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PRUE RUSCOE

SPORT AND RECREATION
The harbourfront Sydney home of Stylerunner founder Julie Stevanja is an oasis of urban calm with a rockstar history. Stevanja wears Kopper & Zink top; at stylerunner.com. Matteau skirt; matteau-store.com. Balyck earrings; balyck.com. Driade Roly Poly chair; at hubfurniture.com.au

Space to breathe

Stylerunner founder and fitness devotee **JULIE STEVANJA** says her space-filled Sydney waterfront apartment is where she finds peace

by **RACHEL SHARP** photographed by **PRUE RUSCOE** styled by **AMBER MACKAY** fashion styled by **KATHERINE GREEN**



De Gournay wallpaper surrounds the marble fireplace in the living area. On the mantel sits an ornate antique mirror and hand-blown Murano vase; at thevaultsydney.com. Domo vases filled with fresh magnolias and anemones decorate the coffee table; domo.com.au. James Said linen covered chairs; jamesaid.com.au. Artwork; mcmhouse.com. OPPOSITE: Stevanja wears her own Zimmermann dress. Adidas Originals sandals; at stylerunner.com. Bird-of-paradise plant in terracotta planter; gardenlife.com.au

A generously sized dining room opens onto the courtyard. Glass candleholders; domo.com.au

“Space is so important to me—it just has such an impact on your psyche. I think a Zen space inspires more ideas”



TOP: A framed Stuart Cantor print sits on a console table from MCM House; mcmhouse.com. Leather chair and floor cushions; globewest.com.au. Indoor plants; gardenlife.com.au. ABOVE: A photograph by Stevanja's friend, Australian artist Danielle Cross, hangs in the foyer above a velvet-covered Minotti chair from De De Ce; dedece.com

She forged fame and fortune with a high-tech start-up that touts latest-trend sportswear, but when it comes to her private downtime, Julie Stevanja values old-fashioned nostalgia above all. In striking contrast to the super-cool high-energy office digs the award-winning Stylerunner founder and CEO surrounds herself with for work, the postcard-perfect Sydney Harbour-side apartment she shares with husband of six years Kej Somaia is a serene lifestyle dream.

“I’d seen this building so many times and loved it so much from the outside,” says Stevanja of the 100-year-old Spanish-Mission-style complex that’s a landmark in Sydney’s upmarket Elizabeth Bay. The Adelaide-born business graduate lived in the same street for five years before moving into the abode, previously inhabited by Wheels and Dollbaby founder Melanie Greensmith and her Divinyls guitarist partner Mark McEntee, almost two years ago.

“When I was younger, I gravitated towards cool, modern buildings but now I’m just in love with romantic, heritage-style architecture,” she notes. “I love that Elizabeth Bay feels kind of European, like the South of France, and this [five-apartment] complex feels like something from a bygone era. Obviously, we’re by the water, but it’s also one street away from all these incredible restaurants and wine bars in Potts Point, and it’s two kilometres from the CBD of Sydney, one of the coolest cities in the world. It’s a pretty special place to live.”

Given their amazing view across Sydney Harbour, facing Taronga Zoo in the distance, it’s little surprise outdoor living features heavily in the couple’s home time. “My favourite area in the house is without



TOP: Outdoor setting; hayshop.com.au. Driade Roly Poly chairs; at hubfurniture.com.au. ABOVE: A secluded jetty at the bottom of the property also doubles as a picturesque sunbathing location

doubt our beautiful courtyard—it just feels so green and serene—and the garden is a slice of heaven,” says the 38-year-old, whose parents emigrated from Croatia before she was born. “The big marble elephant statues out there are phenomenal. My husband has Indian heritage [global funds manager Somaia, 42, was born in London to an Indian mother and father who grew up in Kenya and Tanzania respectively] and that area feels like we are transported into another part of the world. We love sitting out in the courtyard, making a big pot of plunger coffee, reading the papers and looking out at the view.”

The 2016 Veuve Clicquot New Generation Award finalist, who’s the perfect poster girl for her fitspo-focused e-commerce business, also makes the most of the building’s private wharf too, but not in the sporting way you might think. “Our backyard goes all the way down to the water, so I sometimes sunbathe on the jetty,” she admits. “It’s amazing to just lie there and watch all the gorgeous little boats sail by.”

Her dwelling’s exterior might be Zen, but the way Stevanja has treated her indoor surrounds is equally serene. “One of the things I love about this place is the balance of space,” she says. “The bedrooms are fine size-wise, but the open space is in the living areas. There’s a really generous dining room and living room, so it really is made for

“It’s so green and serene here—the garden is a slice of heaven”

entertaining. Space is so important to me—it just has such an impact on your psyche.”

While her almost 30,000 Instagram followers are used to seeing the entrepreneur sport bold fabric prints and neon activewear (“subtle colours don’t look so interesting on social media”) she is quick to point out her day-to-day fashion mirrors her neutral home interior. “I love wearing monochrome,” says the former *InStyle* Women of Style finalist, who’s dressed in a cropped cable-knit jumper, leather leggings and chunky sneakers—all black—on the day we meet. “I’m the kind of person who likes the ‘take one thing off’ fashion rule and it’s the same at home with my surroundings. I prefer pared-back colour with just a few statement pieces of furniture and raw linen. To me, that clean look is very calming.”

Stevanja also has a self-described neat streak. “I like things organised and try to declutter all the time,” she notes. “I’d love to get to the point with shopping where it’s one out, one in. My pantry has everything in uniform jars, too.”

That said, there are some at-home elements this fashion lover couldn’t keep spartan even if she tried. “I must have about 100 pairs of sneakers around the place,” she admits with a laugh. “And that’s after I’ve gifted quite a few pairs out lately. I’ve got sneakers tucked in every space I can find. The drawers underneath the guest bed are literally filled with them. I probably need to find a club of size-nine women to invite over for a recycling party.”

Unsurprisingly, the myriad signature kicks filling her personal space aren’t the only nod to healthy living. “We always have two yoga mats set up side-by-side by the windows in the lounge room. In the morning, I lay there to meditate in the rising sun and do some yoga moves before I go for a workout. We’ve got foam rollers there for stretching afterwards, too.” In the kitchen, a cold-press juicer and NutriBullet both sit permanently on the benchtop, on call for daily protein shakes and vitamin hits.

Long and exhausting days are inevitable for any CEO of a global business (financial media reports Stylerunner is now worth more than \$50 million and Stevanja also owns two in-house activewear labels,



The complex’s expansive garden leads to a private pool where Stevanja often swims laps. Rachel Gilbert dress; rachelgilbert.com. Stella McCartney heels, Stevanja’s own

Hair and make-up: Rani Shortland

Flightmode and New Guard) but the change-maker tries to practise what her brands preach five mornings a week. “I get up early, have water and supplements, then walk to a gym nearby to work out—usually a spin class, but sometimes Pilates or F45,” she explains. “When I get home, I have protein and oats with things like banana, coconut [and] goji berries, before I get to the office at 8.30am at the latest. Weekends are different though. I still go for an early spin class, but this time I get to do it with my hubby. Then we’ll have brunch, go to the markets to buy flowers and organic veges. It’s our routine.”

For now, apartment living suits the couple, who first met at a business networking event eight years ago. “I know we won’t be able to live in this place forever. Things will come up in life, whether it’s moving [Stylerunner] internationally or needing more space for children, but we love it and will quite happily stay here until something drags us away—wild horses, probably.” ■