



TOGETHER *at home*

WHAT BEGAN AS A PASSION PROJECT TO DESIGN THEIR IDEAL SCANDINAVIAN-STYLE HOME HAS FLOURISHED INTO A THRIVING SIDELINE CAREER FOR ONE DESIGN-SAVVY DUO

Story SUE WHEELER Styling SARAH ELSHAUG Photography ALEX REINDERS



TWO BY DESIGN First-time homeowners Jamie and Az (opposite, from left) honed their creative talents and designed their Nordic dream home from scratch, in Melbourne. While the pair share a passion for Scandinavian interiors, according to Jamie, Az takes more risks. When Az suggested the Muuto 'Under The Bell' pendant light (below) for the dining space, Jamie thought it was too big, but grew to love it. "It emits a beautiful light and helps define the zone," explains Jamie. "And we love that it's made from recycled plastic bottles." Taking centrestage is a leggy Bok oak table from Ethnicraft with a matching bench. "We wanted an earthy, relaxed feeling, so we chose a bench instead of six chairs, which would have made it more formal and 'separate'," says Az. "Incredibly comfortable" Globe West chairs enhance the stylish space. >

When friends visit Az and Jamie's newly built abode in Melbourne's western suburbs, there is no need for the couple to say "make yourselves at home". Their Scandinavian-inspired interiors exude such serenity, people say they just want to put their feet up and relax. "It makes us very happy to think we've created such a welcoming space," says Az, with a smile. "We've always been drawn to this aesthetic and the lifestyle it represents: The raw earthy textures, clean lines, beautiful blonde timber and the sense of unity with nature and the feeling that creates." This is more than a mere nod to Nordic; the duo infused every beautifully styled room with a sense of harmony, or *lagom*, as the Swedes say: not too much, not too little, just right.

While Az and Jamie both have corporate management jobs, they have always nurtured their creative sides. "It's important for us to have that balance in our lives," explains Az, who embarked on a part-time interior design course when the build began. "Jamie is a photographer and I have always had a knack for design." In 2016 they started to document their journey on Instagram for their family and friends and, to their surprise, it gained attention – today they have about 32,000 followers and a creative design studio called Haus Of Cruze. "We put on our creative heads when we get home from work and we do makeovers and fit-outs for clients at weekends," explains Jamie. Their recent wedding gave them another project to juggle.



"I BELIEVE IN SPENDING MONEY ON BIG PIECES AND SWAPPING SMALLER THINGS AS TRENDS CHANGE" ~ AZ

When Az and Jamie were ready to purchase their first home, they soon discovered that building a property in an up-and-coming area was a much more affordable option. "It also gave us more scope with interiors and control over the orientation of the house to maximise the northern light," says Jamie. Eventually they came across the perfect block of land on a small, friendly estate and, in June 2017, Boutique Homes began constructing one of the company's pre-designed houses: a light-filled, three-bedroom, single-storey property. "As we were moving further out it was important to have bedrooms for people to stay," explains Az. "We're not having any kids, so we like to surround ourselves with friends and family, and spending time with them and entertaining is how we love to relax."

To enhance their Scandinavian vision, the pair upgraded most of their fixtures and finishes. "We increased the height of the doorframes to accentuate spaciousness and added skylights to eliminate any dark areas and chose premium finishes in the kitchen and master bathroom," says Jamie. "We entertain a lot and I love cooking, so it's more sociable with one big space. We also have a butler's pantry to hide all the ugly stuff and keep the kitchen clutter-free."

When it came to styling their home, the couple used their talent for combining investment pieces with more affordable items – mixing the likes of Ikea with Ethnicraft and Kmart with Globe West. They even collaborated with Nordik Living to design a striking entertainment unit and sideboard (previous page). "We feel lucky to be able to do what we love creatively, away from our day jobs," reflects Az. "But I think what I'm most proud of is that when we walk into our home we can wholeheartedly say that we did it together."

LOUNGE ROOM A comfortable spot to unwind is high priority for the busy couple – and their toy cavoodle, Bella, who has hijacked the King Living 'Neo' sofa (above). Cushions from Norsu Interiors, a coffee table from Globe West (adorned with striking king proteas from Say It With Flowers) and the 'Magic' rug from The Rug Collection make for a cosy zone, but the biggest consideration is lighting. "We steered away from putting thousands of downlights all over the house, and created pockets of light to create a mood," explains Az, of the 'Wall Step' light by Volker Haug. "This light was a non-negotiable and is probably the star of the show in this area," says Jamie. "It's expensive, which is why we ended up with the Kmart side table," he adds with a laugh.

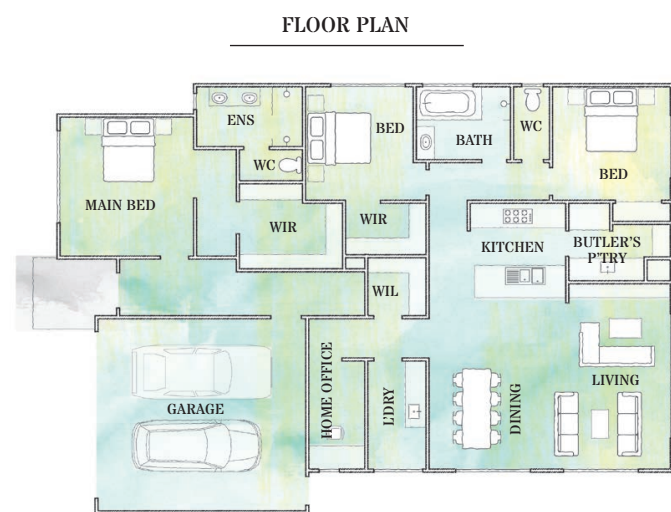


ILLUSTRATION KENZIEDSIGN.COM

KITCHEN In their mission to create a functional, "less-is-more" space, Az and Jamie chose a simple white kitchen, using Wattyl Magic White warmed with timber accents (below). They upgraded the cabinetry to Polytec's timber-effect Ravine range, which has a soft-to-touch feel and a raised profile, bringing textural contrast to the smooth finishes. The couple's Uniqwa 'Tractor' bar stools provide a comfy place to perch and are the perfect foil for edges and lines. "We love their natural earthiness and that they age and change," says Jamie. "They are quality pieces we'll have for a long time." A few premium appliances from Ilve, along with a sprinkling of Nordic-style homewares, such as Norsu's 'Menu' grinders, complete this sociable space. >



WE LOVE...
instant texture
 The Easycraft 'Easy VJ' panels in Jamie and Az's home add texture and style to their walls and the kitchen island, which is painted in Dulux Clay Pipe to contrast the otherwise white interior. Easy to install, the panels are popular for Nordic looks, but they also enhance many styles, including Hamptons and 'coastal'. Available at Bunnings. Visit easycraft.com.au.



“WE LOVE PLANTS; THEY’RE SO EMOTIVE AND ENHANCE A FEELING OR MOOD” ~ JAMIE

ARTWORKS (THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT): ‘LUCKY NUMBER’, OLIVETORIEL.COM (TOP RIGHT): ‘ALFIE THE BABY GORILLA’, ABBEY FUSARELLI (BELOW, LEFT): ‘GIRL INTERRUPTED’, OLIVETORIEL.COM (OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT): LOVEYOURSPACE.COM, SOCIETY6.COM (3), ELEMENTALPRINTS.COM, AU



MAIN BEDROOM

“Because it’s our personal space, we deliberately designed the master bedroom (opposite & above left) to be more masculine, with darker accent colours,” says Az, referencing the tan leather Nathan + Jac cushion, Make And Hound bedside cabinet and Ikea black floor lamp. Evocative artworks above the bed are all characteristics of Scandi interiors and mostly connected to nature. “The broom is a photo of mine, Az drew the face and others are of Scandinavia,” says Jamie. “We like to tell a story with our galleries – this one has personal references and pictures that resonate with the tree, a longifolius ficus, next to our bed.”

GUEST BEDROOM

This tranquil room (left) promises family and friends a dreamy sleep on the ‘Spindle’ bed frame from

Domayne, or a good read propped up by a huddle of Adairs cushions. Beacon Lighting pendants hang above bedside tables from Ikea, while plants and prints perch on ledges to add personality. “We use these Ikea picture ledges a lot as they make it easy to change things up – we get bored easily,” smiles Az. The central female image is from Olive Et Oriel.

STUDY

The workspace (above) celebrates Scandi hallmarks of simplicity, functionality and an abundance of plants. Jamie says, “The decor is intentionally monochromatic as I find it easy to work in.” His study features an Ikea desk, Globe West chair and Benny Planter in White from Middle Of Nowhere. “I chose prints that were a little edgier and modern, too – we got the portrait online from The Print Emporium,” he says. >

KITCHEN

Jamie and Az's island bench is a much-loved social hub; for catching up over coffee or for gathering around with friends as the couple prepares dinner. They chose the modern matt finish of Caesarstone in 'Fresh Concrete' for the island and benchtops, both here and in the butler's pantry. "We also used it in the bathrooms to create harmony and continuity throughout the house," adds Az pictured right, with Jamie and Bella.



Az and Jamie splashed out on large floor-to-ceiling tiles and a hexagonal tile feature wall in their double shower. Tiles from Surfaces by Hynes, all tapware by Caroma.



FLOOR Porcelain timber-look tiles from Surfaces by Hynes.

SCANDI STYLE

The details



QUILT COVER
A stormy-hued quilt cover from Adairs in the main bedroom.



CABINETRY
Polytec's Ravine range comes in a soft texture.

INSIDE STORY

AZ & JAMIE'S HOME

WHO LIVES HERE?

Az and his husband, Jamie, both of whom work in corporate management and also run the design studio Haus Of Cruze (@hausofcruze); along with their toy cavoodle, Bella.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ROOM?

Jamie: "The living area - it's where we entertain our friends and spend time together. I love the connection to the outdoor space... it's light and airy but still feels cosy."

Az: "The master suite - it's like waking up in a luxury retreat every day, and I've never had a bedroom big enough for a king-size bed, ensuite, walk-in robe and reading chair. I love it."

WHAT ARE YOUR TIPS TO BRING MORE LIGHT INTO A HOME?

Az: "To bring light into any dark areas we installed Opal Lite dome skylights. They look good and work really well but are more cost-effective than vaulted skylights."

WHERE DO YOU BUY YOUR GREAT ARTWORKS?

Jamie: "Mainly from websites that sell prints that work with our style: desenio.com.au, oliveetoriel.com, theprintemporium.com.au, foto-factory.com and society6.com."

SOURCE BOOK

BOUTIQUE HOMES, VICTORIA (03) 9674 4500, boutiquehomes.com.au.

"WE LOVED HAVING THE FLEXIBILITY TO MAKE CHANGES" ~ JAMIE



Matt black Caroma taps and the Polytec Ravine cabinetry bring luxe to the ensuite.



Bella poses on a Kmart bench painted white (Ikea table, and Ro glassware set from Kiss With Style).



'Hand' vase from Kiss With Style and ceramic oval tray from Norsu Interiors.

ACTUAL PAINT COLOURS MAY VARY ON APPLICATION