Retail Therapy ID – that reflect the couple's eclectic taste. >

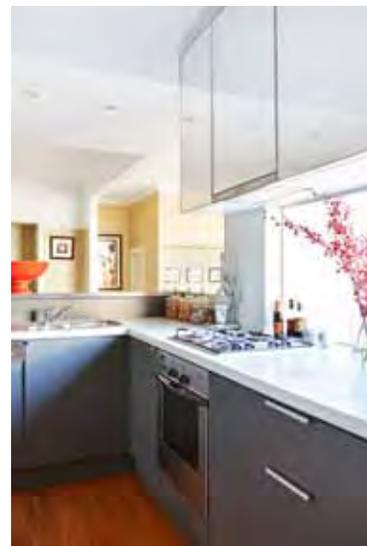


KITCHEN {left} Effortlessly combining style and practicality, the open-plan kitchen looks out over the dining and living areas to the garden outside, so Lara can easily keep her eye on Alexander and Grace. “We introduced a window splashback that enables me to see out to the deck, which is great when the kids are out there,” she says. “It also brings in more natural light, which is always a bonus.” Engineered stone worktops from Granite Transformations and chic mirrored cupboards **{below right}** add a touch of glamour to the family-friendly kitchen.

ENTRANCE {below left} Setting the tone for the rest of the house, the entrance hall is adorned in shimmering Osborne & Little ‘Quinta’ wallpaper from Retail Therapy ID. “The hall was already dark, so I decided to embrace it rather than fight it. Transitional spaces allow a great excuse to try something different and unexpected,” says interior designer Carolyn.

SITTING ROOM {below centre} Upon the mantelpiece sit a couple of gifts from Carolyn to Lara, which she found in New York; the miniature Eames chair is from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, while the artwork was purchased in Soho.

“The window splashback brings in more natural light, which is always a bonus”



DINING AREA Grouping the timber dining table and modern chairs from Freedom atop a sisal rug from Ikea helps define the eating area in the open-plan space. "The dining table is a real hub of activity as the rooms all open out from here," says Lara. Walls in Taubmans Kid Skin bring warmth to the space, accented by crisp white trims. >





MASTER BEDROOM {opposite}

Cocooned in the dark tones of Dulux Raku, the master bedroom exudes sophistication.

"The charcoal walls were a huge leap of faith for us," says Lara. "Carolyn kept telling us it would be wonderful but even as the paint was going on, we weren't sure. But as soon as it was completed, it looked amazing! It transformed the whole room." Embossed silver drawers are teamed with fresh green and white trellis-patterned curtains, while charcoal-toned bedlinen adds to the room's luxe yet inviting feel.

MAIN BATHROOM {right}

Classic elements fuse with contemporary finishes in the spacious family bathroom. Taking centrestage, a beautiful handmade leadlight window {below left} was a gift to Lara from her mother – "it's instrumental in making the room as lovely as it is," says

Lara. Taupe walls, tongue-and-groove panelling and a freestanding clawfoot bath from Recollections showcase charming traditional style. Plenty of storage and double basins, set atop a limestone benchtop with chrome edging from Laminex, were practical inclusions, while two elegant, oversized mirrors complete the glamorous feel.



"I'm a huge fan of mixing classic elements with contemporary pieces"



we love
pops of pattern

Wallpaper can add panache to any scheme, and in Lara's home, it's been used to great effect. Schumacher 'Imperial Trellis' wallpaper from Retail Therapy ID, paired with Dulux Raku paint, lifts the study's style status, while Osborne & Little 'Quinta' wallpaper (on page 22) brings a touch of theatre to the hallway. Use sparingly for maximum impact.

HOME OFFICE The home office is a masterclass in scale, pattern and colour. Underfoot, seagrass carpet adds texture, while the oversized form of the Moooi 'Paper' chandelier from Space adds an element of fun. "The study has been an absolute saviour for us," says Lara. "Not only is it a lovely room to look at but it allows Travis a quiet place to work. Sometimes when the shutters are closed, we don't even realise he's in there!"

style notes



GRACE'S BEDROOM Designers Guild 'Floral Street' wallpaper from Radford Furnishings is pretty in pink.



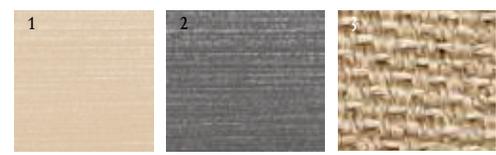
LIVING AREA A glossy 'Bourgie' lamp from Space and a pair of shapely vessels bring shimmer and shine.



GRACE'S BEDROOM

Box storage doubles up as a seat in a clever space-saving solution, while the flower-shaped mirror above from Retail Therapy ID works as a sculptural feature.

"We warmed up the house with layers of pattern and interest"



colours & materials

1 Dining area paint Endure interior paint in Kid Skin, \$63.90/4 litres, Taubmans.

2 Master bedroom and study paint Wash & Wear 101 Advanced paint in Raku, \$40.95/litre, Dulux.

3 Dining area rug try 'Ekgby' rug, \$39.99/80cm x 140cm, Ikea. **Stockists, page 220**
Due to the printing process, colours may vary.

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