



No place LIKE HOME

The joy of togetherness is woven into every element of this sparkling Sydney abode.

STORY *Tamarah Pienaar* | STYLING *Kayla Cox*
PHOTOGRAPHY *Maree Homer*

FRONT COURTYARD *above and opposite* Homeowner Judy Renkert (seated at right) with fashion-designer daughter Lizzie, grandchildren Luella and Max and son-in-law Andrew Foy, who was also the builder on the project. Daisy the cavoodle is never far away. The dining table belonged to the previous owners. Tablecloth, Linen House. Dining chairs, Le Forge. Climbing star jasmine creates a fragrant frame for the water feature by Sam Hiney of Bespoke Masonry. The courtyard is paved with stone-look porcelain from Armstone. "We opted for porcelain pavers because they don't require any maintenance," says Judy. Landscaping by Adam Robinson Design. **Smart buy:** DLT84129 marble fan mosaic tiles (on wall), \$30/sheet, Di Lorenzo Tiles.

Stylist's assistants: Sara Åkesson & Jamie Walsh.



This is the life

The private garden was a real drawcard for Judy and her husband Stephen. Landscaper Adam Robinson refreshed the design, concentrating on trees for the front, a rear terrace featuring Judy's favourite white hydrangeas on the southern boundary, and a subtropical zone on the lower level. Judy has done the majority of the new work herself. "The garden is everything to me," she says. "I am out here nearly every day." ▶

—unny thing about houses... While one might fit the bill on a practical level, it will never feel like home if you don't have an emotional connection to it. This was the case for Judy and Stephen Renkert, who downsized in 2011 to a lovely apartment on Sydney's northern beaches but soon realised it wasn't for them. "Family is very important to us and we wanted space for our growing brood of grandchildren," says Judy. "We also missed having a garden."

Seeking something "manageable and unpretentious", the couple found exactly what they were after on the lower north shore; a three-bedroom 1920s cottage with views of Sydney Harbour. "I knew the second I stepped through the door that this was the home for us," says Judy. "It felt like the house wrapped itself around me."

As warm and welcoming as the home was, Judy and Stephen initiated a few modifications to make it perfect. "We wanted to draw in more light and to reconfigure the floor plan to make the most of the view," says Judy. They also decided that the kitchen, awkwardly situated near the entrance, should be moved to the rear and incorporated into a more family-friendly kitchen/dining/family area adjacent to the existing living room. A new wraparound verandah would deliver an additional entertaining zone. Finally, the lower-ground level (containing the third bedroom and laundry) would be expanded to make space for a bunkroom, a family room/guestroom, an additional bathroom and a larger laundry.

With family as the prime motivator, every inch of the brick house had to be useable, nothing too precious ▶



KITCHEN *this page and opposite, bottom right* Relocating the kitchen was pivotal to the renovation; it's now Judy's favourite room. Design by The Kitchen Maker. Pendant lights, The Light Site. 'St Tropez' bar stools, Alfresco Emporium. Corian benchtops. Smeg stove and rangehood. Wreath, Koch & Co. Cake stand, Williams-Sonoma. Limed American oak flooring. Foliage and flowers throughout, Mandalay Flowers. **Local hero:** Gingerbread village (guarded by Max and Luella), from \$295, including chocolate box with lollies, Scrumptious Chocolates and Cakes. **PORTRAIT** Luella helps spread the festive joy. **GIFTS** See following pages for tree, gift wrap and decoration details. **TABLE SETTING** "My Christmas table always has a white tablecloth and touches of silver and gold," says Judy. Napkin, Peacocks and Paisleys. Charger, Pottery Barn. Blue and white ornaments, Alfresco Emporium.



"I knew the second I stepped through the door that this was the home for us." Judy Renkert, owner



THE
PALETTE

Dulux Lexicon
Quarter
(main interior
walls)

Porter's Paints
Chintz Grey
half strength
(main bedroom
feature)

Stone-look
porcelain
(courtyard)

Family festivities

Judy's Christmas kicks off in early December when she and her grandchildren have a special tree-trimming day. "I love decorating," says Judy. "I have a different theme every year." On the big day, Judy hosts a traditional sit-down dinner for family, continuing the merriment more casually on Boxing Day. "We'll have a seafood feast or barbecue lunch, maybe walk down to the beach, then head home and carry on the celebrations."

LIVING The built-in shelving is original to the house; its detail inspired the design of the joinery throughout the home. Judy bought the armchair and silver side table years ago. Custom sofas by Kirsty Keir Interior Styling. Table lamp and ottoman, The Classic Outfitter. Glass-topped iron table, Renee's House of Designs. Cushions in Schumacher 'Hothouse Flowers'. Christmas tree, Big W. Assorted decorations from Myer, Big W, My Christmas and Ivory House. Gifts wrapped in a selection of paper and ribbon from Finmark, Fox & Fallow, Koch & Co and Vadoros Fine Packaging. Rug, The Natural Floorcovering Centres.

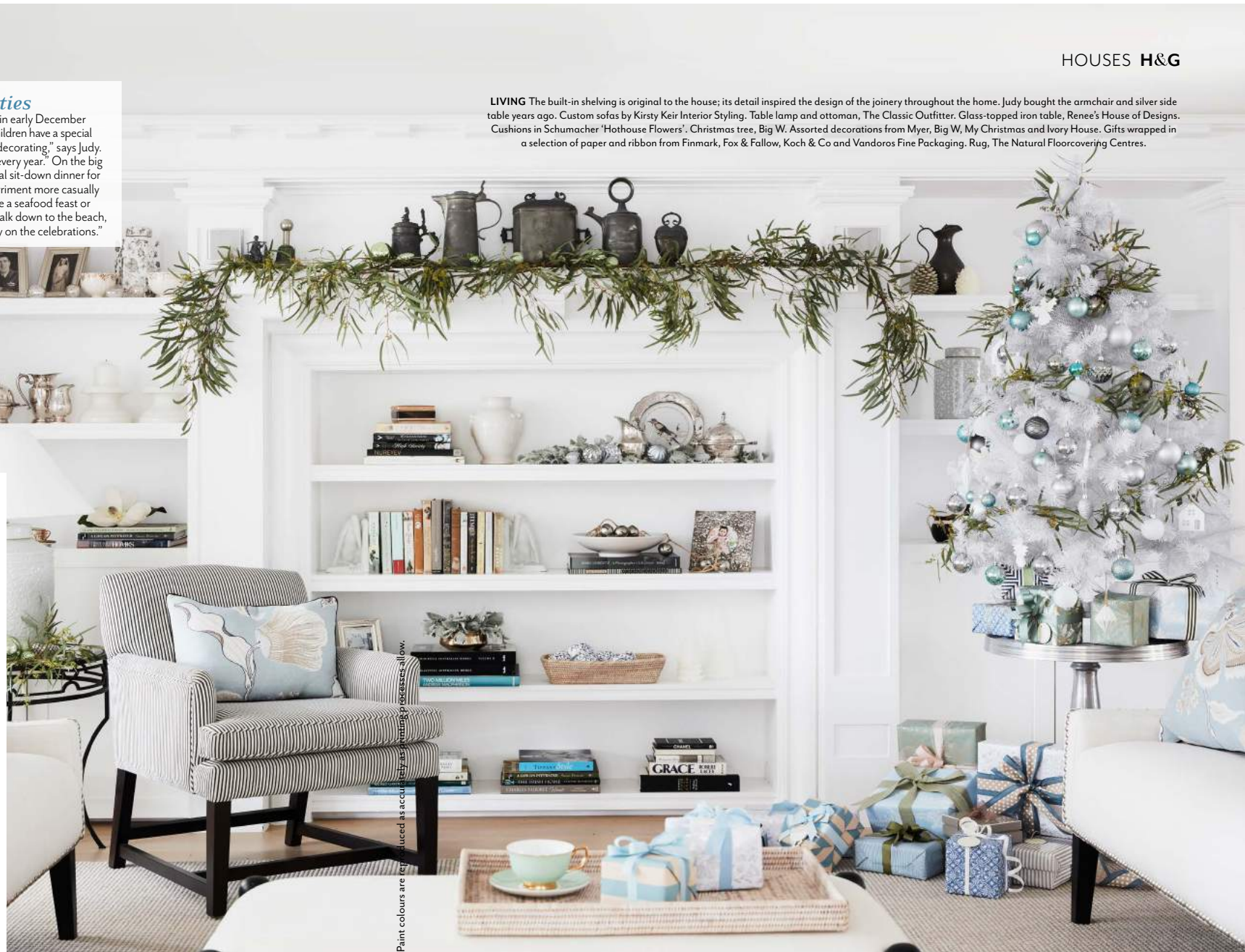
to touch. Judy was also keen for it to look and feel timeless, with the original home and new work in harmony. The couple's son-in-law and builder, Andrew Foy of Dreamscape Constructions, proved invaluable in achieving the brief. Raked ceilings in the new section amplify the light and space, while beautifully detailed joinery - referencing the 1920s picture rails - adds character and that all-important element of continuity.

Family was top of mind when decorating, too, with treasured heirlooms and pieces the Renkerts have cherished for decades playing a starring role. "I think homes should be filled with memories and reflect the people who live in them," says Judy. "We've collected lots of bits and pieces over the years that we still love."

A coastal palette of white, soft blues, greys and taupes is used throughout, teamed with robust limed American oak flooring upstairs and honed travertine downstairs. "The colours tie in with the trees and water outside, and instantly create a sense of calm," says Judy. "It's so peaceful - the antidote to our busy lives."

Judy says contentment is the prevailing feeling at home now. "The kitchen is my favourite room because that's where my family congregates, and the floor plan flows so well that I can see almost every other area in the house from there. It's charming but not precious. The whole family loves spending time here."

► **Dreamscape Constructions, Cremorne, NSW;**
0414 620 000 or dscon.com.au.



Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.



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THE LAYOUT



FAMILY ROOM Glass doors slide open to bring in the harbour views of this indoor-outdoor space. Coffee table, Kirsty Keir Interior Styling. Rug, Home & Giving Mosman. Faux topiary in pot, Florabelle. Crackers from The Paperie. Planter (on verandah), Copper Beech.
Smart buys: 'Bermuda' chairs, \$649 each, and 'Hampton' outdoor sofa, \$2499, all Alfresco Emporium. **MAIN BEDROOM** opposite, top and bottom left Porter's Paints Chintz Grey (half strength) is used below the dado rail and in the nook. "I wanted wallpaper, but Stephen wouldn't let me," says Judy, laughing. The artworks are limited-edition Norman Lindsay prints. Bedhead, The Classic Outfitter. Coverlet, Alfresco Emporium. The silver side table and mirrored bedside table are old favourites. Lamp base from Renee's House of Designs with shade in Parish Hadley for Lee Jofa 'Allegra' fabric. The crystal bowl (filled with hellebores) belonged to Judy's grandmother. Secondhand chair. 'French Wreath' wool carpet in Taupe, Feltex. **CONSOLE** In this vignette by the entrance, an artwork by Stephen's aunt, a pair of candlesticks that were a wedding present and a much-loved lamp are teamed with a console table Judy found by the side of the road and restored. *For Where to Buy, see page 212.* H&G

FEATURE PLANTS & TREES

- Magnolia 'Teddy Bear'
- Dipladenia
- Walking iris (Neomarica gracilis)
- Star jasmine (Trachelospermum jasminoides)
- Madagascan jasmine (Stephanotis floribunda)
- Bacopa (Sutera)