

tree change

In a quiet pocket of Sydney's north, Tessa and Matt transformed their 1970s home into a blissful retreat

STORY CATHERINE McCORMACK
STYLING BREE OLIVER
PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON WHITBREAD



"I like an understated approach," says homeowner Tessa of her serene home's minimalist decorating style. "I like things to be different but in a subtle way." The footprint of the building was extended slightly to enclose the entryway {opposite}, with oversized windows making the most of the leafy outlook. "Externally, we wanted the house to blend in with the trees and natural environment," explains Tessa. The only splash of colour comes courtesy of the front door. Painted in an eye-popping shade of Resene's Atlantis, it was inspired by the colour of the leaves on the Gymea lillies that grow nearby. >

ECO IDEA

Part of the sweeping staircase was made using recycled timber from the home's original roof beams.



AN EVERGREEN CANOPY of eucalypts may not be an iconic view by Sydney standards, but it's an outlook that proved more than enticing for homeowners Tessa and Matt. The couple, who relocated to the city's north from Melbourne seven years ago, initially held concerns about uprooting their three growing children – Ella, now 20, Becci, 17, and Harry, 15 – yet this two-storey, four-bedroom home among the gum trees soon swayed them. “It was just so beautiful and quiet,” recalls Tessa. “It was nothing like how we'd imagined it would be living in Sydney. We couldn't believe we could find such a peaceful spot that was so close to cafes, shops, beaches and the city.”

While the location was perfect, the layout of the original north-facing abode wasn't conducive to family life. Designed and built in the 1970s, it featured a floorplan with segregated living spaces, a roofline that partially obstructed the view and uncomfortably low ceilings. “We wanted something open-plan with a really good sense of flow; where you could sit in the living area and have privacy while enjoying the view and the breezes,” explains Tessa.

Seasoned renovators Tessa and Matt chose to live in the house for a year before engaging the services of architect Caroline Pidcock, who is renowned for her environmentally sensitive design approach. “We wanted to retain the original feeling of the house and have something that was in keeping with the area,” says Tessa. “Caroline really got that early on.” >



LIVING & DINING Cool shades of blue and indigo feature in the open-plan living space. A royal blue couch the couple have owned “forever” is adorned with colourful purple ikat cushions – try Table Tonic for similar. The louvres and expansive, north-facing bifold doors – all set in Forestry Stewardship Certified (FSC) hardwood surrounds – frame the view

ARTWORK PRO HART

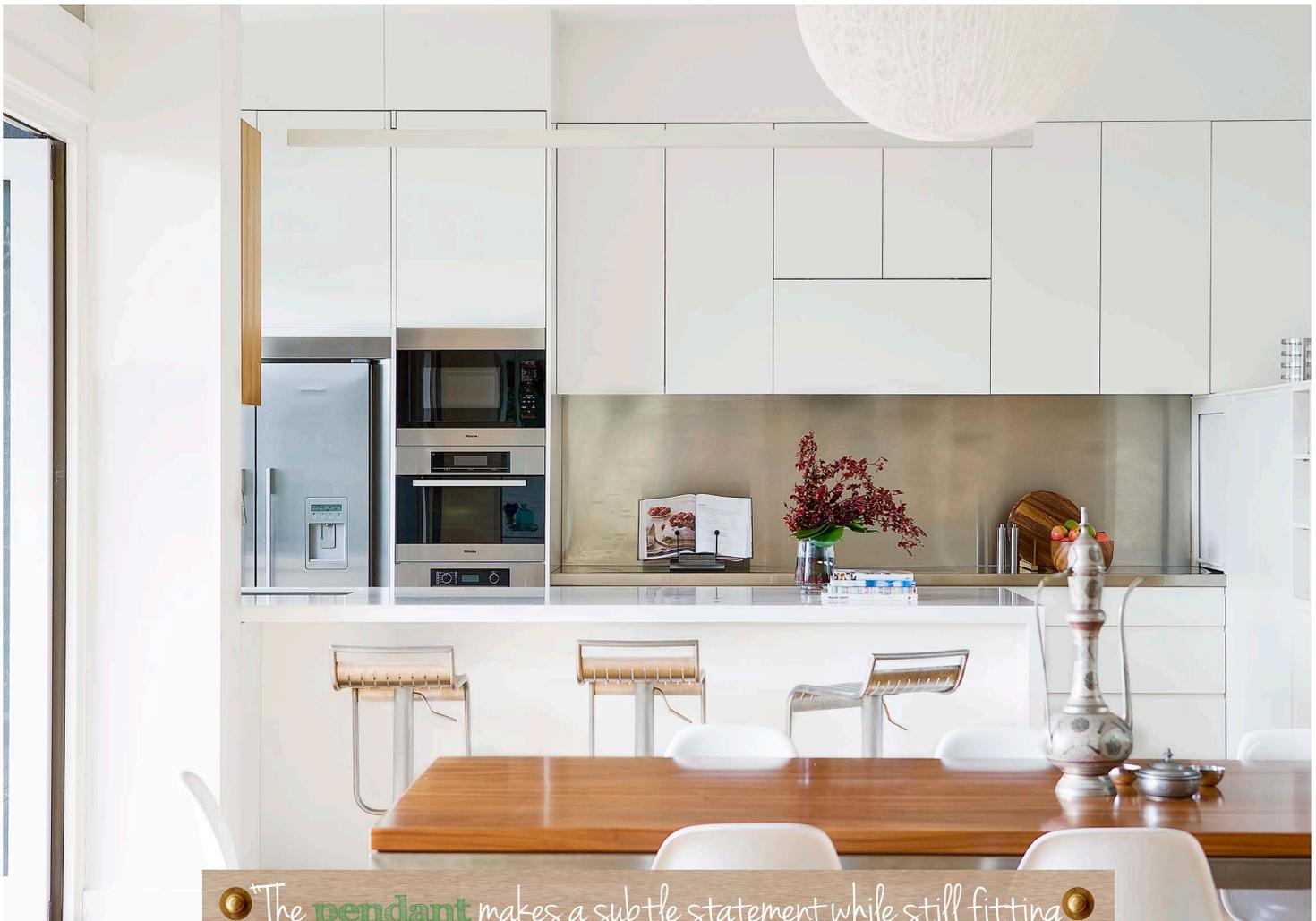


and work to passively heat and cool the house year-round. On cold days, the Jetmaster fireplace comes into its own. A large 'Habitat' pendant light from Beacon Lighting helps define the dining area. Atop the custom-built table, surrounded by 'Eifel' chairs from Domayne, is an ornate silver tea set purchased during a family adventure to India.

KITCHEN (this page & opposite) The open, airy kitchen has become a gathering hub for Harry and the rest of the family. Tessa had firm ideas about the space's new look. "I didn't want handles, I wanted extra deep and wide drawers to get all those big saucepans and plates in, and I wanted an all-drawer pantry," she says. The streamlined design also includes polyurethane cabinetry finished in Resene Joanna in quarter-strength – the same colour as the walls. Open shelving above the sink (opposite, bottom right) – finished in teak veneer – adds warmth and offsets the stainless-steel splashback and icy white Laminex island bench. "I love that the benchtop has no joins," says Tessa. The sleek bar stools are from Taste. >



BENCHTOP
"Freestyle" solid surface
in Kosciuszko, from
\$254/sqm, Laminex.

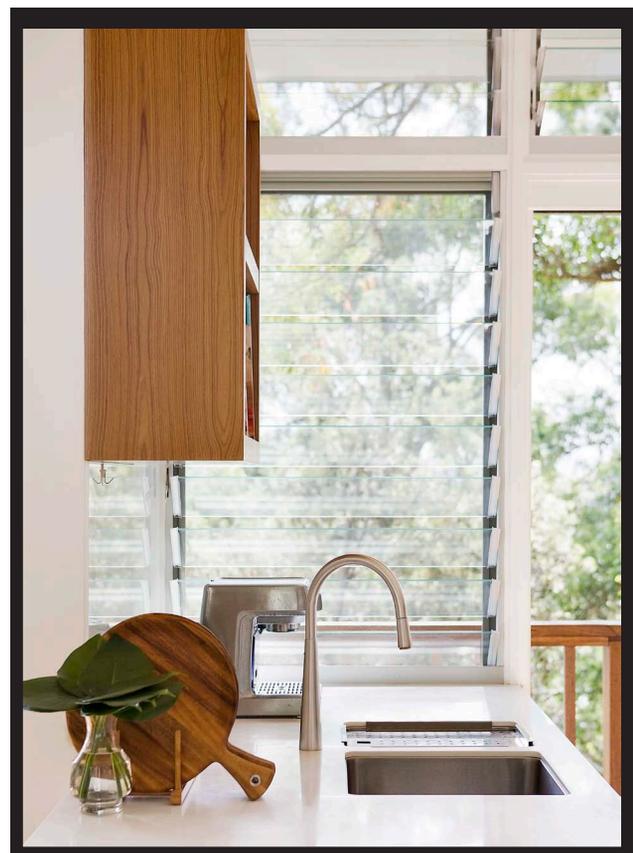


"The **pendant** makes a subtle statement while still fitting with the **monochromatic** scheme" - Tessa

< For Caroline, retaining as much of the original building structure as possible made good sense. "By recycling or re-using materials, you're not creating rubbish or landfill, and you're not going out and harvesting more materials," says Caroline. "From a sustainability viewpoint, it's a great place to start."

Over the course of the 12-month build, the front of the house was brought forward two metres, with balconies installed on both levels, and the entryway extended and enclosed. Inside, staircases lead down to the garage and up to the first floor living space, where the kitchen, dining and lounge room now share one large open-plan area. Downstairs, ceilings were raised and the floorplan reconfigured for bedrooms for Ella and Becci and a generous family bathroom. Tessa also specified there be custom-built storage in every room.

Comfort was key for the interiors. Describing her decorating style as "casual, elegant and understated", Tessa focused on neutral colours, natural finishes, subtle textures and a recurrence of elements throughout. "I find the repetition of surfaces and materials, as seen through our paint colours, tiles and joinery, creates a relaxing feel and ties everything together," she says. "At first I was a bit worried it was going to look boring, especially with the white benchtops in the kitchen, but there is so much greenery outside that it actually provides quite a soothing contrast." And a perfect family escape.





FAMILY ROOM Tessa and Matt wanted their children to have their own space for entertaining friends without it being too loud for the adults in the next room. "Part of the home's success is that you can zone spaces for acoustic and thermal benefits," says architect Caroline. An important factor in any home, storage is an integral part of this room. The combination of handle-free drawers and built-in bookshelves keeps everything in order and clutter tucked away.



RUG
 Trinity' wool & polyester rug
 in Red \$750/small
 Jimmy Possum

ELLA'S BEDROOM A mix of patterns and textures brings Ella's room to life – as does Chilli, the family's beloved jack russell ("I don't think Chilli is even aware she's a dog!" says Tessa with a laugh.) For similar bedding, try the Ruckus 'Marley' quilt cover from Adairs and the 'Gracia' range from Kas for painterly pillows. >

"Purpose-built **storage** is an **extravagance** well worth
it for the sake of having a **tidy** house!" - Tessa





CONTACTS

Architect

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ENSUITE A skylight was incorporated into the master ensuite to bathe the space in light. The vanity is topped with twin basins from Villeroy & Boch's 'Variable' range. "I like their clean lines and organic oval shapes," says Tessa. "And because it's an integrated benchtop and has no joins, it makes for easy cleaning." The stone-like Dagon porcelain tiles in Vision are from Rocks On.

INSIDE STORY

Who lives here?

Tessa; her husband Matt; their children Ella, 20, Becci, 17, and Harry, 15; and Chilli the jack russell.

Was it tough to renovate in a new city?

Tessa: "Sourcing everything for the house was a great way to get to know my way around Sydney. Fortunately, I also had a friend who had just completed her renovation with the same builder and she was able to guide me."

Any design tips to share?

"An architect Matt and I had worked with in Melbourne once gave me some great advice – he said go through magazines and tear out anything you like, then go back and look at the pictures and ask yourself: what do all these things have in common? It's a really useful process and helps you hone in on what it is you actually want."

Top of your must-have list?

"Spend a bit extra and buy good quality taps that have a good mechanism – they are a 'quality of life' decision you will appreciate repeatedly every day."



The bedroom's luxe Sheridan bedlinen picks up on the artwork's moody hues.

PLANS



The home's exterior colours blend seamlessly with the surrounds.

