



# Storied *style*

Words **JUDY PASCOE** Photography **ANSON SMART**  
Styling **JACK MILENKOVIC/ATELIER LAB**

Coaxing this inner-city heritage property into a new role as a stylish contemporary family home required abundant sensitivity and imagination.



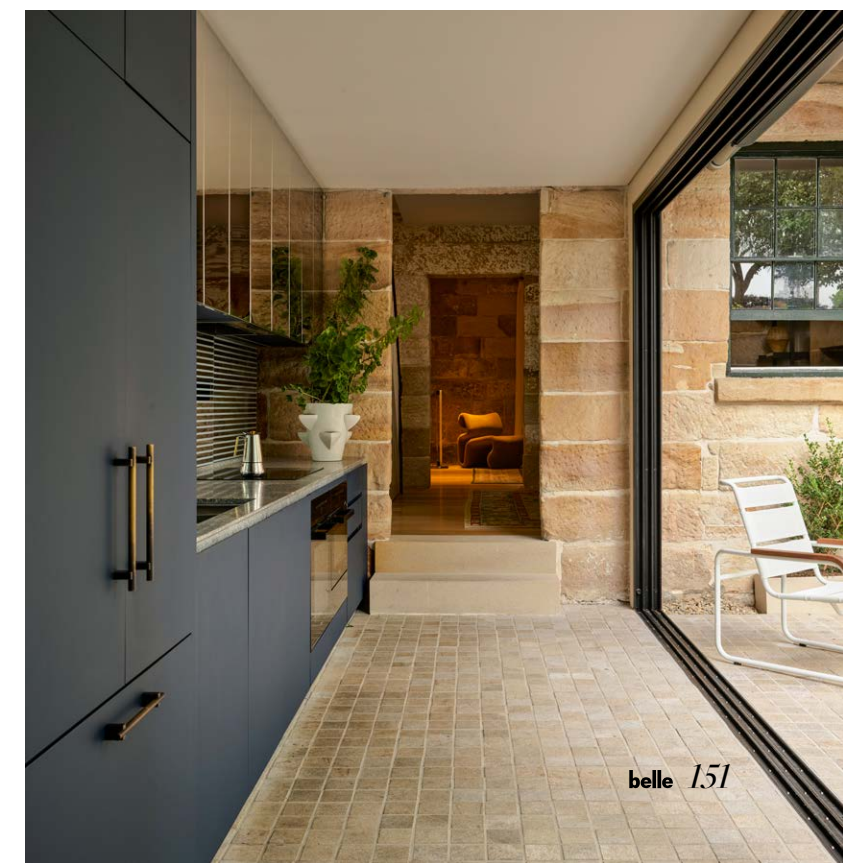
These pages, from left The main bedroom is on the top floor and enjoys an atmospheric view over neighbouring rooftops to the water. Vintage Queensland maple bedside table from Ken Neale. Lumina 'Daphne Cloe' bedside lamps from Enlightened Living. 1950s child's cane desk in the style of Louis Sognot from The Vault Sydney. Chiavari chair and tray on desk, both from 506070. Collection Bauhaus organic cotton and linen bedcover from In Bed. Untitled #3 sculpture by Scott McNeil from Fletcher Arts. The late 19th-century Georgian home is one in a row of terrace houses in a historic part of inner Sydney.



Tucked into a historic inner-city enclave with the Sydney Harbour Bridge almost arching overhead this terrace house is redolent of the past yet is strikingly contemporary in spirit. It is one of a row of terraces formerly used as government housing and offices that have been gradually transformed into elegant abodes. The late 19th-century Georgian property was an attractive proposition for the buyers, a family with three young adult children. Quite dilapidated when they bought it, the house was also subject to stringent heritage constraints on alterations.

The owners engaged specialist heritage architects Long Blackledge, and structural work had already been decided and approvals granted before design studio Arent&Pyke were invited to work their magic on the home. “We knew what we could and couldn’t touch before we started,” explains Arent&Pyke principal Sarah-Jane Pyke. “But it was tricky, with complex intricacies that came with working in the space and navigating the lengthy reconstructive build.” »

**These pages, from left** The kitchen is slotted into a cleverly designed, unobtrusive extension with the marine blue of the cabinetry echoing the nearby water. Custom-designed joinery by Arent&Pyke in Laminex in French Navy with benchtop in Medulla granite and stainless-steel overhead cupboards in a mirror-polished finish. KWC Ono ‘J-Spout’ tap and Miele microwave, oven, warming drawer and cooktop, all from Winnings. Floor in Tiger Skin sawn cobblestones from Surface Gallery. On bench, from left, Japanese vase from Planet, vintage dish from Becker Minty, and vintage French vase and Brutalist stool from The Vault Sydney. The kitchen connects seamlessly with the courtyard. Thonet GmbH S 35 N ‘All Seasons’ chair from Anibou. Custom-designed bistro tables with terrazzo tops by Arent&Pyke. Normann Copenhagen ‘Bit’ stool from District. Serax ‘Pawn’ side table in Black from Spence & Lyda. Kelly Wearstler ‘Dune’ tableware from Becker Minty. Custom awning from Simple Studio. Antique brass handles on kitchen cupboard from Whitechapel.







« Subtle changes to the layout and the conservation and remediation of existing materials such as the sandstone walls and timber floorboards were completed before any of the decorative work could begin. The owners and designers agreed to celebrate the historic persona of the terrace while evolving it into a contemporary family home.

“They obviously had bought the house because they loved it and were excited by the challenge but having negotiated the very complex heritage requirements where they were mostly told what they were not allowed to do, they felt a little defeated. It was our role to show them what the opportunities were and how it could all come together in a way that would bring them joy,” Sarah-Jane explains.

As the owners wished the home to feel fresh and sharp, the designers leant in to an all-white palette – “quite unusual for us”, says Sarah-Jane. “It’s a continuum up and down the stairwell, one colour throughout, with the sandstone, cobblestones and chocolate-stained timber floorboards providing contrast. There’s a crispness and a freshness with dark floors and white walls.”

The simplicity of the layout – two rooms on each floor, one at the front and one at the back with a set of stairs linking the four levels – creates a real immediacy, says Sarah-Jane.

At the street level entrance, a bedroom is at the front while at the back is the family bathroom, opening to a verandah with big sky views and bathed in a warm, rosy glow from its pink marble tiles and floaty pink curtains. “You can only look good in that bathroom,” muses Sarah-Jane, “It’s so pretty and all your reflections are rosy and peachy.”

Down a level from the street and the two rooms within the sandstone foundations are living and dining spaces. The linear-shaped kitchen is in a discreet extension – “the tiniest little pavilion designed by the architects that skirts along the edge of the boundary between what was the outside toilet and the house, linked by a glass wall and roof. It’s a very subtle addition”.

The kitchen connects through sliding doors to a cobblestone-lined courtyard. “The openness of that feels like a very contemporary way to live in an old house,” says Sarah-Jane who indicates one of her favourite features – the retractable orange awning. »

**This page, from top** The living area in the basement is backdropped by sandstone walls. Minotti ‘Goodman’ modular sofa from De De Ce with custom scatter cushions designed by Arent&Pyke and made by Inge Holst. Spanish martini table from The Vault Sydney. ‘Modern East Turkestan Vase’ Khotan rug from Galerie Shabab. Eternity Design Collections Brazilian rosewood ‘Catavento’ side table from Vampt Vintage Design. Custom-designed console by Arent&Pyke. Willy Rizzo table lamp from 506070. *Three Sisters* 2023 stoneware sculpture by Sarah Eddowes from Michael Reid. *Broken Monument* artwork by Mark Maurangi Carrol from Nasha Gallery. **Opposite page** Eileen Grey for ClassiCon ‘Tube Light’ floor lamp from Anibou. Serax ‘Pawn’ organic stool in Green from Becker Minty. Etcetera ‘Easy Chair’ in turmeric velvet upholstery from Tigmi Trading.







**These pages** The basement level also houses the dining area which is furnished with a custom table by Daniel Barbera with a bronze base and Ongouma marble top. Knoll Saarinen 'Conference' chairs from De De Ce. De Padova 'Wigmore' shelving system from Boffi. Stoneware sculptures by Sarah Eddowes from Michael Reid on top shelf, *Pink Peak* 2023, and on mantel (second from left), *Cloud Tower* 2023. On mantel, *Bassoon Demon* by André Piguet from Station Gallery. *Blackbird* 2024 by Mark Maurangi Carrol from Nasha Gallery. On middle shelf, far right, *Still Life with Five Bottles* by India Mark from Michael Reid. Vintage objects on shelf from 506070. On table, a pair of large Verlys Art Deco banana leaf vases from The Vault Sydney. Vintage rug. Le Klint ceiling light from Great Dane.





## SPEED READ

» Juliette Arent and Sarah-Jane Pyke of design studio Arent&Pyke were engaged to refresh this late 19th-century Georgian terrace house in inner-city Sydney. » Redolent with history, the four-storey house had stringent restrictions on any alterations but Arent&Pyke and heritage architects Long Blackledge deftly navigated these to deliver a stylish and practical family home for five. » With two rooms on each floor, one at the front and one at the back, the floorplan is simple, admitting plenty of natural light and offering views of the trees and cityscape at the front, and an outlook over the rooftops to the water at the back. » Sandstone features and timber flooring are complemented by white walls, while the jewel-toned furniture, patterned rugs and a spectacular marble dining table provide richness and texture.



« “The awning creates the most beautiful sunshiny moment. It blocks out some of the high-rise buildings in the distance and really warms the whole house. It’s convivial and jaunty – a bit of fun.”

The level above the street houses two more bedrooms, with the primary bedroom located in the attic complete with a micro ensuite bathroom and views to Walsh Bay.

While the house is compact – “my favourite kind of house, everything you need and nothing you don’t”, quips Sarah-Jane – the rooms are generous in size with both front and back spaces benefitting from abundant light and connection with the outdoors, the leafy street outlook and the cityscape enjoyed from the front rooms while those at the back look over the rooftops to the water beyond.

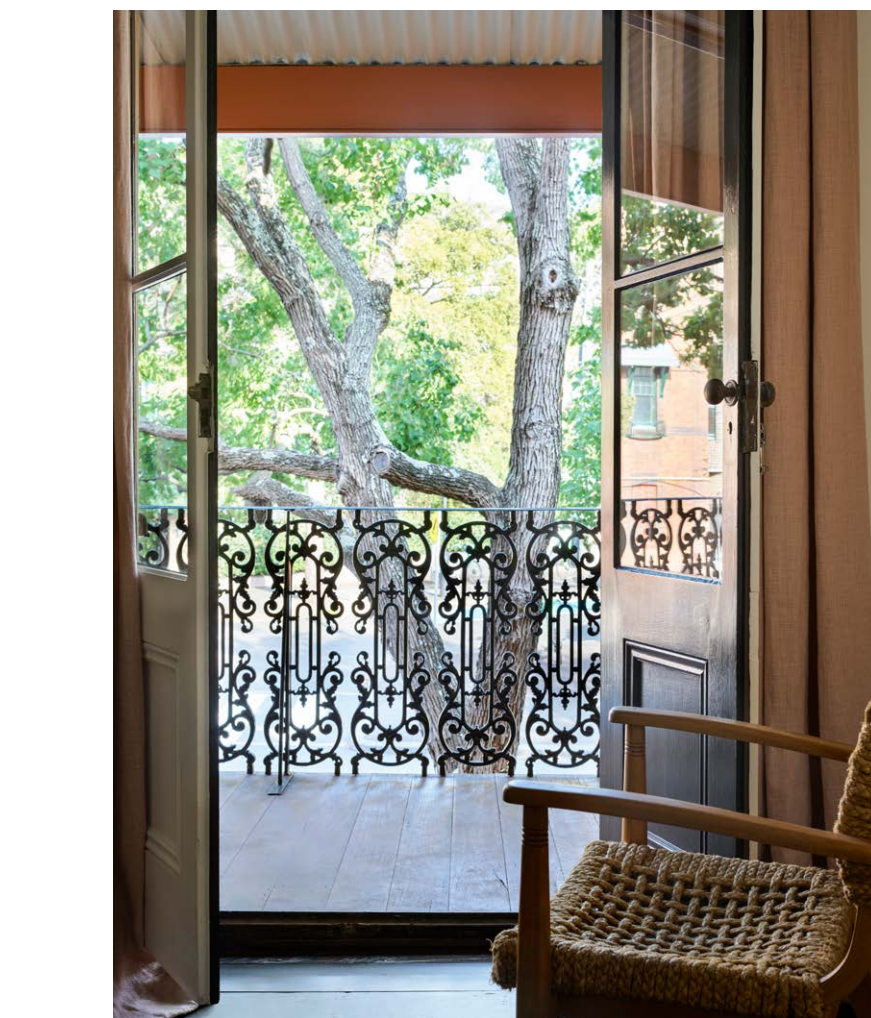
The furnishings were conceived early in the process with the sandstone as a major consideration. “The approach to the furnishings came from working with the building. When you have something stark like sandstone which is warm but also cold physically, how do you create comfort?” says Sarah-Jane. “The sandstone fireplace in the dining room is such an incredible piece but we had to work out how to bring it to life.” A custom table with a spectacular swirling marble top set in a brass frame is like a work of art, and a colourful rug introduces a warmth and richness of pattern and texture that animate the space.

Similarly, the living area wrapped in sandstone could have seemed cold but an expansive, modular built-in sofa in a deep jewel colour and a curvaceous mustard armchair on a patterned rug create a cocooning feel and it is a beautiful, comfortable gathering spot for the family.

Sarah-Jane remarks, “There’s a romance to the house – it has the ease of a contemporary home but the magic and romance of a historic one. It so beautifully matches its site in that way – the streets and that area of Sydney have such a deep colonial history. You feel you need to step so carefully but in fact we actually didn’t do anything traditional.”

There is no doubt the house has beguiled its owners, and they can’t thank Arent&Pyke enough. “Our favourite room is the kitchen with its sleek lines, textural contrasts and rich materials. The house is both an energising retreat and a character-filled space for entertaining.” [arentpyke.com](http://arentpyke.com); [longblackledge.com.au](http://longblackledge.com.au)

This page, clockwise, from top A vintage rush-seated stool and Brutalist stool, both from The Vault Sydney. Vintage Campbell’s stool and vase on mantel, both from 506070. *Double Happiness (Flag)* artwork by Mark Maurangi Carrol from Nasha Gallery. The bedrooms at the front of the house enjoy leafy street views. Vintage armchair from The Vault Sydney. **Opposite page** ‘Collide’ heavyweight bedcover by Colin King Studio from Cultiver. Bench and vintage armchair, both from The Vault Sydney. On mantel, from left, vase from 506070 and *Composition 14.3* freestanding geometric sculpture by Dan Schneider from Becker Minty.







## SIGNATURE STYLE KEY PIECES



1 'Freeway' bookcase by Giorgio Cattelan, POA, from Milano Furniture.  
2 'Tall Studio' vase in Dark Horn, \$880, from Dinosaur Designs. 3 'Trace' drinks trolley, POA, from Tait. 4 India Mark *Still life with Morandi bottle artwork*, 2024, \$6000, from Michael Reid. 5 1970s Italian lounge chair in Ochre bouclé, \$1347, from 1stDibs.

These pages, clockwise from left The family bathroom opens to a verandah with a verdant outlook. Custom joinery by Arent&Pyke in Bubinga veneer with vanity top in Carrara marble and handles in blackened bronze by Henry Wilson. Custom angled peach mirror by Arent&Pyke. Breccia Rosa honed floor tiles from Bisanna. Gilt hammered iron side table from The Vault Sydney. Object from 506070. *Still Life with Four Bottles* artwork by India Mark from Michael Reid. Serax planter from Spence & Lyda. In the hallway beside the stairs, small black and white photographic works by Traianos Pakioulakis. Glass vase and tray (on vanity) from Fineworks Paddington. ClassiCon 'Pailla' wall lamps from Anibou. Sheer curtains by Simple Studio.



Photography **PRUE RUSCOE** Styling **OLGA LEWIS** Interior designer **ARENT&PYKE**

# HIGH END, LOW KEY

Masterfully transformed, this contemporary country home has been opened up to new life, designed with rigour and infused with joy.

**This page** Business strategist Kim McKay moved from Sydney to the Southern Highlands. "Pre-Covid [my partner and I] were travelling overseas constantly for work. The pandemic made us, like many, re-evaluate how we worked and lived," says Kim, of her move to the country. 'Double Tier' ceramic sconces by Sarah Nedovic. Gabbeh' runner in Coral from Halcyon Lake. Rattan console from Girl Meraki. **Opposite page** B&B Italia 'Camaleonda' sofa from Space on custom cc-tapis 'Hello Sonia!' rug. Artwork by Stacey Mrmacovski, *Found Our Way Part 2*, from Michael Reid Southern Highlands. 'Champagne' crystal and glass side table by Edward Waring.



These pages Tacchini 'Pigreo' chair in Walnut. Cassina 'Rio' coffee table and B&B Italia 'Camaleonda' sofa from Space with custom cushion in Pierre Frey fabric, on custom cc-tapis 'Hello Sonia!' rug. On coffee table, the vintage Murano vase is the stylist's own and the bowl is the owner's existing. Artwork by Theresa Hunt. Champagne' crystal and glass side table by Edward Waring.

WHAT APPEALED TO YOU ABOUT YOUR HOME? Kim McKay: I was captivated by the property's inherent potential. The location was just what we were seeking but the interior was an unflattering interpretation of a 1980s aesthetic. The layout was a rare find that spoke to incredible possibilities and wouldn't need much structural change. It gave us the perfect mix of large open entertaining spaces and the ability to create a suite of rooms away from the living areas. The original architect had oriented this home perfectly for the highlands weather and we were also happy to find that, always important, feng shui considerations could be met. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE INTERIOR? Our goal was to create a chic, laid-back retreat. From an emotional point, we wanted a high-end finish with a low-key, comfortable feel and uplifting with colour and personality. Ultimately, we were aiming to create a sanctuary. We were looking for silence, stillness and simplicity in a way you can't get in the city. We didn't want to fall into the trap of having anything too kitsch or country so we knew who to call when it came time to help create a haven away from the demands of a city





life. I love the contemporary design style that Arent&Pyke brings and our previous project together showed me that they really know us so they are able to infuse joy into our home which is how we wanted to feel coming here. After years of travelling this was a place for us to get away from it all. Arent&Pyke took our brief and levelled everything up, and we designed every room to be effortlessly luxurious yet versatile. Perfect for private relaxation and hosting guests, the home is incredibly fun and functional. WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT LIVING HERE? Quiet is the new luxury and that's what we have. The countryside is rich in natural beauty where you can enjoy fresh air and exploring stunning landscapes right outside the door. My weird idea is that you're not in the country if the streets have gutters. In our lovely street (with no gutters) in a village of under 300 people it feels like we have been transported to the perfect country weekend. People know each other, look out for each other, and participate in local traditions and events. Living my entire life in cities, it was foreign to forge meaningful relationships with neighbours. I have come to enjoy the serendipity of meeting them on walks or in our local café or pub. DO YOU HAVE A WORK-FROM-HOME SET-UP? My set-up speaks beautifully to the design's versatility. I can move around the house depending on the task, the light and my vibe. I really enjoy working in the living area but the deep learning and client-facing work happens in the study. It includes a huge desk (an antique dining table), cosy armchair, record player and Pilates Reformer. Routine and habit are my least favourite things so I cherish the ability to move things to create a new feeling in my work space. Due to my mini obsession with feng



This page, clockwise from top Artwork is *Untitled XXII* (2017) by Juli Balla from Olsen Gallery. 'Rond' beech wood bowl from Audo on banquette which with the table were custom made by the joiner. Vase on dining table, stylist's own. In the hallway a vintage crystal bowl sits on a custom table made by joiner. Gebrüder Thonet Vienna GmbH 'Trio' counter stools. *Still Life (Gluten Free)*, 2018 by Matilda Michell. Ceramic on benchtop by Terunobu Hirata, 'White Wave' vase, and brown sculptural vessel above is 'Contemporary Artefact VIII' by Claudia De Salvo. Opposite page, from top Artwork is Meg Walters' *The Fallen* from Michael Reid which hangs above the Cassina 'Bramante' lacquered sideboard. Flos 'Taccia' table lamp. 'Remnants #26' green side table from Mario Lyda. 'August' dining table from Jardan with vintage chairs. 'Flotilla' pendant light from Blueprint Lighting NYC.







This page, clockwise from top left The mirror in the guest ensuite is a custom piece by Arent&Pyke. Rattan sconce from Dunlin Home. The sofa in the main bedroom was a vintage find. 'Allard' ottoman from Rachel Donath. A guest room features a 1920s Swedish Art Deco bedside table with 'Nelson' pear-shaped sconce from Hay. Opposite page In the primary bedroom, custom bedhead by Arent&Pyke. 'Coklat' bedside table by Studio Kallang. Le Klint 'Sax' wall lamp in White Oak.



shui it's also imperative that my office space is unfixed so my desk can be easily moved each year to maximise the positive energy. IS THERE A COMMON APPROACH THAT RUNS THROUGH YOUR WORK? Underpinning my work is the idea of progress. Is it better than before? To me, success is progress. Have I learnt something, have I grown, has it improved? I want to feel a sense of evolution in all I do. Especially in creating spaces. In pure aesthetics I like to focus on light, bold accents and the freedom to blend eclectic elements to create something personal. I fell in love with Arent&Pyke for the effortless way they bring these elements to life and guide us in finding the perfect pieces and finishes. DESCRIBE A TYPICAL WORKDAY? I don't like the idea of work or days being the same. I mix it up and maximise meeting-free days with nature walks or long lunches. I am rewiring how I work, think about work and what I do. I have been busy letting go of anything outdated and finding creativity in a mix of new subjects I have been studying. Each day I spend time on learning some French, practice skilling up on generative AI and dabble in the study of human design. I'm purely focused on future-proofing myself and my businesses. With the advances in longevity, it's likely we will all work longer so I'm currently obsessed with how that will look for me and ensuring work is built on a platform for future growth and evolution. I recommend to everyone that they take a career break. Gap years aren't just for high schoolers. If we are going to work longer we need to make that sustainable and some time in 'reirement' can make a work life longer, more sustainable and fulfilling. *kimmckay.com*

