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**GRAND  
DESIGNER**

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THE  
STYLE



**“I designed [my home] so I could show my clients what you can do if you have a sense of boldness.”**

KATE CHALLIS

Interior designer



SHARYN CAIRNS

## Immersed in a picture of creativity

Melbourne-based interior designer Kate Challis is a master of melding art and design, drawing on her background in art history to create spaces rich in colour and texture. *By* **ELICIA MURRAY**

**Q: You come from a family of artists and intellectuals. Tell us more.**

**A:** My grandfather, Bernard Smith, was a well-known art historian. I spent my childhood in Germany. My mother was always taking me to galleries and museums. She remembers me being captivated by *The Birth of Venus* at the Uffizi in Florence.

**Q: And you also studied art at university?**

**A:** I studied art history for quite a long time. For my PhD, I concentrated on the early 16th century art. I was really interested in these hand-painted books made for kings and queens. The colours were so vibrant and luminescent. I loved learning from the masters about how artists use colour. I'm constantly referring back to artworks.

**Q: How did this transform into your interior design practice, Kate Challis Interiors?**

**A:** As a child, I was always obsessively rearranging and redecorating my own room. When I was pregnant with my son, who is now 10, I started writing an interior design blog. I posted a couple of photographs of my own house, which were picked up by design blogs and print media. People started contacting me, saying they liked my style and wanting me to design their homes. I started out helping family and friends. They loved what I did and it snowballed from there.

**Q: Without formal training in interior design, how do you make the technical elements come together?**

**A:** I collaborate with interior architects,

architects, engineers and trades. I've got an innate sense of space and flow. Great design is really about pragmatism as well as aesthetics.

**Q: What was your vision for your own home?**

**A:** I designed it so I could show my clients what you can do if you have a sense of boldness. But I also have a child, so it had to function practically as a family home. The front room is really immersive. It feels like you're in the landscape. We commissioned artist Valerie Sparks to customise her wallpaper so it wraps around the walls. Her work is inspired by traditional 18th-century wallpapers that used to be hung in homes in Europe. It's a modern take on that style.

**Q: Fans of minimalism praise the pared-back look for invoking a sense of calm. Your aesthetic is anything but minimalist. How does it feel to live in that sort of space?**

**A:** I would say it's more calming than just a white cube. It's like being in nature. There's a lot going on in nature but it is very calming. 🌿

[katechallis.com](http://katechallis.com)

Clients began asking Kate Challis to design their homes after seeing photographs of her own house on design blogs and in the media.