

Tiers of joy

On returning to Sydney after a stint overseas, one family set about finding a home that would help them make up for lost time in the sunshine.

STORY *Georgia Madden* | STYLING *Maryann Schmidt* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Tom Ferguson*



HOUSES **H&G**

REAR EXTERIOR "There are curves on the exterior of the house so we introduced them inside as well for a sense of unity," says interior designer Maryann Schmidt.
SUNKEN LOUNGE Nook sofa, Memphis coffee table and Luna cushions, all Jordan. Space Copenhagen 'Swoon' lounge chair, Great Dane. Cumulus rug, The Rug Establishment. Throw, L&M Home. Outdoor dining setting, owners' existing.





SUNKEN LOUNGE This area acts as a transition point between the casual dining areas. Sofa, Jordan. Artwork in dining area by Lisa Morgan. **KITCHEN** Carrara marble benchtops and splashback. Scala gooseneck mixer, Reece. Oven, Ilve. Compact O2 wall light, Snelling. American-oak shelving; existing spotted-gum flooring. **CASUAL DINING** Custom banquette upholstered in Unique Fabrics 'City Velvet' (back) and 'Fresco'. The dining table is a custom piece by Hunt & Design. Dining chairs, stylist's own. Arch wall light, Snelling.

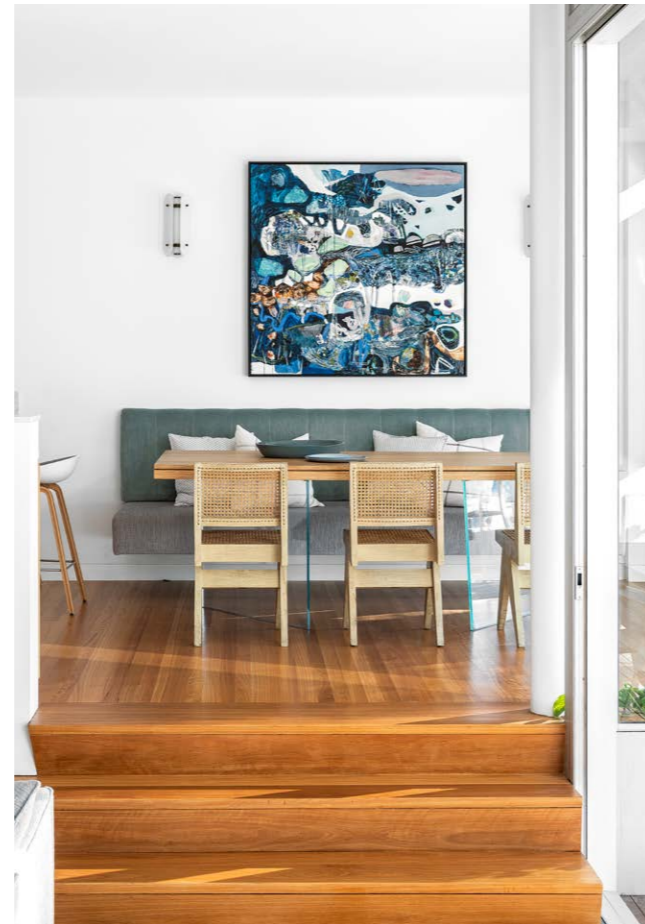


After 15 years in London, Nick, Nicola and their daughters Emily, 20, and Sophie, 17, were more than ready to return home and enjoy Sydney's enviable lifestyle. When a friend alerted them to a three-level, four-bedroom waterfront property for sale on the sought-after Lower North Shore, they wasted no time in snapping it up.

"We love entertaining and the outdoors, so a property that allowed us to create that lifestyle was a must," says Nick. "The location was amazing - just minutes to the city - and the home had easy flow between indoors and out, several substantial entertaining areas and uninterrupted water views."

While the house ticked every box in terms of location and amenities, including its own private jetty and a small beach, it did have a few issues internally. "The second and third bedrooms were too small to fit a double bed, the kitchen was awkward and closed off from the living area, and the bathrooms had not been touched in 30 years," he says. "The living room had a huge fireplace and a beautiful, but impractical, 10-metre-long fish tank. It was lacking on the energy-efficiency front too."

The couple turned to interior designer Maryann Schmidt of Hunt & Design, who had renovated a previous property for the family, for help. "It's a stunning home, but it felt dated and had some spatial problems," says Maryann. ▶



RETREAT Located on the lowest level, the retreat has direct access to the swimming pool and garden. New joinery on the covered deck conceals a fridge, sink and other accoutrements for entertaining. Artwork by Ali McNabney-Stevens. Miller sofa, Sidney coffee and side tables, and Alby floor cushion, all Jordan. Floor lamp, stylist's own. Vases from Freedom and West Elm. Fractal rug, The Rug Establishment. Throw, L&M Home.

THIS IS THE LIFE

Nick, Nicola and their daughters enjoy nothing more than spending time on the water. "We take our kayaks out at least twice a week and we share a small boat with friends up the road," says Nick. At weekends, they open their home to friends and family. "We love experimenting with food and cook anything and everything," he adds. "Outdoor entertaining is best, but with this home it feels like you're outside even when you're inside." ▶





MAIN DINING Above Artwork by Kerry Armstrong, Studio Gallery. Lodes Random pendant lights, Urban Lighting. Custom dining table, Hunt & Design. Stanford dining chairs, Preston sideboard and blue vases, all Jordan. Table lamp, stylist's own. **RETREAT** Below *Skeleton Leaves* artwork by Ali McNabney-Stevens. **LIVING** Opposite An existing fish tank was replaced by a fireplace with custom Carrara marble surround. "The curves are designed to reference the architecture," says Maryann. B Zip & Co 'Wiggle' vase from Jordan.



A fortuitous turn of events saw Maryann and her family looking for somewhere to rent before they moved into their new home at a time when Nick and Nicola's property was still unoccupied. The designer and her family moved in for three months, giving her a unique insight into the house and what it needed.

"Staying there revealed the need for an extra bathroom on the lower level and two separate outdoor entertaining areas as these would be where they'd likely spend most time," says Maryann. "The roof wasn't properly insulated so the three bedrooms on the top level were boiling in the mornings and freezing at night - new insulation was a must. The house gets a lot of sun, so we ended up tinting the bedroom windows and double-glazing the doors and windows on the living level too."

Maryann also sought to give the couple the laidback and contemporary feel they were after. "The lifestyle and aesthetic in London are so different to ours. We wanted this home to give the family what they'd been missing - the beautiful sunshine, relaxed living and a connection to the outdoors."

Nicola and Nick were clear that they didn't want fussy details or an obvious coastal-home look. "There's a national park opposite, so we used the soft greens and blues of the gum tree foliage as accent colours," says Maryann. That said, it was important to bring in some drama ▶

STAIRWELL The walls and underside of the stairs were refinished in a matt plaster for a softer look. **MAIN BEDROOM/ ENSUITE** Soho chair, H&J Furniture. Custom curtains in The Textile Company 'Sahara Delft'. The custom bedhead, upholstered in Unique Fabrics 'City Velvet', includes both charging stations and book storage at either end. Mib 6 wall light, Urban Lighting. Artworks by Ali McNabney-Stevens (top) and Ray Saunderson. Samurai wool carpet, Bremworth. Custom vanity painted Dulux Roland. Scarpa Carrara marble mosaic tiles (splashback), Surface Gallery. Sussex 'Circa' tapware, Reece. Mini Glo-Ball wall lights by Jasper Morrison for Flos, Euroluce.

"WE WANTED THE HOME TO ENJOY LOTS OF SUNSHINE, FEEL RELAXED AND CONNECT TO THE OUTDOORS – EVERYTHING THE FAMILY HAD BEEN MISSING."

MARYANN SCHMIDT, INTERIOR DESIGNER



and playfulness as well. "The plum sideboard in the dining room with the bold artwork above it is a prime example of that playfulness. Together, these colours create a wonderfully serene feel."

When it came to the spatial adjustments, Maryann started by reconfiguring the awkward entry on the top level. "Moving the hallway altered the flow so you're drawn downstairs into the open-plan living area rather than into the bedrooms. Doing this also allowed us to make the bedrooms bigger," she says. Reducing the size of the main ensuite - which ran the length of the house - was a priority. "We also added a walk-in wardrobe and reconfigured the layout to make the most of the view."

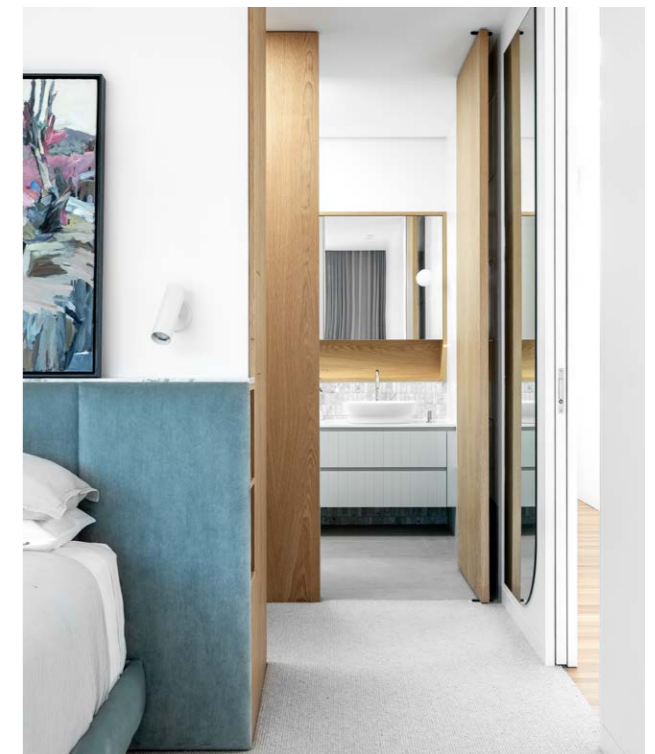
On the middle level, Maryann opened up the kitchen so it connects to the living and dining areas. Carrara marble splashbacks and benchtops add a sense of luxury. "We carried the marble through to the bathrooms to visually connect the spaces," she says.

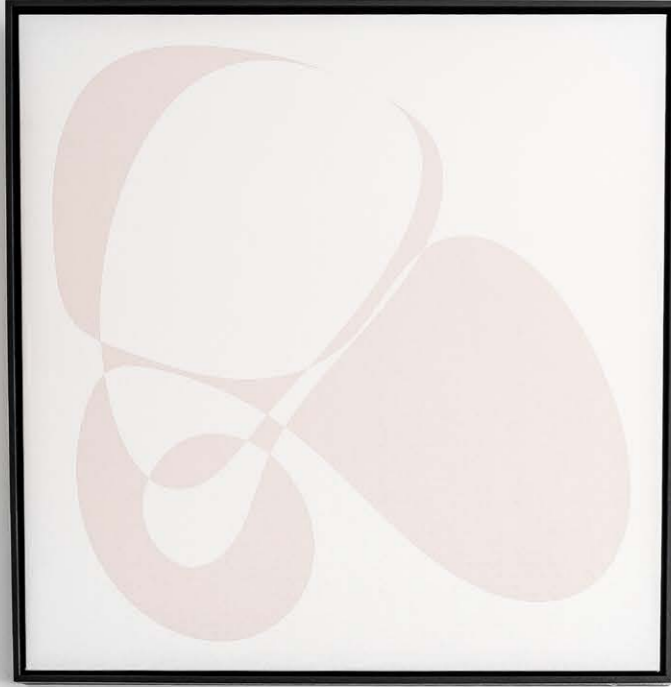
A new dining area with a floating bench seat by the window is where the family enjoys most of their meals. A few steps down in the sunken living room, Maryann removed the fish tank and added a wall of beautiful custom joinery with a gas fireplace and a comfortable corner sofa where they can gather in the cooler months.

"This house and its location offer the lifestyle everyone dreams of - and now they have the interior to match," she says. ▶

Hunt & Design, Neutral Bay, NSW; www.huntanddesign.com.au.

Schmidt Construction, Neutral Bay, NSW; schmidtconstruction.com.au.





THE PALETTE

Dulux Lexicon Quarter (interior, throughout)	Dulux Roland (main ensuite vanity)	Porter's Paints Majolica
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SOPHIE'S ROOM Artwork by Sepideh Ilesley. The bedhead and table lamp are part of the family's existing collection. Bedside table, stylist's own. Cushion and throw, Jordan. Rug, The Rug Establishment.



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THE SOURCE

Earth, air and sky tones deliver all the elements required for a home with grace and style.



Produced by Saffron Sylvester. Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.

1 Curio Practice 'Turn On' blanket, \$540, Jordan. 2 Oto Murano glass pendant light by Pio and Tito Toso for Vitosi, from \$350, Mondo Luce. 3 *Changing Tides* artwork by Phoebe Rolleston, POA, Jordan. 4 Hallie dining chair, \$259, Freedom. 5 Keystone beeswax bowls, \$400 each (includes 3 tealight candles), The Raconteur. 6 Bella 3-seater sofa, from \$7390, Fanuli. 7 Iggy and Lou Lou 'Amphora' vase, \$275, Bed Threads. 8 Christina Lundsteen 'Paula' cushion, \$185, MatchesFashion. For Where to Buy, see page 192. H&G