

IN

HER



Words and Photographs Ben Kelly

# SPACE

How does the space around you affect your success, happiness and productivity? Meet the South Australian women whose homes and workplaces play key roles in their lives, while also reflecting their own values and personalities.



## Sophia Leopardi

*Director — Williams Burton Leopardi*

Next month, architecture firm Williams Burton Leopardi marks 10 years of working from the century-old Darling Building on Franklin Street. Recognised for its elegant classical detailing typical of early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial architecture, the building carries a strong sense of legacy. “This building does quite a bit of heavy lifting to get people into a creative headspace – both us and our clients,” says director Sophia Leopardi. Sophia knows a thing or two about how spaces can influence one’s creativity and inspiration, having designed spaces for clients for two decades. “I’ve learned that there are connected themes we’re all seeking out of our spaces,” she says. “And in terms of coming to work, a space that is inspiring and attuned to your work is very powerful.” Today, the firm’s staff is more than 80 per cent women. “That has not come about because of any conscious decision, but who has been the right fit for our team,” Sophia says. The opportunity to work within such an inspiring building is something Sophia doesn’t take for granted. “This space embodies a beautiful, collected and evolving story of design which gets our team and clients into a fertile state of mind. There are elements of this building that I’m trying to bring home with me, too.”



## Katherine Fyffe

Executive director — State Theatre Company South Australia



When Katherine Fyffe and her family moved from Melbourne back to Adelaide at the end of 2025, the first thing they did was make room for their vinyl records. “The house needed to feel colourful and lived-in,” says Katherine. “This area is where family time happens. It’s a busy home with our two children each having various interests and commitments.” Katherine and her partner – actor and musician Cameron Goodall – happily display the family’s eclectic mix of records. “John Farnham’s Greatest Hits and Bruce Springsteen are mine. The different personalities of the members of our family are on show,” she says. Then there’s a blue Fender Telecaster that previously belonged to Cameron’s late brother Tristan, the pair having played together in hit South Australian group The Audreys. Rounding out the display is a pair of boots from Disney’s *The Lion King*, in which Cameron starred as Zazu. “The adventures of my new job are possible for me because I have someone who’s supportive of the whole family and as a partner,” says Katherine.

**Katya Komarova**

*Fashion designer*

The stars have aligned for fashion designer Katya Komarova in 2026. She and her partner Travis Clapp recently completed a renovation and extension of their Adelaide Hills cottage, just in time for Katya's first pregnancy. "It's been a long seven-year IVF journey for us and we're very excited," Katya says. "We're still in shock. Having this bigger space will be important." Katya has also learnt that the space around her directly influences her creativity. The home's uncluttered walls are adorned with a few of Katya's designs, such as a corset that gained attention during New York Fashion Week, and Travis's paintings. "We are both creative people," she says. "The space helps us to do the things that we love." For this *SALIFE* photo shoot, Katya wears her grandmother's wooden beads – a nostalgic tie to tradition. "I wear them often as a nice memory and link back to my Russian heritage; they're so timeless."







## Charlotte Davey

*Creative director — Say Cheese Social*

For Charlotte Davey, what started as a side-hustle helping her brothers with their businesses' social media has evolved into a full-blown marketing agency. "For five years, I ran the business from home, out of my bedroom," Charlotte says. "Then I hired my first staff member and realised I needed a proper space." Today, Say Cheese Social operates from a creative studio in Parkside where Charlotte works alongside her team of four. Now as a working mum, Charlotte says the studio gives her clear delineation between work and family time. "At home, I'm working in-between feeds or naps, or taking my little one to shoots and meetings, all of which can be challenging. Three days after I had my son (Sonny), I had my laptop out in hospital, working on a campaign. I rarely switch off, so a space for work allows me to give 100 per cent of my focus," she says. The studio's bright atmosphere fosters a collaborative workplace culture. "It's my fifth year in the studio and I love coming to work here with my team. It's such a fun, inspiring environment."





### Michelle Nikou

*Visual artist and sculptor — 2024 Guildhouse Fellow*

Michelle Nikou's artistic practice involves transforming everyday domestic objects into sculptures that convey humour, poignancy and intrigue. But in her own home, objects and spaces are functional, rather than curated. "Currently, it's lived-in and serves a function," says Michelle. Working towards an exhibition at the Art Gallery of South Australia later this year, Michelle says balancing art and home life can be a challenge. "My kids come first; I am thinking about a swimming carnival next week or just making sure there's food in the house. Raising a family and being a contemporary artist are not entirely compatible, but we make it work," she says. But one thing Michelle does have in common with her home is a sense of the unconventional. Built in 1959 by architect Andrew Benko, the mid-century home features terraced gardens and split-level living spaces. The family has renovated the home and gardens, bringing its unique design into a new century. "It is a fascinating house with dynamic spaces," says Michelle.

## Pip Williams

*Author*

Bestselling author Pip Williams feels most at home when she is immersed in books. They populate every nook of her renovated Adelaide Hills cottage and its hand-crafted strawbale walls. “For me, books are like art on a wall; they’re colourful, expressive and draw your eye,” Pip says. “You peer into a bookshelf to see what books someone has.” Between the many spines are mementos including a century-old book press gifted by the State Library, while dozens of writers’ festival lanyards hang from a shelf. From her debut *The Dictionary of Lost Words* to second book *The Bookbinder of Jericho* (which investigates the invisible and fascinating history of female bookbinders) it seems that at least a small part of Pip’s success can be attributed to the environment around her. Currently working on her third novel, Pip takes great inspiration from her home’s leafy outlook. “It’s a place that encourages contemplation,” she says. “Through our windows we see only trees, the vegetable garden and the chooks, often kangaroos and even the odd koala.”

