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BY THE BEACH

THIS SUPERBLY RENOVATED HOME IN THE SYDNEY BEACHSIDE SUBURB OF BRONTE IS A MAGNIFICENT EXAMPLE OF MODERN COASTAL LIVING.

STORY SUNNY DE BRUYN PHOTOGRAPHY TONY POTTER STYLING FIONA SHAKESPEARE





AMANDA AND JAMES ARE FORTUNATE TO LIVE ONLY A STONE'S THROW FROM THE BEACH. THEIR UPDATED THREE-BEDROOM HOME HAS BEEN CLEVERLY DESIGNED TO MAXIMISE LIGHT AND SPACE WITH ITS SOARING CEILINGS AND WINDOWS AND FABULOUS OPEN-PLAN LAYOUT. AS A RESULT, EVERY ROOM IN THE HOME IS FLOODED WITH NATURAL LIGHT.

To complement the style of the home – as well as its proximity to the beach and the needs of James and Amanda's lifestyle – the couple chose to decorate with modern, clean lines. The emphasis was also on good-quality finishes and using natural fibres, textures and materials.

The couple enlisted the help of interior designer Fiona Shakespeare to pull together their look. "I have known Amanda for many years – since university days – and James has done photography for my portfolio," says Fiona. "When they purchased their home in Bronte, they asked me to help them design the furnishings." It was quite a project as, apart from the beds, almost none of the furniture came from their previous home and everything was sourced from scratch.

"I helped them define the look they wanted to achieve, the colour palette, furniture and paint colour, rugs and lighting. I also helped them choose some art – though they both have a very artistic eye and didn't need a lot of help in that department," says Fiona.



Above James took the spectacular photographs of the Sydney Opera House that are such a striking feature in the dining area.

Right The windows in the home have the most beautiful proportions and are the perfect backdrop for Amanda and James' relaxed yet edgy style.

Far right The jug and ceramics on the table are from Koskela, the vase is from Mud Australia and the candles are from Marrimekko.

Opposite page

Above The Nook sofa from Jardan is perfectly paired with the Douglas and Bec coffee table and Borge Mogensen armchair from Bo Butik. The cushions are from Cloth and Utopia Design and were custom-made in fabrics from Sparkk and Shibori. Amanda sourced the Aboriginal artwork from a local gallery and the rug is from Bayliss.



"I also thought the style should incorporate lots of natural materials to reflect the beach lifestyle"



NATURALLY CONTEMPORARY

To create the couple's vision, Fiona chose furnishings that were modern and crisp with layers of texture and colour. "I also thought the style should incorporate lots of natural materials to reflect their beach lifestyle – this meant choosing furniture with timber legs, chairs with woven cord seats and earthy linen and wool upholstery fabrics," she reveals.

Decorating the home took around six months from start to finish. "Amanda is so easy to work with and very organised. She and James knew what they liked – though they didn't agree on everything!" Fiona laughs. However, the overall experience was a seamless one. "Once we had built a mood board, I set about sourcing a short-list of furniture and furnishing items to discuss with them. Then we'd make a final selection."

Above The open-plan kitchen gets plenty of light and breeze and overlooks the outdoor entertaining area. The Steelwood stool by Magis are from Cult Design and the pendant lights are Mingus by Lightyears, also from Cult Design.

Opposite page Interior designer Fiona says that her favourite thing in the house are the Mingus lights in Celadon Green and Neutral Grey, which she says are such a beautiful soft colour and have a gorgeous satin sheen to them.

[FIONA'S DECORATING TIPS]

What would you suggest for readers trying to achieve a similar look? Use your favourite colour and work with different shades of it, mixed with lots of neutrals – creams, greys and whites always work. Then choose one other colour to add as a small amount of accent. This style is essentially Scandi with a mix of Australian beach. There is a strong theme of good craftsmanship in every piece of furniture; nothing is overly rustic or ornate, everything is simple and refined. Don't be afraid to use touches of black to add glamour and sophistication.

What decorating tip would you give readers?

One of the best things about working with Amanda and James is they appreciate the importance of decorating your walls as well as choosing furniture. As James is a photographer, he appreciates the impact framed art can make to a home and so his input was invaluable when planning what to put on the walls and the colour of the frames and size etc. When you have art on the walls your eye is drawn up to see the full scale of your room and the effect is transformative.



Above The master bedroom has fabulous plantation shutters that can be thrown open to reveal the lovely balcony and unobstructed views of the sky.

Below Amanda and James' airy upstairs bedroom is a soothing oasis to retreat to. Blanket throw by Bemboka, cushions by Cloth, bench designed by Borge Mogensen from Great Dane Furniture and Stella side table from Zuster Furniture. The glass lamp is a custom design from Shakespeare Design.



COMFORT WITH STYLE

The homeowner had a lot of input in the decorating process. "Amanda sourced the stunning original Borge Mogensen chair from Bo Butik and then I incorporated it into the furniture plan for the lounge room and found a beautiful aqua fabric to have it covered in," Fiona says, adding that she and Amanda have very similar personal tastes, so they worked together effortlessly. "James had input on key decisions, such as the comfort level of the sofa – key to any household!" Fiona laughs. And, as James works from home, it was really important that he both liked the colour palette and style and found it comfortable.

[BEHIND THE SCENES]

With Interior Designer, Fiona Shakespeare

[Favourite thing about the house]
My favourite things are the Mingus lights in Celadon Green and Neutral Grey. They have the most beautiful soft colour and satin sheen to them.

[Favourite room in the house]
My favourite room is the main bedroom – I love the large plantation shutters that open to the balcony with a big view of the sky seen from the bed. The Aboriginal artwork looks perfect with the Borge Mogensen bench seat.

[Favourite object or piece of decor]
I have two favourite pieces: James' incredible photographs of the Opera House in the dining area, and the timber sideboard from Zuster in the lounge room.

[Biggest challenge in creating this home]
Our biggest challenge was designing a look that fitted Amanda and James' existing lifestyle as busy working people who love to entertain, but also suited their hoped-for future lifestyle as parents of a new baby. They were successful on this score too, and are now parents to twins, so the decor has been put to the test and – they'd surely agree – has passed with flying colours.



Above left Amanda sourced the vibrant red artwork in the guest room. Pretty cushions from No Chintz continue the bold colour theme. The small side table is from Chris Colwell Furniture.

Above The sweet nursery for the twins is a bright and welcoming space. The cot blanket and cushion are from No Chintz and the chair is a vintage find from an antiques market. The gorgeous, playful rug is from Down to the Woods and the cot is Leander.

Left Aesop toiletries are an elegant addition to this bright bathroom with its unfussy, clean lines and crisp feel.

[COLOUR CODE]

They chose a calming colour palette of whites and pastels with splashes of black. Fiona says she wanted the palette to feel harmonious with graduated changes in tone rather than bold clashes of colour, and it felt right in this house.

DULUX NATURAL WHITE





Above Built-in benches maximise outdoor space and create extra seating. The cushions are covered in fabrics from South Pacific Fabrics and Publisher Textiles. Fiona sourced the decorative glass bottle.



Left There's a lovely natural flow from the dining area to the courtyard, making it a stunning space for entertaining.

Below Evidence of a relaxed life by the beach – a bike and a surfboard rack!



One of the main challenges they came across was finding furniture in materials and fabrics that were up to the minute but also serviceable with small children, as Fiona says Amanda and James were planning a family at the time. “We went for materials that had a naturally rustic finish so if anything got stained or scratched in the future it was either washable or wouldn't be too noticeable,” Fiona explains. For example, the Hudson dining table from MCM House has a textured timber finish with a glazed coating, which Fiona says is very forgiving. “I also selected a combination of replica Wishbone chairs from Matt Blatt to sit alongside Italian-made Drive chairs from Bedont, sourced from Hub Furniture,” she adds.

The furnishings are beautiful quality and work just as well whether people have sand all over their feet, or when entertaining friends for dinner.