

# LOVE ME SLENDER



EXTERIOR \ SANDSTONE TEXTURE RENDER

The challenge: design and build a luxury contemporary family house with expansive indoor and outdoor living and entertainment spaces and a double garage on a slender inner-city block.

When Lisa Li and husband Wade Guo decided to knock down and rebuild in Kew, they not only had an exacting requirement list for their new house but also faced the test of how to create the space, light and amenities they wanted on their 10-metre-wide site.

After much research and consideration the couple settled on Englehart Homes, a custom home designer and builder with an established reputation in Melbourne's inner-eastern luxury-home market.

Several months of planning with Englehart's in-house architect paid off for Li, Guo and their two daughters, who are now enjoying life in their centrally located, modern 43-square house that sits sympathetically within its traditional streetscape. It's near impossible to believe that within this trim and elegant façade are four bedrooms, three bathrooms, a study, voluminous family living, dining and kitchen zone opening to outdoor living, formal living, upper-level sitting room, study, laundry and powder room.

What Li loves most is that their new home is comfortable and has achieved the large open spaces she wanted in spite of the narrow block. All rooms have abundant natural light and the house is designed to optimise the northern orientation of its upper length.

"We kept working on the design until we had achieved the spaces and light we were looking for. The time we spent on planning was so important – we kept going until we had exactly the right plan," she says.

"Our home was custom designed for us – it was

## FEATURES

- Sandstone texture render
- Daniel Robertson brickwork
- Colorbond roofing
- Sawn bluestone pavers
- Double-glazed windows
- High-efficiency integrated heating and cooling
- Jetmaster fireplace with stainless-steel trim and granite hearth and mantel
- Solid American oak floorboards and staircase
- Calacatta marble floor and wall tiles
- Three-metre-high ceilings on ground level
- Emporite kitchen cabinetry
- Solid-surface benchtops
- Miele kitchen appliances
- Caesarstone benchtops in bathrooms
- Frameless-glass shower screens
- Merbau timber decking

important for each of us to have our own space as well as the living and entertaining spaces to be together with family and friends. We have had gatherings of up to 80 people and it doesn't feel crowded.

"We use every room and corner of the house – we didn't want rooms that are only used occasionally. We like to be all together with our family and friends," Li says.

Englehart Homes managing director Ron Englehart says the design proved that anything was achievable on a smaller block.



OUTDOOR LIVING \ BLUESTONE PAVED COURTYARD

"Our clients wanted big-house amenity on a small block and we were able to design and build that for them," he says.

A key design challenge was treatment of the double garage, which takes up seven metres of the block's 10-metre frontage. Englehart's architect resolved this by setting the garage within a deep portal frame and using a series of stepped levels and depths and variation in tone to create interest and activity in the façade, drawing the eye away from what could otherwise have been an overpowering and less attractive element.

Inside the full-height, double-width front door, the generosity of the entrance hall sweeps away any remaining preconceptions about building on a restricted site. Three-metre ceiling heights throughout the ground level further enhance and expand the perception of space. A curved internal wall leads the eye to a central gallery, where a cantilevered American oak stairway is set against a north-facing, double-height window wall that floods light through the centre of the house.

Behind the wall of glass, a serene courtyard provides a peaceful aspect for a central gallery living area and a

**Living large:** Indoor spaces extend to a bluestone paved courtyard. (COURTESY MATTHEW MALLETT.COM)

resort-sized guest suite with en suite bathroom.

A large, north-facing study, laundry and powder room sit between the central gallery and the expansive rear family living, dining and kitchen with walk-in pantry. Near full-width bifold doors connect indoor living to the 20 square metres of covered outdoor living with a bluestone paved rear courtyard, water feature and perimeter plantings beyond.

Plaster wall recesses and ceiling treatments define function within the living zone and a curved bulkhead mirrors the sweeping curve of the solid-surface island bench below, where Li's family and friends love to sit and talk while she whips up culinary feasts. Solid American oak flooring flows through the ground level, while the bedrooms and the upper-level sitting area are carpeted.

Upstairs in the main bedroom suite the couple enjoy a panorama of sky and a leafy urban landscape through a massive west-facing picture window. Their spacious en suite features a double Caesarstone vanity, bath and double-length shower and is finished in marble floor and wall tiling.

A sitting room and the stairwell divide the parents' zone from their daughters' queen-sized bedrooms, which share the family bathroom with a separate powder room between them.

Englehart says that incoming reforms to Victorian residential zones will make building on smaller inner-city sites even more challenging with increases in side setbacks and height restrictions.

"The reforms will make innovative design and thorough planning even more critical and we will do everything we can to help families achieve the living environment they want on their land."

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