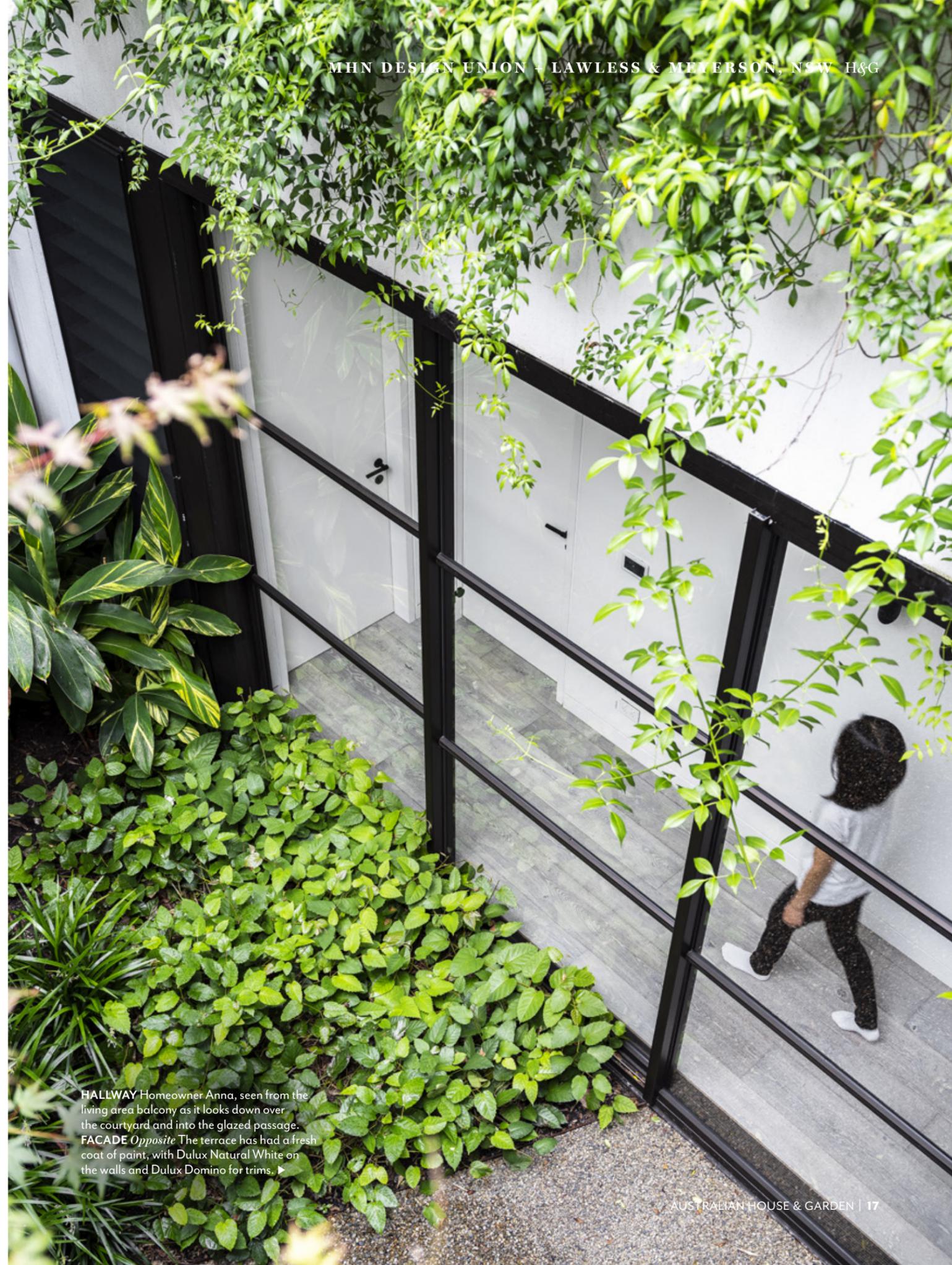


MONOCHROME MAGIC

Lush greenery, light wells and courtyards provide a significant lift to the black and white interiors of this compact city home.

STORY *Carli Philips* | STYLING *Jo Lawless & Eliza Perkins* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Tom Ferguson*



MHN DESIGN UNION + LAWLESS & MEYERSON, NSW H&G

HALLWAY Homeowner Anna, seen from the living area balcony as it looks down over the courtyard and into the glazed passage.
FACADE *Opposite* The terrace has had a fresh coat of paint, with Dulux Natural White on the walls and Dulux Domino for trims. ▶



Affectionately nicknamed 'Bondi Mews' by its owner-architect, this home is one of four terraces, three of which belong to Kevin Ng of MHN Design Union. Kevin purpose-built one of the terraces for himself, wife Anna and daughter Hayden, and was adamant about fitting in three bedrooms on the compact site. "As a firm, we do a lot of projects in this area and know the market, so we knew what was important to include," says Kevin, who was thinking about long-term value.

While the footprint was small, Kevin was determined to use every inch of the site. "Not a corner is wasted; we have even used roof space behind the first-floor family room as a mezzanine library, accessible by a ladder from the kitchen," he says. So rather than go wide, he went up, building vertically with the private quarters on the ground floor and the kitchen/living area on the first floor, where there's a balcony overlooking an internal courtyard. Thanks to a lightwell and clever devices such as high glazing, skylights, open stairs and balconies, Kevin and Anna barely switch on any artificial lights during the day. Cultivating a relationship with the outdoors was a huge part of the ▶

This page The cooking space is flooded with light, making it a pleasant place both to prepare meals and for the family to come together. The joinery is Polytec 'Woodmatt' in Black, the kitchen benchtop is Dekton Domoos in Black, and the flooring is French oak timber in Pale Grey from Woodcut. Zip tap in Matte Black, Winning Appliances. Wall oven, Miele. Cooktop, Fisher & Paykel. Kreon 'Diapason' wall lights from Dedece and bowl from Country Road. **KITCHEN** *Opposite* Anna climbs a purpose-built ladder to access tall bookshelves. These were built into the roof space behind the first-floor family room, and fulfilled the remit to expand upwards and use the house's space creatively.



"AS A FIRM, WE DO A LOT OF PROJECTS IN THIS AREA AND KNOW THE MARKET, SO WE KNEW WHAT WAS IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE." *Kevin Ng, homeowner and architect*



“INTERNALLY, IT’S A MODERN FAMILY HOME WITH A VERY MONOCHROMATIC PALETTE.”

Jo Lawless, interior designer

project, and with the help of landscape architect Dangar Barin Smith, there is now a verdant courtyard with a maple tree and three mature palms that were transported from Manly. “Bearing in mind the size of the block, it’s a great achievement,” says Kevin. “It also creates some privacy between us and the neighbours, and some amenity for them too; now they have something green and beautiful outside their windows. It may be the smallest garden I’ve seen, but it provides the most amount of amenity to the highest possible number of people. This house was as much about architecture and interiors as it was landscaping.”

Lawless & Meyerson took charge of the interiors, which Kevin wanted entirely in monochrome. His wish list included terrazzo in the bathrooms, a black kitchen and Kreon lights. Add to that matte-black fixtures, steel-framed windows and a geometric balustrade for graphic effect. The only exceptions are a pale-green feature wall in the living room and Hayden’s desk, which is a pink laminate.

There were a lot of architectural constraints, and Kevin was required to build something akin to the proportions of the surrounding terraces. He worked closely with council (the offices of which are across the road, so the heritage architect passed the site every morning) to design something that was sympathetic to the streetscape but also contemporary. “Externally, it had to look terrace-like, but internally it’s a modern family home with a very monochromatic palette,” says Jo Lawless of Lawless & Meyerson. “Given that everything is black ▶



DINING Basile & Evans ‘Elan’ stools, P4 Design. Vincent Van Duysen tray, Serax. Artwork by Karina O’Brien, Curatorial+Co. The framed works at the bottom right are Korean calligraphy. **STAIRS** *Opposite* Floating treads lead from the living level to the study/attic level.



THE PALETTE

Dulux Vivid White (interior walls)

Black 'Woodmatt' Polytec (joinery)

Pale Grey French Oak timber, Woodcut

CHILD'S ROOM Rosa Baby laminate, Abet Laminati Australia. Joinery by Interface Joinery. Leifarne Chair, IKEA. Curtains, Ezi Fit Blinds. **TERRACE** *Opposite, top* An outdoor chair from IKEA is positioned to take in the leafy outlook. **BATHROOM** *Opposite, bottom left* The ground-floor bathroom is lined with Italian terrazzo from Surface Gallery. **ENSUITE** *Opposite, bottom right* Icon mixer and shower head, both in Matt Black, Astra Walker. The towel is from Country Road.

and white, the green landscape bursts through,” adds Kevin. “It’s very lush. The idea was to let it go wild.”

DESCRIBE THE BRIEF AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE RENOVATION. To transform a tight site into an oasis of calm and transcendence with a better view to greenery and more light.

WHAT WAS THE DESIGN SOLUTION? We installed a new three-metre skylight and flipped the living area to achieve an elevated outlook over the street.

ON THE GROUND FLOOR, THE BEDROOMS NOW WRAP AROUND A CENTRAL COURTYARD. WERE THERE ANY COMPROMISES? I had to compromise on a wall and junction detail next to the staircase that isn’t positioned quite where I wanted it. Because we didn’t have time to fix it, it’s a constant reminder every time I use the staircase!

WHAT ARE YOU MOST HAPPY WITH? The garden. We couldn’t get in a proper backyard due to site constraints, but the garden and courtyard we created with Dangar Barin Smith provides a beautiful, lush outlook. It also provides us with privacy and the neighbours with a garden view.

WHAT ARE YOUR WORDS OF WISDOM FOR ANY WOULD-BE RENOVATORS? Listen to the professionals and provide a clear brief. We engaged our long-time collaborators, interior designers Lawless & Meyerson and landscape architect Dangar Barin Smith. It was the best thing we did. ▶

Design and building team Architecture MHN Design Union; mhndu.com.

Interior designer Lawless & Meyerson; lawlessandmeyerson.com.

Builder AJA Projects; ajaprojects.com.au. *Joinery* MSA Projects; msaprojects.com.au. *Landscaping* Dangar Barin Smith; dangarbarin smith.com.au.





MATERIALS & finishes

JOINERY Dekton Domoos in Black (kitchen benchtop). Black Melamine (internal joinery). Black 'Woodmatt' Polytec joinery (kitchen). Italian terrazzo, Surface Gallery (bathroom floor and wall).

FLOORING French oak timber in Pale Grey, Woodcut.

APPLIANCES Miele oven. Fisher & Paykel integrated fridge and cooker.

TAPWARE Kitchen mixer, Brodware. Icon tapware, Astra Walker (bathrooms).

COLOUR SCHEME Dulux Vivid White low-sheen acrylic (walls). Dulux Vivid White flat acrylic (ceilings).

LIGHTING Kreon 'Diapason' wall lights, Dedece.



“THE BRIEF WAS TO TRANSFORM A TIGHT SITE INTO AN OASIS OF CALM WITH A BETTER VIEW TO GREENERY AND MORE LIGHT.” *Kevin Ng*

HALLWAY *Above* Aluminium-framed windows by Micos form a glazed walkway that brings both the greenery and huge amounts of light directly into the home. **MAIN BATHROOM** *Right* Italian terrazzo from Surface Gallery is teamed with Astra Walker tapware. **COURTYARD** *Opposite A* Japanese maple and Kentia palms contribute to a verdant patch of paradise. The house extension features cement render and painted walls, and Colorbond Longline profile cladding in Dulux Monument. *For Where To Buy, see page 123. H&G*

