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NEW CHAPTER

Author Alice Nelson and her husband Danny saw great potential in this Perth home. Their recent renovation is the latest update in a century-long tale of transformation.

COVER Sarah Phillips | STYLING Jo Campbell | PHOTOGRAPHY Judy Wainy



LIBRARY "My lifelong ambition was having floor-to-ceiling bookshelves and a reading ladder, so it's nice to have achieved this," says Alice. The ladder was made by hand-crafting a wooden Daniel Kuster and has lines from one of Alice's favourite Rilke poems engraved into the rungs. "I like" refers to Jordan's "Cloud Series" photograph by Trevor Mann. **FRONT STEPS** "Having been disappointed by many previous owners - one of whom bricked up the front window - we wanted to restore the home's 1930s facade as best we could." Crepe myrtles are planted on either side of the steel-framed bay window. ▶



Author Alice Nelson used to write in cramped studios and at noisy public libraries, always dreaming of having a library in her own home. It would be a peaceful space, where her favourite books would be to hand and creativity would come easily. Except it didn't quite work out like that. When Alice settled into the writing desk built into the steel-framed bay window of her freshly renovated Perth home, she found herself quite daunted. "I now had such a lovely and beautiful room to write in I thought, 'Wow, the pressure's really on to write a book worthy of this space.'"

She needs't have worried. Most of her novel *The Children's House* (published by Random House) was composed at her new desk and, upon release, the book was lauded as one of 2018's best Australian works of fiction. That Alice has such a beautiful space to work in is largely down to the intuitive understanding and skill architect David Hartve brought to this renovation.

LIBRARY above and opposite Alice at her writing desk, set into a window designed by architect David Hartve and fabricated in Melbourne by Steel Design. "At the entry courtyard, Alice's desk is isolated from the library and projects over the garden, into the trees and sky," says David. Alice's desk chair is a 'Shortline' dining chair with custom finish from Living Edge. Moroccan Berber rug from Loom Rugs. The library floor is original but was stained ebony after the restored parquet boards came up too red. Miniature dachshund Gracie is curled up on the Morris 'Redonda' sofa from Hub Furniture. Elena Lytkin photographs hang on the wall and the space is illuminated by a Serge Mouille 'Composée' floor lamp. 'Shanghai Tip' green side table, Hub Furniture.

"When we met in 2003, David had read everything I'd written and had this real sense of who we were. We found ourselves immediately comfortable with him and how he saw our renovation taking shape," she says. "It was his idea to engrave lines of poetry into the treads of the sliding ladder in our library."

Alice and her psychiatrist husband Danny Shub bought the house in 2011 after admiring its presence and proximity to Cottesloe Beach. They lived in the house for a while to get a sense of it and then set about restoring some of the space and grace the original 1911 home would have had. "Over the years a number of rooms had been cut up into smaller rooms, and there was a bathroom where the library is now," says Alice. "Some very unusual changes had been made."

David came up with a simple floor plan that everyone agreed suited the house: the library to the left of the entry, the main bedroom to the right and a hall down the middle with a second ▶



'Alice and Danny are passionate about sustainability. They wanted the house to have the flexibility to respond to the climate shifts of the seasons.' David Hartve, architect



THE LAYOUT



LIVING AREA A favourite perch for Alice (with Grace) is her Maroon 'Klara' chair from Muji Furniture; long-haired miniature dachshund Tooty rests at her feet. Danny relaxes on one of the Maroon 'Gentry' sofas. "We tried about 100 sofas before making our decision," says Alice, "but in the end the comfort and European styling of this design won out." The space is heated by an Obloca fireplace and the texture is delivered via the ceiling's jarrish living boards. The triangle sculpture is by Brighton Peters and the paper bird sculpture was created by Anna WGS Highfield. Tripkick by Caroline Rasmussenberg. Local hero: Austral 'Baroque' glazed bricks in Charming Black, \$5837/1000, Austral. ▶



THE PALETTE

Scandinavian Metal Glow
(exterior walls)

Forest Whispers
Pinehouse in Black
(floorboards)

Dulux White Duck
quarter strength
(interior walls)



H&G HOUSES



This is the life

Danny and Alice love the coast and enjoy living within easy walking distance of Perth's Cottesloe Beach. "Our neighbourhood is lovely and leafy, with everything we need close by. We don't use the car a lot because we can cycle everywhere," says Alice. The couple also travel frequently so coming home is always a relief. "It's very relaxed here," she says. "This house lends itself to lots of indolence – and a few gin and tonics."

FEATURE TREES & MATERIAL

- Chinese weeping elm
(*Ulmus parvifolia*)
- Ponytail palm
(*Beaucarnea recurvata*)
- Dry stone wall in
Alpine Stone from
EQ Outdoor

COURTYARD Low garden furniture works well in the small but perfectly formed outdoor space. Kettol's Mosa outdoor sofa and chairs and 'Vieques' coffee table, all Mobilia. Porhido split stone pavers, Attico. Steel doors custom made by Steel Design. **KITCHEN** Alice and Danny opted for a solid slab of 'Bianco Antico' granite from Zuccani for their bench. It has a bronzed mirror base. Ebonised overhead cabinetry is 'Metro Recon' veneer in Black Gold from Amerind. Splashback, Academy Tiles. A pantry/laundry is tucked away just off the kitchen. Tim Webber Design 'Wrap' stools, Cult. The lovely Lindsay Adelman 'Terrarium' pendant lights were shipped from New York. Painting by Agneta Ekholm. **DINING** Chairs in a natural finish and customised 'Corbusier' end chairs from Thonet are positioned around a 'Lysina' dining table by Melbourne firm Tjde-Design. "We asked for it to be approachable and therefore more intimate," says Alice. For where to buy, see page 190. **H&G**