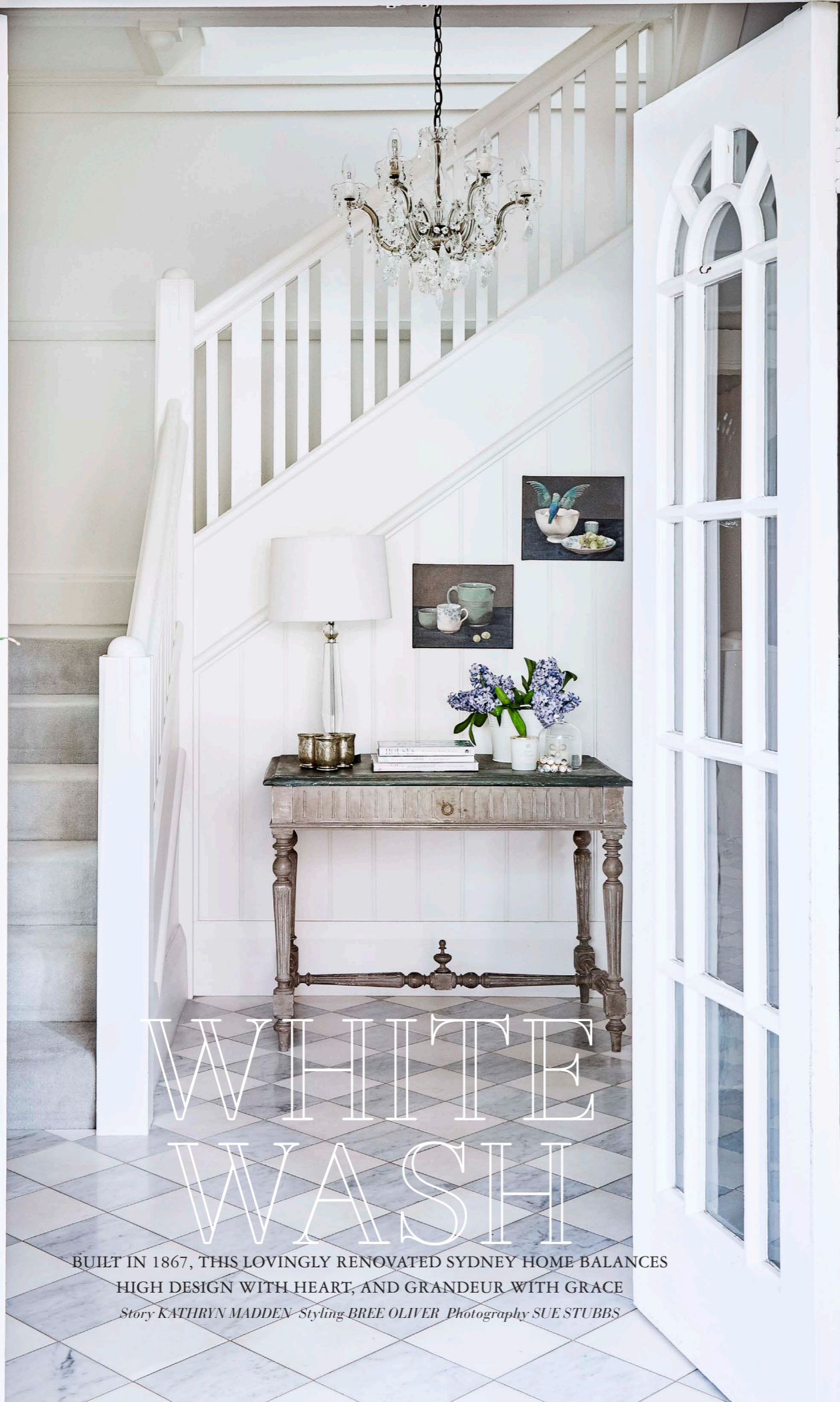


CLASS & COMFORT "I always decorate with white and then add colour through accessories, cushions and artworks," says homeowner Belinda of the style philosophy that informs her family home on Sydney's lower north shore. Classic design meets comfort in the living room (below) via a much-loved Jordan sofa, chocolate-hued vintage chairs and custom-made cushions in Elliott Clarke florals. The home's entrance (opposite) harks back to yesteryear with a twinkling antique chandelier overhead and chequerboard marble flooring. "Often, people do black and white tiles, but I wanted to make it softer and more elegant," says Belinda. >



WHITE
WASH

BUILT IN 1867, THIS LOVINGLY RENOVATED SYDNEY HOME BALANCES HIGH DESIGN WITH HEART, AND GRANDEUR WITH GRACE
 Story KATHRYN MADDEN Styling BREE OLIVER Photography SUE STUBBS



ARTWORKS (OPPOSITE) ANITA MERTZLIN

LIVING ROOM Walls in Dulux Natural White and recycled brushbox timber floors (topped with a stunning silk-wool rug from Cadrys) form a strong foundation for decorative details (below). “I was very hands-on throughout the renovation,” says Belinda, who worked with her builder to create an intricate moulding for the Jetmaster fireplace and the old-world ceiling cornice. The artwork depicts the Byron Bay hinterland, a keepsake from the couple’s honeymoon, while the coffee table – a whitewashed Coco Republic find – is the perfect spot for Belinda’s styling nous to flourish.



When Belinda looks around her home, it’s not the furniture, finery and finishes that she sees, but the cherished memories. Christmas mornings in her sun-drenched living room; children’s sleepovers spent sprawled out across the window seat; long, languid Sundays spent by the pool. Her very first memory of the property dates back to 2011, when she and her husband Charlie went to an inspection on Sydney’s leafy north shore. “It was a deceased estate and had been a little unloved,” recalls Belinda, remembering an unsightly sewer pipe by the front door and the barren garden. “But I could see it was a beautiful piece of architecture with a big, north-facing backyard – we were sold.”

The couple were, however, curious about the home’s original heritage. “It was sold to us as 1920s, but it had these thick walls with stucco all over them,” says Belinda, an interior designer and renovation consultant. “I noticed the house next door was sandstone, so as soon as we took possession I took over a pick and chipped off some stucco.” Sure enough, underneath there lay exquisite, solid sandstone. “That was the first little gift that the home gave us,” she says. “And ever since, it’s just kept on giving!”

The new owners wanted to restore and refresh each space to share with their children – Matt, then 14, and Steph, then 12 – while also staying true to the history of the home, which had actually been built in 1867. Layers of stucco were sloughed away to expose the original sandstone walls, lawns and hedges were manicured to perfection, and a sparkling pool was installed. Next up came a sympathetic weatherboard extension comprising an open-plan living and dining area, plus a kitchen so palatial and polished that it wouldn’t be out of place in a manor house. Upstairs, a serene main suite with river views was added, raising the bedroom tally to four.

For her style inspiration, Belinda looked across the globe to Amsterdam, where the family had lived a few years prior. “It’s a little bit European, a little bit English,” she says of her signature design look, with all white walls (Dulux Antique White USA in the front of the home and then the slightly fresher Natural White in the new extension) set off by soft colours and touch-me textures. Every last detail is both considered and classical, from the coffered ceilings above to the recycled brushbox flooring below. “You get your depth from your flooring,” explains Belinda. “And also a sense of history – I like the patina of recycled timber.”

Indeed, the past has played a significant role in designing and decorating this much-loved family home. But now it faces the future – with two grown-up children, Belinda and Charlie recently decided to downsize. “It’s such an incredible home and we were really sad to leave,” shares Belinda. Yet, her love for the dwelling lives on. She’s now helping the new owners with sourcing and styling, as they seek to fill this beautiful abode with a whole new chapter of stories.

MUD ROOM Connecting the old and new parts of the home, this space (top right) serves as a second entrance for muddy feet – and a hotspot for border collies Abbie (left) and Poppy! While practical, it’s pretty too, thanks to a one-of-a-kind Rustic Coast bench seat, pendant from Magins Lighting and panelled walls adorned with art.

DINING ROOM “I’m a keen entertainer and my husband loves to cook, so we’re a perfect match!” says Belinda. Just as well, then, that this custom dining table (right) can extend to fit 14 people (the ‘Titan’ elm wood dining table from Interior Secrets boasts a similar shape and texture). “I really like things a little imperfect,” explains Belinda, pointing to the grainy tabletop. “I used to always strive for perfection, but I realised that’s actually a bit boring.” The antique Swedish chairs complete the whitewashed scheme, finished with smart slipcovers on the seats and sweet ribbons. >



“THE ENTIRE HOME WAS DESIGNED AROUND THE KITCHEN - THE *flow of entertaining* IS SO IMPORTANT IN A FAMILY HOME” - BELINDA



KITCHEN This home's undeniable pièce de résistance is the kitchen, a magnificent white space that melds classic country cues with ultra sleek surfaces. "I went to eight different suppliers before I found a slab of Carrara marble I was happy with for the benchtops," recalls Belinda (pictured), who extended the 3.2-metre island even further with an oak butcher's block (below), crafted by John Gallagher of Piece Furniture. Simple bar stools were elevated to elegant with custom-made slipcovers, while the satin poly cabinetry - painted Dulux Natural White - is straight from storage heaven. And for the grand finale? The space opens out onto the back deck via sliding bi-fold windows. "We throw them open first thing every morning," says Belinda. For similar flooring, try 'Antique Mink Grey' from Royal Oak Floors' Artisan Collection. >



FLOOR PLAN

GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR





WE LOVE...
design direction

While this home is blessed with a north-facing outlook – providing lovely natural light and warmth – this does present its own set of decorating challenges. “With the incoming sun, strong fabrics would have faded,” says Belinda. “Instead, I used a lot of soft colours, washable slipcovers and white.” Here, the bed is dressed in muted golden florals that still make a style statement. For a similar look, try the Sanderson ‘Sunflower’ quilt cover, \$179.95/queen, David Jones. >

MAIN BEDROOM “A bedroom should be a sanctuary, a peaceful place – and I believe it should be treated differently to the rest of the home,” says Belinda. And in the treetop main suite, she stayed away from her signature white walls – not always good for sleep – and mixed in a bespoke shade of blue. The designer then turned ordinary into extraordinary by coupling an inexpensive Sealy Posturepedic bed with a custom-made bedhead, valance and bedcover, all in matching fabrics. “It gives a really finished, hotel-style look,” she says. Plush wool carpet and a pair of timeworn chests (scour antique stores, for similar) complete the luxurious scheme.



"IT'S A VERY SYMPATHETIC renovation - PEOPLE CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OLD AND NEW" - BELINDA

ENSUITE

No prizes for guessing Belinda's favourite feature in this room (top left & left). The 'York' freestanding tub by Victoria & Albert, complete with polished nickel tapware from The English Tapware Company, is the ideal indulgence after a long day. It shares the spotlight with other expertly executed elements, including Carrara and Thassos basket-weave tiles and a graceful marble-topped vanity - which had to be built on site. Belinda, a budding artist, painted the leafy green watercolour hanging on the wall, a subtle nod to the striking side table (get the look with the 'Delis' ceramic side table from Living Styles).

LAUNDRY

With its original sandstone walls, a treasured relic of the 1867 build, the laundry (top right) speaks of the past, yet its high-tech appliances and functional layout bring it back into the now. "Every laundry

should be gorgeous as we spend so much time in them!" says Belinda. Mission accomplished courtesy of hexagonal floor tiles in Carrara marble, a deep butler's sink by The English Tapware Company and plentiful storage finished in Dulux Antique White USA.

BACK EXTERIOR

During the remodel, the original verandah was removed to make way for the extension, but every bit of sandstone was retained. As such, the new weatherboard structure features a sandstone base (opposite), which ensures continuity between old and new. Dulux Natural White exterior paint provides a crisp contrast to the verdant green garden and blooming hydrangeas. "The entire garden was pretty barren when we bought the home, so everything has been added and planted by us," says Belinda. "You can always find me in the garden picking the flowers and then arranging them in displays, or painting them." >





DECK "What stands out about our home is that it's always filled with friends and family," says Belinda, pictured at the kitchen servery. The deck, furnished with custom-made cushions and a charming alfresco lounge setting, is a prime spot for entertaining guests. For a similar setting, try Pottery Barn's Ivory Hampstead collection.

EASY ELEGANCE

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INSIDE STORY

BELINDA & CHARLIE'S HOME

Who lived here?
Belinda, an interior designer and renovation consultant; her husband, Charlie, who works in financial services; their children Matt, 22, and Steph, 20; plus border collies Abbie and Poppy.

How would you describe your home?
"Relaxed, comfortable, inviting and filled with cherished pieces that we've collected."

What inspires you creatively?
"Many things, but the answer is always in nature - the colours of plants, the sea and the sky."

What's your top tip for creating vignettes?
"Clean silver so it shines, and go to Vinnies and buy pretty vases to display single stems in."

How does the home function seasonally?
"Perfectly! It was the north-facing aspect that drew us to this home - it decreases electricity bills because you have the natural sunlight, as well as solar heating warming your spaces."



ACTUAL PAINT COLOURS MAY VARY ON APPLICATION

1. The 'Bussy' range cooker, by Lacanche, is a chef's delight.
2. Create your own modular outdoor setting with the 'Jasper' range, from King Living.
3. For a similar blue wall paint, try Pre School Half, Dulux.
4. Carrara marble island bench topped with crockery and curios.
5. Poppy finds a perch on the eight-metre-long window seat.
6. Perrin & Rowe outdoor shower, The English Tapware Company.