



Endless SUMMER

In Sydney, a dramatic addition to a 1930s semi enables its owners to take full advantage of the myriad pleasures of beachside living.

STORY *Karen McCartney* | STYLING *David Harrison* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Prue Ruscoe*



HOUSES **H&G**

DECK The sheltered space offers a place to pause between the living area and the compact garden, landscaped by William Dangar. Roda 'Harp' outdoor chairs. The barbecue was custom-designed by Robert Plumb and homeowner Bill Clifton.
GARDEN Bill describes the backyard as an urban oasis. Branch lounge by Tribù. Crown ceramic stool, Robert Plumb.

Bill and Kate Clifton had earmarked this vibrant coastal suburb in Sydney's east as an ideal spot for their children, George, three, and Millie, two, to grow up in. Their first visit to this 1930s semi left them in no doubt it was the ugly duckling in the street, however. "It was pretty uninspiring at first sight," says Bill. "It faced south and consequently felt dark and cold. It had a classic semi layout - a series of sequential rooms - which didn't help, and a really awkward connection to the garden."

Some may find the process of making an old home fit for contemporary living daunting, but Bill, head of architectural building company, Robert Plumb Build, was unfazed. "I could immediately see what was possible and the first floor plan that Kate and I drew up aligned with that of our architects," he says.

Having worked with Imogene Potter and Simon Wilson of architects Potter&Wilson on a previous job, Bill was aware of how they operated and liked their ▶

THIS IS THE LIFE

Kate and Bill say they couldn't have dreamt of a better location to live in. It has a lovely local community, proximity to Tamarama and a plethora of fabulous restaurants close by. "The open-plan living and dining area that opens to the backyard and the swimming pool is one of our favourite features - it's such a nice space to live in. We've created a beautiful home in which to bring up our children," says Bill.

LIVING The Nook sofas and matching ottoman, from Jordan, pick up on the colour of the sparkling turquoise pool outside. Artwork by Kathleen Petyarre. Agra rug in Pearl, Armadillo & Co. 'Karakter TriAngle' stool by Aldo Bakker, Cult. Curtains made by Simple Studio in James Dunlop Textiles 'Kyoto' fabric. Schüco sliding doors.



“THE BEST RESULTS COME FROM HAVING A TEAM THAT WORKS REALLY WELL TOGETHER.”
Bill, owner-builder



collaborative and problem-solving style. The same went for interior designer Briony Fitzgerald. “From my experience, the best homes come from having a design and construction team that works really well together. That is what we wanted for our own project,” says Bill.

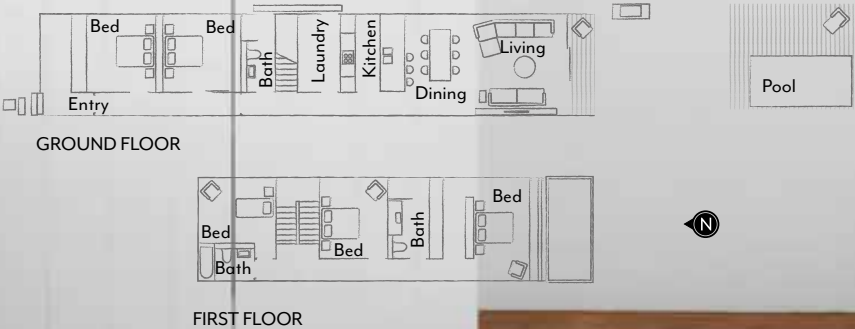
Equally, Kate’s approach was to give a concise brief of what she liked, how she wanted the home to feel and to function, and then trust the process. The wish list was extensive: a generous living, kitchen and dining area connecting to a garden with a pool, a main bedroom with ensuite, two additional children’s bedrooms and a bathroom, a study/guestroom, and a downstairs laundry and bathroom. All on a tight 270m² block.

The architects retained the ground-floor facade and front bedrooms while pumping up the sense of volume in the living room – where the ceiling height is 2.9m – and enhancing its engagement with the garden. “It was important to get light and cross-ventilation into the long, narrow building which we managed to achieve with a large picture window on the southern side and skylights in the upper storey rooms,” says Imogene. The home ►



LIVING/KITCHEN/DINING Collected treasures on display in this open-plan space include a Royal Doulton Olio jug and bowl by Barber & Osgerby. Muuto Ambit pendant lights and Nerd stools, Living Edge. Moroccan tiles (on splashback), Onsite Supply+Design. Benchtops in Super White granite, Granite & Marble Works. Zip ‘Arc’ tap and Franke mixer, Winning Appliances. Custom dining table, Robert Plumb. Spensley dining chairs, Barnaby Lane. American oak flooring. Artworks by George Byrne (this page) and Evi O (opposite).

The layout



The palette

Dulux
Vivid White
(interior,
throughout)

Haymes Paint
Christmas Holly

Dulux
Coastal Fringe



“IT WAS IMPORTANT TO GET LIGHT AND AIR INTO THE LONG, NARROW BUILDING.”
Imogene Potter, architect



MAIN BEDROOM *This page and opposite bottom right* To filter the strong light, striking external venetian blinds and louvres from Maxim were fitted. Swoon chair, Fredericia Furniture. Bedlinen, Bedouin Societe. **STAIRS** A clerestory window draws light into the core of the house. Plum pendant light, Spence & Lyda. **ENSUITE** A Carrara marble vanity softens the slick monochrome scheme. Wall tiles, Onsite Gallery. Ceramic sculpture by Jane McKenzie. **GEORGE’S ROOM** Pops of colour in the rug, from Armadillo & Co, energise the space. Custom bunk beds and ceramic stool, Robert Plumb. ▶

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.



"IT FEELS LIKE AN OASIS IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT." *Bill*

HALLWAY The decorative mouldings, the arch and the two front rooms are original to the 1930s house. Flos Glo-ball pendant lights. **FACADE** Tracing the roofline, the new first-floor addition rises up from the rear. *For Where to Buy, see page 222.*



is not heritage listed, but Imogene and Simon were mindful of minimising the appearance of the first-floor addition from the street. By playing off the existing gable angles, they achieved a structure that, while clearly contemporary, has a distinct relationship to what existed.

Interior designer Briony Fitzgerald came on board early in the process, advising on the relationship of the scale of furniture to the built form. "One of the wonderful things Briony suggested was that we have two sofas opposite one another and a TV hidden in custom-built joinery," says Kate.

In fact, with the brief to bring a relaxed beachy style to the home, Briony kept the palette broadly fresh with soft blues and greens while knowing when to dial up the drama. "In the TV room, which has 1930s proportions, we delivered intensity with a deep blue across both walls and joinery, which contrasts with burnt-orange velvet scatter cushions on a wall-to-wall denim sofa," says Briony. In the front room, which doubles as a study, Briony specified a geometric wallpaper to again denote a different aesthetic.

What both Bill and Kate love about the house is how function and aesthetics combine. "The downstairs bathroom can be accessed directly from a passageway along the southern side of the house," says Kate. "It means kids coming from the beach or the pool can go straight into the bathroom rather than tracking water and sand through the house." For builder Bill, the seamless resolution of the steel framing at the rear elevation is a highlight. "The external blind has been so well integrated that it is invisible when not in use," he says. The deck is another favourite haunt. "Watching the kids in the pool and firing up the barbecue for dinner has become an everyday occurrence."

Bill's business partner is William Dangar of landscape design practice Dangar Barin Smith, so it was only natural that William would be the one to makeover the garden. "One day, I asked when he was going to design my garden," says Bill. "Forty minutes later he had it all drawn up and I showed it to Kate, who agreed it was perfect." The result is strong and simple with two mature palms, a grassed area and a cactus garden outside the huge picture window in the main bedroom. "It has the effect of creating an oasis in an urban environment. We are very lucky - and very grateful," says Bill.

H&G

Potter&Wilson, Sydney, NSW; potterandwilson.com. Briony Fitzgerald Design, Darlinghurst, NSW; brionyfitzgeraldldesign.com.au. Robert Plumb Build, Botany, NSW; robertplumbbuild.com.au. Dangar Barin Smith, Botany, NSW; dangarbarin smith.com.au.