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Breath of FRESH AIR

A thoughtful renovation and breezy interior approach turned this home in Sydney's east into a custom-made haven for an outdoorsy family.

PRODUCED BY GATE GRAY | PHOTOGRAPHY AMANDA PRIOR

The sign in the living room was custom-made and includes places that have special meaning to homeowners Kirsty and Simon. Linen-covered sofa from Coco Republic. Palm tree cushions from Beachwood. **OPPOSITE** Kirsty plays in the garden with her children, Tom, Claudia and Jessica, who all wear outfits by Kirsty's company, Cocoon Clothing. For Where to Buy, see page 249.

This is the life

"This house is a reflection of what we are about," says Kirsty. "We spend a lot of time on weekends at one of the beaches close by, swimming and sailing. The outdoor shower, off the laundry, means sand stays outside where it belongs! It's a really easy and practical house to live in. The lime-washed floors don't show dirt and we have lots of storage. After living with none for nine years, it was a must!"

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MOUNTAIN



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'We wanted to keep as much of the original interior as possible, but at the same time we had to open up the house to the outside to feel the breezes flowing through.' KIRSTY

In the kitchen, light streams in through glass louvre windows and bounces off the creamy white surfaces, including the Caesarstone benchtop. Replica Emeco US Navy bar stools from Matt Blatt. Antique Welsh dining table. Dining chairs from Beachwood. **OPPOSITE TOP** Vietnamese fishing baskets were converted into pendant light fittings to add character to the hallway. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM** Tom walks through the playroom, out to the side garden. Custom-built day bed upholstered in fabric by John E Puddick Furnishings. Red cushions from Vivid Shop. Wicker storage basket/coffee table from My Island Home. For Where to Buy, see page 249.



A sculptural old lobster pot hanging by the front door hints at the easy coastal ambience within this four-bedroom family home – which doesn't disappoint. White, light-filled and airy, on a sizeable block in the Sydney harbourside suburb of Vaucluse, this house wears that lived-in coastal luxe look so well it's hard to believe it wasn't always so.

After living in the house for nine years (filling it with three children – Jessica, 10, Claudia, eight and Tom, five – along the way), owners Kirsty and Simon had a clear vision of how their red-brick Federation bungalow might be transformed into a great family home. The new design had to work on a practical level, to accommodate the family's lifestyle, and provide ample space for entertaining.

"We wanted to marry the old with the new," says Kirsty, one of the design duo behind childrenswear label Cocoon Clothing. "We were keen to keep as much of the original interior as possible, but at the same time we had to open up the house to the outside to feel the breezes flowing through."

Other details, like having an outdoor shower and lots of storage space, were also high on the list of desirables.

The original house had the high ceilings and generous-sized rooms of its period, but also the characteristically small kitchen and only one bathroom. The internal spaces had no real connection to the large, level lawn and garden at the back and down one side of the house.

Finding an architectural firm with an aesthetic they liked turned out to be simple. "We worked backwards in choosing our architect. We asked our friend, Andrew Shaw, who is a builder, to recommend someone he had worked with," says Kirsty. "He suggested Utz-Sanby so I jumped onto the website. I loved their work."

With everyone enthusiastic about the design, building commenced, with Andrew, of Shaw Constructions, overseeing the work. The four bedrooms and two bathrooms (including a new ensuite and walk-in wardrobe) were brought to the front of the house, allowing as many original walls as possible to remain under the slanted hip roof of the original house.

The playroom, laundry and guest bathroom were placed in the middle of the house under a flat roof. To the side of these areas, an outdoor deck was built in place of the old carport (which was moved to the front of the home). The living and playrooms now open on two sides: to the deck and the north-facing garden. The result is plenty more air and light flowing through the home. >



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A lovely private deck off the main bedroom has become a favourite place for Kirsty and Simon to read the paper on weekends. Chair from Bondi Markets. Cushion from Freedom. Wicker basket from My Island Home. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** The main bedroom is a tranquil retreat, decorated in a calming palette of white and cream. Upholstered grandmother's chair from Justin Puddick Upholstery. Cushion from Ikea. Tom's bedroom has a nautical theme, with boat hull and anchor prints from Paddington Markets and bedlinen from Bed Bath N' Table. Bedside table from The Market New & Old Wares. In contrast, Claudia's bedroom is decorated in dusty pinks and pretty florals. Bedlinen from Bed Bath N' Table. The main bathroom is elegant yet practical with travertine on the floor and benchtops. Custom-made cabinetry by Hoffman's Interiors. For Where to Buy, see page 249.

Colour palette

Dulux Fair Bianca, quarter strength (walls, bedrooms)

Dulux Brilliant White (walls, kitchen/living/dining area)

Porter's Paints Old Church White, half-strength (exterior)

Colorbond Windspray (corrugated roof)



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< The most spectacular change to the house is the addition of the new living/dining/kitchen pavilion at the back. 'The back room', as the family refers to it, has a steep pitched gabled ceiling and roof, soaring up to just over five metres at its highest point. "It's a beautiful, voluminous room but it's also very practical," says architect Jacqueline Connor of Utz-Sanby. "The glass gable ends of the roof and glass louvre windows placed high on all four walls bring so much light and air into the space but still give privacy. It's environmentally sound as well, as the cross-ventilation takes away the need for airconditioning."

The entire back wall – a series of glass bifold doors – can be pushed to the side to open up the house to the garden, with its beautiful old gum tree and the covered outdoor barbecue and dining area. "I love the fact that I can open the doors and the kids have so much space to run, jump, cartwheel, play cricket or whatever," says Kirsty. The indoor-outdoor zone is ideal for the adults to entertain in too. "I love the kitchen! It works well and is practical and easy to be in. And we've hosted many great nights in the outdoor barbecue area."

The new configuration of the home was unified with timber cabinetry by Hoffman's Interiors, lime-washed blackbutt flooring and new roofing in corrugated steel, which thrilled Kirsty. "I've always wanted a corrugated-iron roof. They remind me of my childhood in the country, and I love the sound of rain falling on them."

Throughout the house, Kirsty's eye for detail is evident and the furnishings and interior finishes wholly reflect the family. Some pieces are precious, some are thrifty finds (like the cane sofa on the deck outside the playroom) and most have a story about them – from the large model boat bought for Simon, a keen sailor, to a canvas sign celebrating the places the family has been. Even the colour of the corrugated roof has a reason behind it: "It's the colour closest to the galvanised-iron shearing sheds I grew up with," says Kirsty.

For now, Kirsty is happy designing for the clothes label she and her friend Susan have created, but this project went so smoothly, the renovation bug has bitten: "If I stopped designing children's clothes, I would love to do it all over again... and again."

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Architects: Utz-Sanby Architects, Neutral Bay,

NSW; (02) 9904 2515 or www.utzsanby.com.

Cabinetmakers: Hoffman's Interiors, Alexandria,
NSW; (02) 9698 4067.





Outdoor living

Glass bifold doors and louvre windows open the house to the outside from most rooms. The garden is a level space that's easy to maintain and, together with the outdoor barbecue area, is a great place to entertain. "We deliberately left as much lawn as possible," says Kirsty. "I always thought it was important to have enough room for a game of cricket. I love sitting in the back corner of the yard, watching the kids play and looking back at the house."



'I love the fact that I can open the doors and the kids have so much space to run, jump, cartwheel, play cricket or whatever.' KIRSTY

A wall of glass bifold doors opens up to connect the living and dining areas to the garden. Outdoor dining setting made from recycled blackbutt. Barbecue from AGL Energy Shop. The manicured back lawn is partially bordered by miniature box hedge. For Where to Buy, see page 249.