

EAST COASTING

After a decade of living in a tiny New York apartment, space and big-city style were high on the agenda when this family returned to renovate their Sydney home

cheat sheet

Who lives here Melissa Koch, an interior designer; her husband Jeremy Koch, a stockbroker; and eight-year-old twins Harrison and Stella.

Style of home A tired 1920s three-bedroom, one-bathroom bungalow on Sydney's lower north shore, which is now a glamorous two-storey home with plenty of bathrooms and a mudroom.

🕒 After buying the house in 2008, it was rented out until Christmas 2015 when the family returned from overseas. Architect Jeremy Bull was commissioned in July 2016. Plans were approved in June 2017 and construction started the following January. The build took 12 months.



DINING ROOM Melissa and Jeremy love to entertain and wanted a separate dining area. In order to use the room more often they combined it with a library and home office. "We eat at the table every night," says Melissa. "And the kids use it, too — they often grab a book and curl up on the window seat to read before bed." The Gubi 'Moon' table from Criteria is teamed with 1960s Italian dining chairs from The Vault Sydney. Chandelier, Zest Lighting. Face plates, West Elm. Unattributed artwork bought in New York many years ago. **HALL** Set against the panelling is a Soho Cirque console from GlobeWest. Vintage urn from One Kings Lane.

MURANO GLASS AND TRAVERTINE BOWL, CONLEY & CO. GLASSWARE
MONTMARTRE STORE, WHITE VASE, PLANET FURNITURE

Buying a house sight unseen isn't usually the best strategy, but it's worked out remarkably well for Melissa and Jeremy Koch. Back in 2008, the couple were three years into a 10-year stint living in New York, where Jeremy had been transferred for work.

With plans to eventually return to Sydney, they started scouring Australian real-estate websites for a house.

"We wanted to be fairly close to the city and, after so much apartment living in New York, a backyard was a priority for us," says Melissa. So when they found a 1920s house on a large block on the lower north shore, they snapped it up – despite not having inspected it in person. "We did send our parents and siblings to have a look on our behalf though. And there wasn't really any fear in not having seen it because we knew we were going to make it our own," Melissa explains.

Fast-forward to 2015, when the family – now including four-year-old twins Harrison and Stella – finally moved back to Sydney and into the house. Melissa admits the move was bittersweet. "I'd still love to be living in New York, but it felt like the right time to return. The twins were about to start school and we could see the advantages of being near the beach and having so much more space."

The couple engaged architect Jeremy Bull from Alexander & Co to help them design their dream home. "We knew how we wanted the house to function and flow, but he was amazing at finessing and improving on that," says Melissa.

For conservation reasons, the heritage facade had to be retained, but the couple decided to demolish the rest. A two-storey building was designed, although the upstairs level wasn't visible from the street. That 'secret' second floor now contains three bedrooms and two bathrooms. Downstairs, the new floor plan features a grand entrance hall, as well as a family room, combined kitchen and living area, separate dining room, bathroom, powder room and a quintessentially American mudroom, which leads through to the laundry.

During her stay in New York, Melissa, who had previously worked in advertising, retrained as an interior designer and spent nine years working for high-end Manhattan design firm Cullman & Kravis Associates. This role influenced not only the interior design of their new home but the layout as well.

"I got a real appreciation of how you have to make every inch count in the apartments [I worked on] in New York," she says, adding. "Here, we kept to the original home's footprint, and because we had been used to living in smaller spaces we didn't feel we needed a lot of [extra] air in a room for it to function well. I also learnt a lot about lighting and how you can use a few tricks to make rooms feel bigger."

KITCHEN Both keen cooks, the Kochs wanted a large kitchen where they could entertain as well as make their Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners. "I also wanted a nice big island where the kids could sit and do their homework," Melissa says. Shaker-style cabinetry is teamed with Super White marble countertops from WK-Quantum Quartz. French bistro stools, Rustic Charm. Vase and bowl (on bench), Ondene. Feiss 'Diamond Pendants', LightCo.



"We're so happy that we really live in every room of the house. There isn't a single space that sits empty and is only used on special occasions"

MELISSA KOCH, INTERIOR DESIGNER/OWNER

Despite working on a few projects in the Hamptons while she was in the US, Melissa says her design style has stayed “innately modern traditional”. It’s reflected in details such as the beautiful herringbone floors and panelled walls in the hallway, the bespoke joinery throughout and the sophisticated colour palette, some of which was influenced by the couple’s art collection. “It’s very classic and timeless,” Melissa says. “If we’re still living here in 20 years, it won’t feel dated.”

Now that the build is finished, the family love being able to stretch out in their new home. The twins, who were sleeping in a curtained-off corner of the living room in the family’s one bedroom Greenwich Village apartment, are particularly enjoying their own bedrooms.

However, Melissa says that her children’s favourite part of the house is actually the garage, fitted out with its own basketball hoop, ‘Koch Court’ scoreboard and table-tennis table. “It’s funny, you build this beautiful house and the room they love the most is the garage,” she laughs. **10**

For more information about Melissa Koch Interiors, visit melissakochinteriors.com. Alexander & Co is at alexanderand.co. The builder was HP Constructions at hpconstructions.com.au

FORMAL LIVING Two artworks by Danish artist Christiane Spangsberg influenced the design of the main living area. “We sized the panelling to highlight them,” Melissa explains. The custom mantel in ash grey marble from Nefiko is another favourite item. “It was definitely a splurge but so beautiful – something I was really happy we included in the end.” Hayden buffets, West Elm. Leo Mk 2 sofas in Warwick ‘Dolce Graphite’ fabric from Arthur G. Apollo white chairs, Becker Minty. Coffee table, Jonathan Adler. Lamps, House of Orange.

“There is a lot of New York in this house. We collected a great deal of furniture, art and accessories in the 10 years we were there, and have many of those memories on display here”

MELISSA

SAHARA WEAVE RUG, ARMADILLO & CO





KELLY WEARSTLER GRAFFITO CURTAIN FABRIC ELLIOTT CLARKE
FABRICS BRONZE LAMP WEST ELM SHEEPSKIN STOOL CBZ



lessons learnt

“Never use white grout with floor tiles in high-traffic areas”

MELISSA KOCH, HOMEOWNER

“This is advice I give to all my clients but didn’t take myself! I desperately wanted white grout with our mudroom/laundry floor tiles – like the fresh, clean sample I’d seen – so against our tiler’s advice to go with light grey, I chose white. Those muddy sneakers and soccer boots destroyed the pristine white grout almost immediately and I’m now learning to love the ‘worn-in’ look! I would also say that it’s important to enjoy the process and expect things not to go exactly according to the program – no matter how much you pre-plan! Just as in life, deliveries are delayed or the wrong product accidentally delivered, things break or are discontinued, people get sick and weather intervenes. You need to learn to adapt and be flexible.”



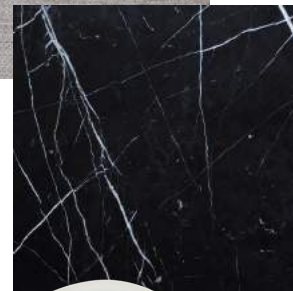
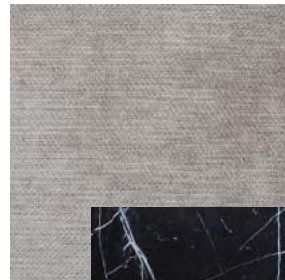
KIDS’ BATHROOM Although the bath looks small, it can comfortably fit two children. Blue tiles, Classic Ceramics. **LAUNDRY** The 1901 Farmhouse sink is from Heritage Building Centre. Janus Face vase, Jordan. **MUDROOM** “These are common in the US, and after having kids I gained an appreciation of how fabulous they are,” says Melissa. “When we come back from the beach or soccer, the kids can dump everything there and put their dirty clothes in the laundry without bringing a trail of mess through the house.” Muuto wall hooks in aluminium complement the walls and joinery in Porter’s Paints Explorer Blue. Futura floor tiles from Di Lorenzo. **STELLA’S ROOM (opposite)** “She is always going through my design books and loves a 1940s theme,” says her mum. Poppy bedhead from Heatherly Design. Roar + Rabbit bedside table, West Elm. Antique wheat-themed wall sconce bought in New York. Wardrobe painted Taubmans Soft Slippers.



GREAT FINDS

american beauty

Shiny and sophisticated, this retro-modern look won't date



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT French bistro stool, \$445, Rustic Charm Interiors. Feiss 'Diamond Pendant' light, from \$1097, LightCo. Dolce 'Graphite' fabric, \$77 per m, Warwick Fabrics. Nero Marquina marble, \$189 per sq m, Teranova. Eggshell acrylic paint (on doors and cabinetry in dining room) in Dusty Mule, \$49.95 per 1L, Porter's Paints. Gubi 'Moon' dining table in Brown/Black stained veneer oak, \$7729, Criteria. Kelly Wearstler 'Utopia' double sconce, \$980, The Montauk Lighting Co.



VINTAGE GLASS LAMP (THIS PAGE), CONLEY & CO. THROW AND BINI PILLOWCASES, MAISON ET JARDIN. ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: NATALIE JOHNSON



MAIN BEDROOM Melissa wanted their room to be dark and cosy. "We actually had a similar colour [to the Dulux Malay Grey] on the bedroom walls of our first apartment in New York and I found it so relaxing to retreat to at night," she explains. Templeton bed from Jonathan Adler. Eye Of The Tiger mirror, Jardan.

BATHROOM This is on the ground floor, adjacent to the family room. Floor tiles, Teranova. Lips poster, Banquet Workshop. **ENSUITE** Each of the bathrooms has a different feel. Here, Melissa opted for a Nero Marquina and Carrara marble floor. "The ensuite is the smallest bathroom in the house, so we used something a bit more special," she says. "I've always loved a checkerboard floor." Kelly Wearstler 'Utopia' sconce, The Montauk Lighting Co. Patterned towel, Miss April.



- 1 Entry
- 2 Family room
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Powder room
- 5 Dining
- 6 Living
- 7 Kitchen
- 8 Laundry
- 9 Mudroom
- 10 Garage
- 11 Bedroom
- 12 Bathroom
- 13 Bedroom
- 14 Balcony
- 15 Main bedroom
- 16 Ensuite



"Working with Jeremy and his team was lovely. Building and designing a house can be quite stressful so if you are working with people you gel with and whose company you enjoy, it makes the whole process much more seamless"

MELISSA