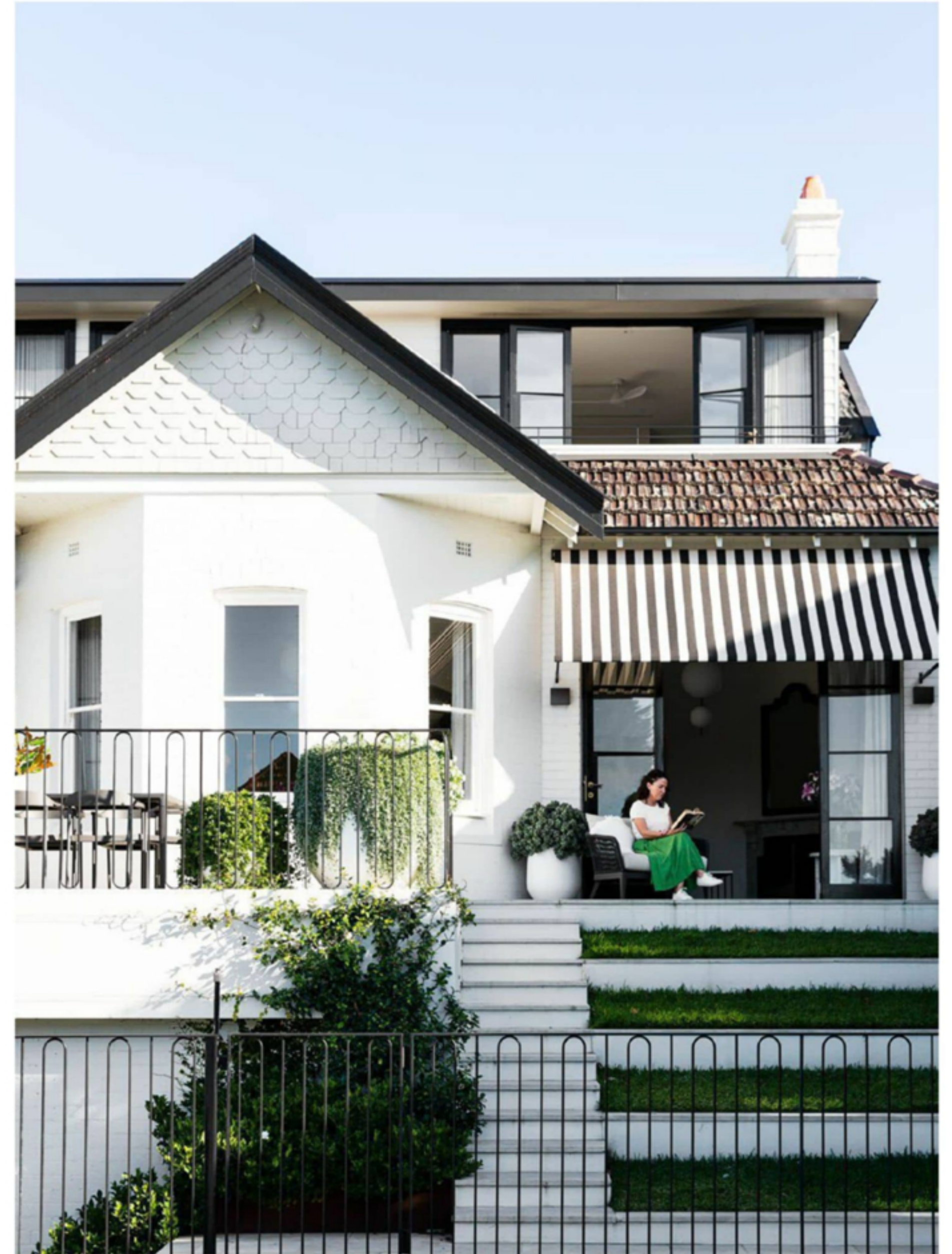


DREAM WORK

FINDING THE RIGHT TEAM HELPED TRANSFORM THIS HERITAGE SYDNEY ABODE INTO A CHIC AND MODERN SANCTUARY FOR THE FAMILY THAT CALLS IT HOME

Story SARAH WORMWELL Styling ASHLEY PRATT Photography SIMON WHITBREAD



AT FIRST SIGHT It was the exterior of this home on Sydney's north shore that first captivated MJ (pictured above) and her husband, Andrew – the classic lines and details were reminiscent of homes in Adelaide, where the couple grew up. The home provides myriad spots to grab a book, from the renovated rear to the living room (opposite), where the couple and their three children also cosy up to watch TV. One of only two rooms in the home not painted white, the grey walls (in 25 per cent Salt by Murobond) add warmth. "This room needed to feel cosier than the rest and the grey walls do that," explains interior designer Viv Hannigan, who left cornices and the skirting in white. "It is a gentle way for old to meet new." For MJ, the room's meeting of styles is timeless. "The mesh chandelier, (Moooi 'Meshmatics' from Space Furniture) references traditional lighting but with modern material; it's one of my favourite pieces because it combines my dual loves of antiques and iconic modern style," she says. >

DINING AND LIVING ROOM The original arched hallway entrance to the rear of the home had been boxed in by the previous owners. Restoring the arch was one of the initial design decisions made by MJ, designer Viv and project architect Imogene Potter. Functionally, the move allowed a lot more light to stream into the space, but it also provided a 'motif' for the rest of the interiors. "We didn't set out to choose curved edges, but in hindsight I can understand why I was instinctively drawn to the curved edge of the dining table and the spherical pendant," explains MJ. The crowd-pleasing table from Poliform is matched with modern Elementi lights by De Padova from Boffi.



Dappled leadlighting, shingled roofing and a chic, elegant exterior were enough to make MJ fall in love with this Federation home on Sydney's lower north shore, even before she took a single step inside. "I was sitting in my car waiting for the open inspection and, without going inside, I knew that it could be perfect for us," she recalls. "My husband Andrew and I grew up in Adelaide, and the home was so evocative of the city's beautiful bluestones that I knew he would love it as much as I did." MJ and Andrew bought the property in 2014, and moved in with their children Alexandra, now 13, Kate, 12, and Jack, 10.

Accompanying MJ on that first visit to the home was her friend, interior designer Viv Hannigan. The two immediately began planning how the interiors could be transformed; while the exterior was gorgeous, the layout and lack of indoor-outdoor connection were not ideal. As a first step, MJ started working on updating the 1980s palette of pine floors and turmeric-hued walls, always with a long-term plan to renovate. MJ and Andrew began meeting with architects and were impressed by Imogene Potter from Potter & Wilson, who had a love of period houses and a collaborative approach. "I wanted an architect who would let me be involved in the process," explains MJ. "I had definite ideas, but needed someone to enhance them and bring them to reality. When I met Imogene it just felt right."

So began the three-way collaboration between MJ, Imogene and Viv. Weekly meetings, myriad phone calls, studio visits and Pinterest boards ensued, all with the central vision of creating a home offering

a greater indoor-outdoor connection and making each room both usable and family-friendly. Imogene's creative design "untangled" the convoluted flow across the ground floor, removing walls, expanding the kitchen and reorientating the staircase to create a broad central hallway and spacious entrance. Upstairs, the bedroom count increased from two to three, with each child given an ensuite. The greatest structural transformation, however, occurred at the rear of the home, where new batwing doors were designed, opening through to a vast external courtyard encompassing an outdoor lounge, barbecue and fireplace. Extensive landscaping was also undertaken.

Imogene and Viv both credit MJ as the driver of the aesthetic. The homeowner, who calls her style "classic modern", wanted her interiors to feel contemporary but respectful of the home's history, with the restored archway at the end of the entrance hallway becoming a key component: the curve is repeated subtly through the home, from the kitchen bench and stairway detail to the dining table and desk joinery, creating a continuous design language. Meanwhile, the interior palette of white walls and dark timber herringbone floors is a harmonious backdrop for rich walnut and brass muted accent colour.

Furnishing the home was also a combined effort, with the careful curation of modern classics that bring together old and new to create an overall sense of timelessness – and the beautiful outcome is a true testament to the value of teamwork. "Taking a collaborative approach has brought everything together so well," says MJ. "Our home has a wonderful family feel and we are thrilled with the result."

KITCHEN "I contemplated hanging a linear pendant light over the kitchen bench, but in the end I didn't want anything impacting the view – I look straight out onto the terrace and can see all the action," explains MJ. For Andrew, high-backed stools for the kitchen bench were a must. "It sounds simple, but finding a stool that didn't overwhelm the bench was difficult," says MJ. After a long search, interior designer Viv found the 'Broom' stool at Contempo and Co. The American oak and leather with brass detailing work perfectly with the scheme and met the brief for hard-wearing elegance. >

WE LOVE...
bar style

The 3.5-metre kitchen island bench has a dual purpose: everyday family dinners and occasional grown-up cocktail parties. MJ was inspired by the charm of old-school hotel lounges, so Imogene designed an opulent-edged Carrara marble benchtop, with a ribbed timber base in warm walnut. The traditional brass footrail was another "borrowed" idea from retro hotel style.





FLOOR PLAN

FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



LOWER GROUND FLOOR



FORMAL LIVING ROOM Always open in warmer months, the new batwing doors create a direct link to the outdoor terrace, inviting people to the pool and garden beyond. "From the outset I knew this house would be perfect for us if we could better connect indoors and out, and this room is proof Imogene nailed the brief," says MJ. The homeowner and design team agreed that all-white walls would help modernise the home's heritage features. "Viv really helped me see how colour and texture could help draw the home into the present," explains MJ of the beautiful combination of a Minotti Andersen 'Quilt' three-seater lounge and two 'Mad' chairs from Poliform - ideal for conversation - grounded by the 'Radiate' rug in Rose from The Rug Establishment. During winter, the restored fireplace often acts as a focal point. "The original mantel was a Belgium rouge marble; it was beautiful, but didn't work in the new scheme," recalls MJ. "On a quick trip to Melbourne I saw a fireplace restoration shop from a taxi. I pulled over and ended up organising to swap our rouge mantel for the gorgeous Carrara marble one that suits our home much better." >

"I WANTED TO RETAIN ALL THE *heritage elements* BUT ALSO WANTED

CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE AND LIGHTING" ~ MJ



"WE ARE REALLY HAPPY WITH THE TEAM WE CHOSE. IT WAS A *true collaboration* - WE'RE THRILLED WITH THE END RESULT" - MJ

JACK'S ROOM Set on the top floor, the children's bedrooms were greatly expanded, giving each one their own ensuite and custom joinery. The renovation also unexpectedly gave son Jack, pictured above left, the best view in the house. "People always ask why we didn't claim Jack's room for ourselves, but I'm really happy with the layout - it works well to have all the kids together," says MJ. Designed by Imogene, Jack's desktop, in Grey Pail by Dulux, has the same curved motif that's repeated throughout the home. MJ and Viv opted for the leather desk chair from Freedom because it added a more masculine texture to the room. "Jack loves it, mainly because it swivels," explains his mother, with a smile.

KATE'S ROOM "The beauty of a neutral base palette means that each child has been able to add their own personality to their room," explains Viv. Kate's room (above) is pretty and feminine, without being too childlike. The coral-hued feature cushion and bedside table, both sourced from Adairs, offer a fresh new take on pink, while a Petal Cane bedhead from The Family Love Tree adds a fun, slightly retro vibe.

MAIN ENSUITE Andrew and MJ's glamorous ensuite (left & opposite) continues the elegance of their bedroom, with Carrara marble floor and Salvatori wall tiles, a Parisi bath and stunning brass detailing in the cabinetry, towel rail and hardware.

ENSUITE DETAIL The bespoke vanity unit, designed by Imogene and then made by Elan, features similarly ribbed panelling to the kitchen bench. Viv suggested the panelling be painted in the soft tones of Dulux Pozieres. "All-white bathrooms can sometimes feel clinical, so we added interest with the warm green accent," says Viv. "The subtlety of the green works beautifully with the marble and brass." >



MAIN BEDROOM Elegant and comfortable, Andrew and MJ's bedroom is layered with luxury. A custom-made bedhead that's upholstered in Westbury linen is complemented by textured faux shagreen side tables from Made Goods. MJ wanted the space, with its gorgeous vistas of their garden and a restored fireplace, to be calm and neutral. "A lot goes on in the rest of the house, so I wanted this room to be a sanctuary," she says. "I can light a fire, look out at the garden and completely relax."

CONTACTS

Interior Designer
Viv Hannigan Design, 0468 969 501,
@vivhannigandesign.

Architect
Imogene Potter, Potter & Wilson,
potterandwilson.com.

Builders
Alex Wilson & Drew Spring, Home
Construct, homeconstruct.com.au.

Landscape Architect
Dean Aiken, Urban Roots,
urbanroots.com.au.



MODERN GLAMOUR

INSIDE STORY
MJ & ANDREW'S HOME

Who lives here? MJ and her husband, Andrew, both with backgrounds in the property industry; along with their three children, Alexandra, 13, Kate, 12, and Jack, 10.

Best advice for renovating? MJ: "Get all your selections done and stay true to your design loves. Work with a good team who share your vision: take advice, but also trust your instincts."

What is the key to establishing a great team? "Invest time at the beginning of the process to meet with different professionals. Trust your instincts as to whether you'll be able to work together."

Most-commented-on feature of the house? "Definitely the kitchen bar, but the high ceilings also get a lot of mentions."

Biggest renovating surprise? "How much they ripped the house apart. They really had to tear it to pieces to build it back up again."



ACTUAL PAINT COLOURS MAY VARY ON APPLICATION

1. The patinated brass footrail of the kitchen bench was designed so a broom could fit underneath.
2. Kate, Alexandra, MJ and Jack enjoy the light and space of their newly renovated home.
3. A blush rug from The Rug Establishment grounds the lounge.
4. The redesigned stairwell creates a more expansive ground floor.
5. The charm and glamour of "old-school" hotel bars inspired the kitchen centrepiece.
6. The front door's dappled leadlighting is one of the home's many heritage features.
7. Archways are a recurring motif throughout the home.

