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making waves

In the middle of Sydney's bustling Bondi, a couple transforms a '90s duplex into a light, air-filled retreat without knocking down a single wall

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cheat sheet

Who lives here: Louisa, managing director of digital marketing agency Click2it; her husband Ryan; and their dog Sim, a labrador x staffy x shar-pei rescue.

Style of home: A three-bedroom 1990s duplex in the Sydney suburb of Bondi.

🕒 Louisa and Ryan engaged interior designer Kristy McGregor after buying the home, and the interior was completed around four months later. The garden took an extra two months.

💰 The couple spent around \$150k on their reno and garden.

WHITE POT PLANTS (OPPOSITE), THE BALCONY GARDEN, THEBALCONYGARDEN.COM.AU; OVENS, VZUG, VZUG.COM

EXTERIOR (opposite) The back garden of Louisa's Sydney home boasts lush plantings and an expansive white mahogany deck, with 'Jedd' armchairs and a coffee table from MCM House. Louisa and husband Ryan chose artificial grass from Grassman. "There's no watering and no mowing," she says. "It's life-changing!" **KITCHEN** Louisa (pictured) with her dog Sim. The polished concrete floor was part of the original house and fits in with the updates, and the original spotted gum flooring was sanded, limewashed and revived by Mint Floor Sanding & Finishing.



For so many of us, renovating is a necessary evil and a way to take a buy from so-so to whoa. We hope the hard work will bear fruit. For Louisa and her husband Ryan, that’s not the case – they know it will. “Oh no,” she says. “We’re born renovators. We love it!” Before purchasing this home near the beach in Sydney’s highly prized Bondi, the couple renovated a property in nearby Rose Bay and another on the NSW Central Coast, which Louisa concedes was “a complete dump” until they worked their magic. She and Ryan also own a home in Byron Bay, and it’s next on the list to spruce up.

“We love the challenge of renovating,” says Louisa. “With this house, it was about taking something good and making it great.” The only problem? They fall in love with the properties and don’t want to sell them, which is the point of buying them in the first place. Luckily for them, this home is for living, not selling.

It was love at first sight, too. “We could see the potential for it to be beautiful,” she says. “When we saw it online, it looked OK, but then we saw it in the flesh and it blew us away. The garden was a lot bigger than it appeared, and even though it’s a duplex, it felt really spacious.” The location was also a huge drawcard so, realising they were inspecting the house the day before its scheduled auction, they made an immediate offer.

The home had been renovated by its previous owners. “They spent a lot of money in some areas,” says Louisa, pointing to certain fixtures such as a sunken polished granite bath. However,

she and Ryan had plans to make the home fit in better with its coastal surroundings. “We wanted to lighten it, make it a bit warmer and more beach-friendly,” says Louisa.

Having worked with interior designer Kristy McGregor on a previous project, they called her and asked for her expertise.

The renovation was comparatively small, with not a single wall being knocked down, but it made a world of difference in opening up the space and giving it an air-filled, Scandinavian vibe. “It was quite dark,” says Kristy. “The walls were a really ‘nothing’ beige, the window frames and doors were painted very dark, the floors were a spotted gum floorboard. It didn’t reflect the location, being so close to the beach and north-facing.”

The existing kitchen had dark wood and outdated fixtures and was the first to go. In its place now stands a studio-style kitchen fitted against a downstairs wall. “We absolutely love the kitchen,” says Louisa. “It’s very much a cook’s kitchen, with a steam oven and a conventional one.” Storage works hard to both streamline the space and declutter. “There’s a hidden cupboard for the appliances,” she adds. “There’s not a lot of space, so we want to make it as tidy as we can.” The floors were refinished and the walls, window frames and doors were painted white.

Furniture and its placement was a significant consideration. “Being a duplex, it’s an odd layout,” says Louisa. “We wanted to maximise the space and still make it feel open.” A vast custom dining table, for instance, fills the room, and a long sofa opposite the kitchen makes that area seem cosy.



KITCHEN (opposite) There's plenty of storage space in the custom zone built by Oska, with a splashback and marble benchtop by Marable providing contrast.

LIVING AREA “The sisal rug was custom made and makes the area seem bigger. It adds to the relaxed feel but still feels elegant,” says Louisa. The palm tree art is by Byron Bay artist Jai Vasicek. “The cool tiles work nicely with the linen sofa from Camerich,” she adds.

MIXER (ABOVE) ASTRA WALKER, ASTRAWALKER.COM.AU PANTRY HANDLE, INDEX + CO, INDEXANDCOCO.AY ILLUMINATE ZI BLACK PENDANT LIGHT, SPENCE & LYDA, SPENCEANDLYDA.COM.AU THROW, COUNTRY ROAD, COUNTRYROAD.COM.AU PLANTER, GARDEN LIFE, GARDENLIFE.COM.AU

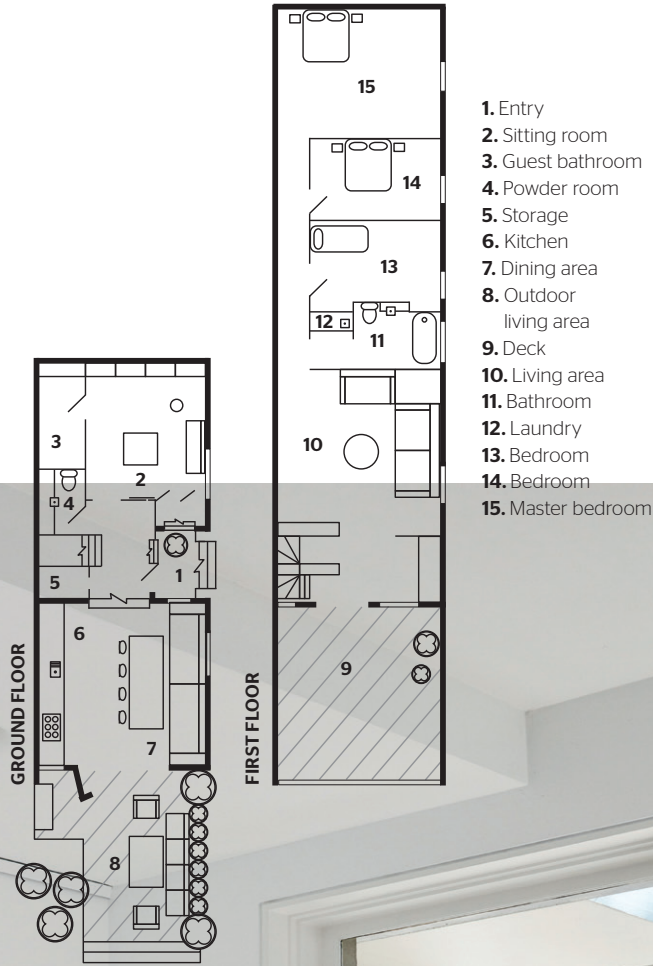
Joinery also helps to define dead space and gives a sense of purpose as well as more much-needed storage. “There was a room downstairs near the kitchen that was a bit ‘nothing,’” says Kristy. “But by putting in joinery, with open shelving, we gave it a reason for being. Now it can be a sitting room or even a guest room, but it looks like it’s meant to be there. It fits in.”

Outside, Louisa and Ryan were intent on creating a sanctuary. “The garden is quite big for the area, and we wanted to capitalise on that,” she says. “We kept the beautiful frangipanis and planted almost everything else, to give a sense of privacy and seclusion.” Artificial grass was laid because the garden doesn’t get a lot of sun. “You have to get the right fake grass!” says Louisa, laughing. “They come in different grades, and some look more real than others. We laid down one type and it looked so artificial – it was terrible. The blades were a bit longer and looked off, somehow. But this, unless you’re up close, you can’t tell. It’s just perfect.”

An outdoor shower was installed to wash off after beach visits, and even here, in an area that’s almost totally functional, the couple have pulled off a certain elegance. “Don’t you love the exposed piping?” asks Louisa. “And the pink timber wall? That’s actually the look of the timber itself – it’s not painted. We put it in and planned to paint it, but then we saw the freshness of the green plants in contrast to the pink and thought, ‘Ooh, that might stay.’ So we might change it but, for now, it’s ideal.”

The garden, she continues, is exactly the oasis they’d hoped for. “People come over and say, ‘Oh wow, it’s so quiet and cool down here. You wouldn’t imagine Bondi is right outside the front door.’ And you really wouldn’t.” **10**

Learn more about Louisa’s work at click2it.com.au. For other projects by Kristy McGregor Interior Design, visit kristymcgregor.com.au. The joinery was done by Oska, oskagroup.com.au, and the landscaping by Azar Landscapes, azarlandscapes.com.



LIVING AREA (opposite) Cushions and a ‘Tonk’ stool, both from MCM House, and the home’s existing daybed, turn this nook into a feature. The face sculpture is from Annabelle’s in New Zealand’s Hawke’s Bay region. **DINING AREA** Louisa and Ryan are big entertainers, so a 3m oak ‘X Table’ and ‘Le Corbusier’ chairs from The Wood Room, and a ‘Joe’ sofa from MCM House, make an ideal setting. “This table fits the space well but doesn’t feel too big,” says Louisa. The artwork is by David Bromley, and the Paris Au Mois D’août pendant light is from Hub Furniture.



bright idea

Louisa and Ryan placed a comfortable sofa on one side of the large dining table to make the setting visually appealing and also to encourage long lunches.



lessons learnt

“SOMETIMES IT’S BEST TO BUY OFF THE SHELF”

LOUISA, HOMEOWNER

“We have a copper sink in the kitchen and wanted taps that matched exactly. We spent a lot of time and money trying to get off-the-shelf metal taps dipped in the exact shade of copper we needed, doing it ourselves – when we should have bought copper taps and coped with the small difference between them! It was a lot of effort for nothing.”

5 GREAT FINDS

QUALITY OF LIFE Wood’s natural beauty and a few design classics successfully crown any interior.



1 ‘B9 Le Corbusier’ armchair, \$370, Thonet, [thonet.com.au](https://www.thonet.com.au).



2 Paris Au Mois D’août pendant light, \$355, Hub Furniture, [hubfurniture.com.au](https://www.hubfurniture.com.au).



3 ‘Aiden’ coffee table, \$1835, GlobeWest, [globewest.com.au](https://www.globewest.com.au).



5 ‘Lunar’ vase by Sarah Ellison, \$379, Life Interiors, [lifeinteriors.com.au](https://www.lifeinteriors.com.au).

4 ‘X Table’ dining table, from \$4150, The Wood Room, [thewoodroom.com.au](https://www.thewoodroom.com.au).

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: NATALIE JOHNSON



BATHROOM (opposite) Louisa and Ryan haven’t touched any of the bathrooms.

“I love the sunken granite bath in the upstairs bathroom,” she says. **MASTER BEDROOM**

A mix of elements – low-pile carpet from Mr Carpet, cool linen bedding from In Bed and a textural bedside table from Bisque Traders – delivers refined style. “Ryan and I found this rug at the Grand Bazaar market in Istanbul,” says Louisa. “We bought it on our honeymoon and it always evokes happy memories.” The Freedom bed and Kmart ‘Marmo’ lamp are from closer to home.



star performer

Throughout their home, Louisa and Ryan have opted for fewer artworks but chosen pieces with extra impact. In the master bedroom, a *My Best Side* print of a Scottish Highland cow, from Pampa, certainly achieves that.



EXTERIOR Louisa and Ryan designed the outdoor living area and back garden layout and asked Azar Landscapes to turn it into reality. "Don't be afraid to ask for what you want," she says. "It's your home." The timber seat was built into the existing retaining wall.

BYRON BEANBAG CHAISE (OPPOSITE), ECO OUTDOOR, ECOOUTDOOR.COM.AU



“The outdoor area really does feel so far away from the city. We worked hard to make it private and secluded. It's our own little world”

LOUISA, HOMEOWNER

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