



MADE TO MEASURE

After a *stylish* makeover, a *Sydney* bungalow fits its owners like a *finely tailored* wardrobe.

Photographs PRUE RUSCOE Words CHRIS PEARSON Styling AMANDA MAHONEY



This page The house makes the most of its prime waterfront location. 'Good One' table and 'Jak' chairs from Takt. Opposite page Rich and alluring charcoal makes a dramatic statement in the entry. 'Mantis' floor lamp and 'Muffin' table lamp, both from Spence & Lyda. 'Stanley' stool and 'Nook' sofa from Jordan. Wire-brushed oak custom joinery, in black stain, by Ecostyle. Wall in Resene SpaceCote 'Gravel'. Framed photograph by Frenchy.

Designers and their clients meet in different ways, but rarely would a pair of chic designer trousers have been the catalyst. In September 2013, the owner of this now translucent, light-filled house in Cronulla, NSW, spied interior designer Yasmine Ghoniem of Amber Road in a magazine article on emerging talent. “She contacted me and asked where she might find herself the very same pair of pants,” says Yasmine, “and in turn whether we would be able to provide design services for their home.”

Just like the trousers, the relationship would later prove a perfect fit, both aesthetically and practically. The modest three-bedroom weatherboard, home to a couple with two teenage children, was built by the owner five years before. But the rooms remained “dark dungeons”, says Yasmine. Despite walls and ceilings in white, crisp marble floors and floor-to-ceiling glazing, this brilliantly located waterfront property failed to launch, thanks to low ceilings and too much white, which “created grey shadows in the areas where no light reflected, the overall effect being muddy and uninspiring. And the dark furniture was bulky and overbearing.”

The interior lacked “that special touch”, adds the owner. “It was stark. We wanted it to be relaxed and calming, with colour in the furnishings. And simple – we don’t like pretentiousness.”

Over the eight-month project, an original – er, brief – brief of “pick the furniture” became anything but, as it mushroomed to repainting the walls, installing joinery, sourcing artworks and landscaping – which was where Yasmine’s sister, landscape designer Katy Svalbe,

“THE OWNERS WERE SO CONFIDENT IN WHAT WE COULD DO, THE PROJECT TOOK OFF. THEY GAVE US THE KEYS TO THE MANSION.”

These pages A 10-metre concrete bench adds panache to the living area. ‘Lampe de Marseille’ floor lamp by Le Corbusier from Cult. Artifort ‘Butterfly F675’ side chairs by Pierre Paulin, and Nonn ‘Liaison’ sofa, all from Living Edge. Moroso ‘Fishbone’ coffee table by Patricia Urquiola from Hub. Beni Mguild hand-knotted rug from Kulchi. Wall in Resene SpaceCote ‘Taupe Grey’. Burnished concrete ledge by Promena Projects. Sliding wall panel in American oak by Evostyle. Photograph by Frenchy.

"THE FURNITURE WAS KEPT TO A MINIMUM AND EACH PIECE WAS LOCATED TO ACCENTUATE ITS BEAUTY AND BREAK UP THE SPACES."



the other half of Amber Road, entered the picture. "The owners were so confident in what we could do, the project really took off. They gave us the keys to the mansion," says Yasmine.

But, while the project grew, the owners' desire for simplicity remained. For this, Yasmine referenced a Japanese design aesthetic called *wabi-sabi*. "This restrained, hand-crafted, aesthetic was achieved by selecting iconic pieces which had sculptural qualities, beautiful shapes and impeccable craftsmanship," says Yasmine. "The furniture was kept to a minimum and each piece was located to accentuate its beauty and break up the spaces."

Virtually the only structural work was the installation of a 10-metre floating concrete bench, which links the adjoining formal and informal living areas in the open plan and sets the tone for the space. Perched above this bench, an American oak sliding panel edged in bronze deftly hides the TV. "The panel is like a piece of art in itself," she says.

The biggest challenges for Yasmine were the downstairs main bedroom and ensuite – the only rooms on the lower level – which were chilly and uninviting. To warm them up, she affixed birch-ply panelling to the bedroom walls and designed a credenza in rich ebony American oak, with brass legs, for storage in the ensuite.

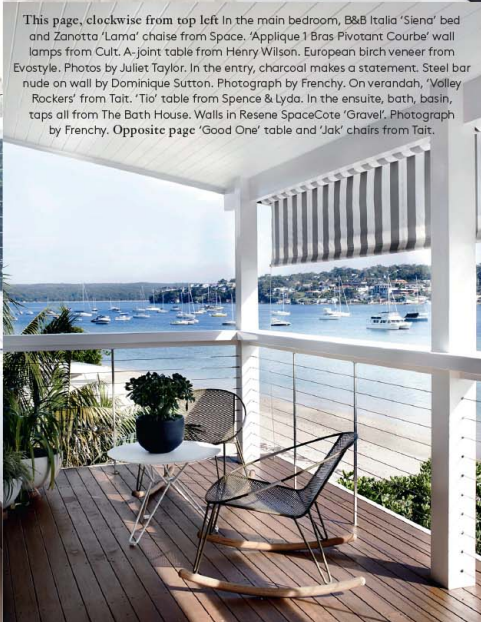
But arguably, paint effected the largest transformation, with Yasmine persuading the owners to part with their all-white walls. "Colour is so intricate and we were finicky about getting it right," says Yasmine, who collaborated with colour consultant Sonia Van De Haar, of Lymesmith, to create a palette of "rich blacks, warm greys and bright whites". Both fresh and warm at the same time, it eschews the shadows that plagued the all-white palette.

"We never would have thought of painting those walls in greys and blacks," says the owner. Having stepped outside their old comfort zone for one much more stylish, the couple rave over the results. No longer an awkward fit, this waterfront home, just like those stylish trousers that first caught the owner's eye, is tailor-made for them and their lifestyle. 15

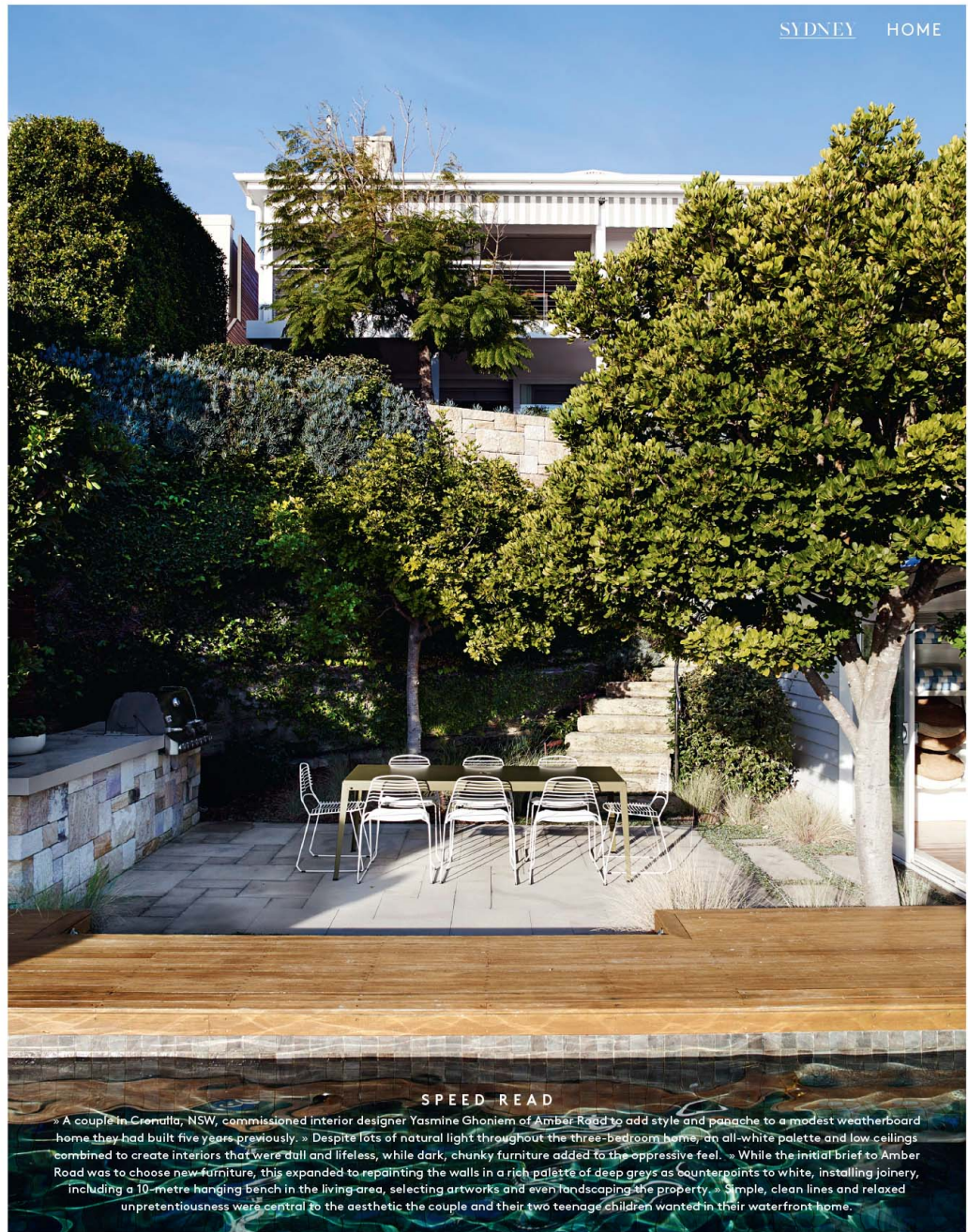
For more go to amberroaddesign.com.au; lymesmith.com.au.



This page Classics serve up design cred in the dining area. Dining table in American oak from Henry Wilson. Walter Knoll 'Cuoio' and BD Barcelona 'Gaulino' dining chairs from Living Edge. Gubi 'Semi' pendants from Cult. Opposite page 'Spanish Chair' from Great Dane Furniture. 'Stanley' stool, 'Wilfrid' chair and 'Nook' sofa, all from Jardan. 'Mantis' lamp from Spence & Lyda. Moroccan Beni Ourain rug from Kulchi.



This page, clockwise from top left: In the main bedroom, B&B Italia 'Siena' bed and Zanotta 'Lama' chaise from Space. 'Applique 1 Bras Pivotant Courbe' wall lamps from Cult. A joint table from Henry Wilson. European birch veneer from Evostyle. Photos by Juliet Taylor. In the entry, charcoal makes a statement. Steel bar nude on wall by Dominique Sutton. Photograph by Frenchy. On verandah, 'Valley Rockers' from Tait. 'Tio' table from Spence & Lyda. In the ensuite, bath, basin, taps all from The Bath House. Walls in Resene SpaceCote 'Gravel'. Photograph by Frenchy. Opposite page 'Good One' table and 'Jak' chairs from Tait.



SPEED READ

» A couple in Cronulla, NSW, commissioned interior designer Yasmine Ghanem of Amber Road to add style and panache to a modest weatherboard home they had built five years previously. » Despite lots of natural light throughout the three-bedroom home, an all-white palette and low ceilings combined to create interiors that were dull and lifeless, while dark, chunky furniture added to the oppressive feel. » While the initial brief to Amber Road was to choose new furniture, this expanded to repainting the walls in a rich palette of deep greys as counterpoints to white, installing joinery, including a 10-metre hanging bench in the living area, selecting artworks and even landscaping the property. » Simple, clean lines and relaxed unpretentiousness were central to the aesthetic the couple and their two teenage children wanted in their waterfront home.