

*Renovator's notebook*  
SECOND CHANCE

A bright-eyed young building designer saw great potential in an unloved worker's cottage.

STORY *Elizabeth Wilson* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Dion Robeson*



**KITCHEN** The spacious 3.76x2.7m kitchen is at the heart of the new open-plan area at the rear of the home. The island – 2.2x0.9m with a 60mm-thick concrete benchtop – easily accommodates four, and is indispensable when Janik entertains. The vinyl-wrap cabinetry in ultra white gloss is the perfect foil for the Andy Glass Insert tiles, inspired by the pop art of Andy Warhol, from Beaumont Tiles. Small appliances are stored in the cupboard at the end of the rear bench.

Artwork by Amok Island. For Where to Buy, see page 87.

*From fibro  
to fabulous*

Some of Janik Dalecki's friends made unkind jibes when he purchased a fibro cottage in a riverside suburb 5km north-east of Perth's CBD. "They thought I was crazy and joked it was a bowl-over house," says Janik, a first-home buyer.

True, the 1940s two-bedroom worker's cottage had seen better days: two poorly executed additions (one in the 1970s, another in the '90s) had ruined its character, and there were visible signs of deterioration everywhere. But it was exactly the kind of project this 20-something renovator had been looking for.

"I'd been hunting for an older home I could restore and rework," says Janik, who runs his own building-design company specialising in the adaptive reuse of existing dwellings. "I knew the back of the house could be opened up to the north-facing backyard to create a gorgeous open-plan living space with lots of light and sun."

Pre-renovation, the bathroom was accessed via the kitchen, and the separate living and dining areas had no connection to the garden. Janik totally reconfigured the rooms, moving the kitchen to the rear and building a new open-plan living/dining zone that flows onto a deck. The facade has been transformed too: asbestos cladding has been replaced with composite weatherboard, and aluminium windows swapped for timber fittings. From the street, the house now exudes character, and the interiors sing with a contemporary flow and feel.

"I put a lot of thought into creating the best-functioning layout, including all the modern luxuries while making the most of every square centimetre," says Janik. "I love every centimetre of it." ▶

#### AT A GLANCE

**Who lives here** Janik Dalecki, building designer.

**Renovation duration** Two-and-a-half years.

**Designer** Janik Dalecki, Dalecki Design, Inglewood, WA; [www.daleckidesign.com.au](http://www.daleckidesign.com.au).

**Building work** By Janik and his dad, John Dalecki, owner of construction business DMS, as well as friends and tradies.

**Size pre-renovation** 90m<sup>2</sup>.

**Size post-renovation** 110m<sup>2</sup>.





A B  
D C



**A Dining** Janik knocked down two old lean-tos at the rear to build the new living/dining zone. His beloved bicycle doubles as an eye-catching feature.

“There isn’t much storage space, so I had to be a little inventive,” he says.

**B Living** Janik designed the bookshelf/media unit to be the focal point in the room. It was the last item of joinery to be installed here and filling it with treasures was “an exciting moment”. New jarrah floorboards were installed to match the existing flooring.

**C Facade** Taking cues from nearby homes, he replaced the fibro cladding with composite weatherboard and the oversized aluminium windows with timber-framed ones featuring glazing bars similar to others in the area. The paved driveway was replaced with washed aggregate. A row of ornamental plum trees lines the path to the front door.

**D Main bedroom** Formerly the living room, the large main bedroom comes complete with character windows, an ensuite and a restored fireplace with ethanol burner.

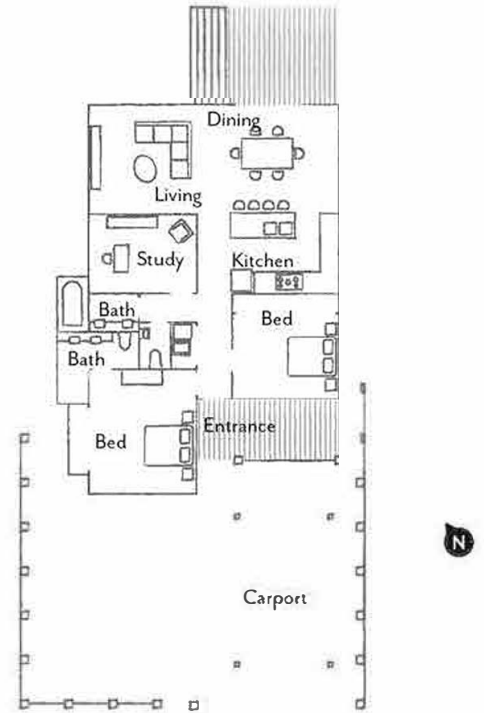
*Below* Janik with his trusty beagle, Mister.



## BEFORE



## AFTER



### Janik’s tips for renovators

- ✦ Unforeseen issues and costs are inevitable. Mentally prepare for them and make sure there is a contingency fund within the budget to cover surprises.
- ✦ Save money by sourcing recycled materials or reuse materials from your own project. The bricks for my front wall are leftovers from other people’s projects and all they cost me was a few cartons of beer. The old driveway pavers were still in good condition so I laid them down the side of the house.
- ✦ Spending a little extra on the more prominent elements can make a huge visual difference, which will enhance your overall project and add resale value.
- ✦ Tackling the painting yourself can deliver huge savings.

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