

The style diary

FORSTER-BASED BUSINESS OWNER SARAH STEELE'S LOVE OF THE NATURAL WORLD INSPIRES HER WORK AND WARDROBE.

WORDS RACHEL WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY BRIGID ARNOTT

SARAH STEELE'S INFATUATION with one-of-a-kind furniture, antiques and vintage pieces started early in life. "I grew up on a sheep farm near Tamworth," says Sarah, 44. "My parents were forever collecting and refurbishing beautiful antiques for a home they were building, and us kids spent our weekends helping where we could." Early exposure to the process of renovating and restoring instilled in Sarah an appreciation for unique objects and creative spaces.

Sarah met her husband James, 43, at uni, and together they travelled the world, got married, and welcomed two sons before settling back on the New England sheep farm where she grew up. "We moved into a tiny two-bedroom farmhouse, and I took great pleasure in ripping up carpet, hand-oiling floorboards and painting walls with old paint that we mixed to make our own colours," she recalls. But when their third son was born, the duo realised it was time to build something

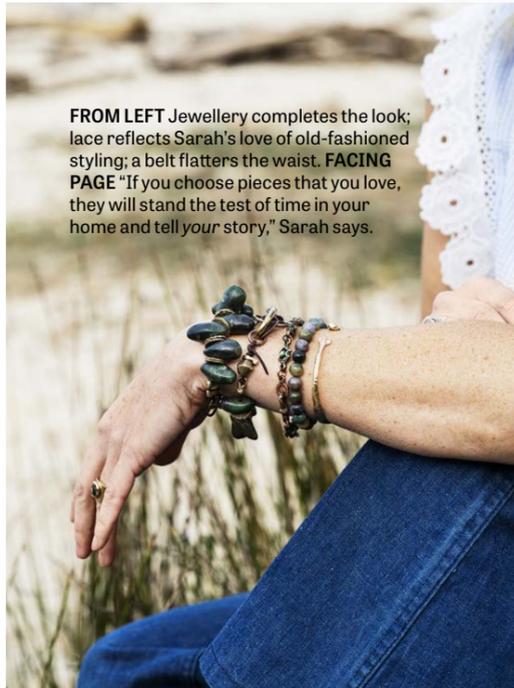
bigger: "It was during the build that I found my love of combining old and new. I would search high and low for special pieces, like the old claw-foot bathtub I'd previously found in a paddock that I re-enamelled with a DIY kit."

After almost a decade in Tamworth, in 2021, the Steeles relocated to James's home town of Forster, NSW. Now, the family of five lives in a half-renovated home by the beach ("I'm always working on it," admits Sarah), and two years ago, Sarah opened her own homewares shop, Green Patina Home. Full of vintage gems mixed with carefully curated contemporary homewares, art and jewellery, it's a place to share her love of creativity and promote sustainability through reinvention: "Green Patina Home is about seeing the beauty in aged pieces and bringing them to life again in a new space, being considered in your purchasing choices, and choosing what brings you joy."

Sarah's considered approach to her home extends into every part of her life, including her wardrobe. "I love scouring second-hand shops - I'm always drawn to a vintage look, old-world jewellery and accessories," she says. "I love pairing denim with lace, vintage finds and handmade pieces, finished with antique jewellery and my trusty Blundstones." Primarily inspired by the colour and mood of her seaside surroundings, she adds, "It is the natural environment that keeps me centred and calms my mind. And this is what I try to emulate through my style." >

"After living in the country for so many years, it feels a real treat to be able to walk across to such a beautiful, hidden beach neighbouring national park, and enjoy the natural seascape and ever-changing rocky outcrops any time of the day," says Sarah Steele, owner of homewares store Green Patina Home in Forster, NSW.

FROM LEFT Jewellery completes the look; lace reflects Sarah's love of old-fashioned styling; a belt flatters the waist. FACING PAGE "If you choose pieces that you love, they will stand the test of time in your home and tell your story," Sarah says.



SARAH STEELE

STYLIST AND BUSINESS OWNER, 44

Sarah lives in Forster, NSW, with her husband James, 43, and sons Ollie, 17, Jasper, 15, and Henry, 13 – plus black labrador Banjo and dachshund Ralph.

How would you describe your style? I am drawn to elegant, timeless and old-world designs, with a touch of country.

Are you interested in fashion? I love fashion, but I don't really follow trends – especially as I get older! I dress for comfort, but I like to show my unique style, and love finding pieces that are different and can be worn for years to come.

Who are your style influences? I'm influenced by anyone who shows creativity in their styling.

What's the best style advice you've ever received? "Be yourself; everyone else is already taken." This is an Oscar Wilde quote that I always refer to in the way I live, the way I run my business, the way I dress and the way I decorate.

What are your wardrobe essentials? Anything denim and my comfortable boots. Plus, my antique and special jewellery pieces which make me feel a little dressed up, even when I'm not.

What are your favourite clothing labels? I love anything vintage or handmade.

Where do you shop for clothing and accessories? I always check out vintage shops if I'm after something special. Indigo Attic in Forster has been my go-to for years.

What are your essential beauty products? My main beauty product is sunscreen. I wear it every day under a tinted moisturiser. I'm also partial to a dry shampoo before I run out the door, and I always carry a good tinted lip balm.

Do you have a favourite fragrance? Issey Miyake L'Eau d'Issey has been a favourite ever since my husband bought me a bottle for Christmas 19 years ago, and Estée Lauder's Aerin Cedar Violet for a fresh, everyday scent.

Do you have any favourite accessories? My Lightning Ridge opal ring. I co-designed it to replace my original opal wedding ring, which I lost on our 10th wedding anniversary

while hiking through Yuraygir National Park in NSW. I also love my old leather belt – I wear it with skirts, dresses and jeans to bring the waist in and add a touch of vintage to the outfit.

What helps you keep a balanced life? Living with the natural environment as part of my everyday routine makes a huge difference – getting out for a walk on the beach, through the trees or under the big sky keeps me feeling grounded. Also, making time for the little things with my husband and boys, such as coffee together each morning, dinner around the table as a family, or an end-of-week drink together.

What are you reading/listening to/watching? Each day in my shop I put on a different playlist that is calming, nostalgic or full of soul. I love listening to Ocie Elliott, Olivia Dean, The Teskey Brothers, Norah Jones, Fleetwood Mac and Bruce Springsteen. I'm also currently reading *Family Houses in the Country* by Alexandra D'Arnoux.

What do you never leave home without? My lip balm, sunnies... and a green tea bag.

Where are your favourite local spots to eat? Swoop, a vibey little cafe next to my shop, and Si Señorita for great Mexican and margies by the lake.

Where are your favourite spots to shop for homewares? I can't go past a vintage or antique shop. There is something about old pieces that just cannot be replicated – their story and beautiful patina bring warmth and gorgeous unique style to the home. *CS*

Visit greenpatinahome.com.au or [@greenpatinahome](https://www.instagram.com/greenpatinahome)
Read more about Sarah's store in our travel story on Forster, starting on page 116. >



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT "We decided to make the move from country to coast in 2021. We wanted our boys to experience part of their childhood near the ocean, as James did," says Sarah; "Part of the ethos behind Green Patina Home is to promote the idea of making considered choices – choosing pieces you love that stand the test of time, not a mass-produced product that will end up in landfill," says Sarah; comfy boots for outdoor adventures; denim is an everyday favourite.



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PRODUCED BY JUDIE SIU

1 Aje Holland denim midi dress in Coastal Wash, \$499, from David Jones. 2 Ngali Pink Gum silk scarf in Multi Print Pink, \$395, from David Jones. 3 Margot mesh knit tank in Stripe, \$69.99, from Indigo Attic. 4 Felle Broderie blouse in Chalk, \$169.99, from Style Runner. 5 Sarah & Sebastian Petite Birthstone opal necklace in Yellow Gold, \$520, from David Jones. 6 Aerin Cedar Violet eau de parfum, \$225 (50ml), from David Jones. 7 Ellie jean in Meridian Mid Blue, \$279, from Outland Denim. 8 Oroton Mica mini bowler in Natural/Penny Brown, \$379, from David Jones. 9 Miranda Oversize sunglasses, \$450, from Zimmermann. 10 Women's Classics #2446 Chelsea boots in Clay, \$269.95, from Blundstone. 11 High Society printed tulle skirt in Twinkle Twinkle Cream, \$149, from Hummingbird the Shop. 12 Open Opal stacking ring in Yellow Gold, \$980, from Sarah Gardner Jewellery. 13 Leroy jumper in Emerald, \$399, from Sage x Clare. 14 Acler Women's Clarkington wedge sandal in Ivory, \$380, from David Jones.

