

LEVELLING UP



The decision to add a second storey to their Sydney semi opened up a world of possibilities for this family of four.

STORY *Stephanie Hope* | STYLING *Jack Milenkovic/Atelier Lab* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Tom Ferguson*



EXTERIOR The home's sharp, bold architecture helps the neighbouring houses recede into the background. "It feels like a private oasis, even though it's in the centre of suburbia," say architects Bronwyn Litera and Chris Trotta of LiteraTrotta. David Harrison 'Ribbon' chaise and Cam Williams 'Crown' stool, Robert Plumb. **MAIN BEDROOM** A Tacchini 'Orsola' armchair from Stylecraft is a favourite perch for enjoying the backyard view. Ceramic wall hanging, Ventifact Studio.

KITCHEN/LIVING/DINING A cohesive palette of cool greys, warm timber and crisp whites paints a calming scene in this much-loved family hub. A trio of Hats pendant lights from South Drawn hang above the Snedkergaarden 'Johansen' extension dining table and Møller '#77' chairs, all from Great Dane.



Cramped and dilapidated, the semi that once graced this block on a busy street in Sydney's east bears little resemblance to the spacious and flexible home that has since replaced it. "The kitchen was old, the carpets were stained, the tiles were broken and the blinds were falling apart," say the owners, a married couple with two primary school-aged children, who purchased the property in 2013.

Along with the aesthetic challenges, natural light and storage were virtually non-existent and a lean-to laundry impeded any meaningful connection to the garden. But it did have some redeeming features, namely the land size and its proximity to the beach.

The couple gave the house a mini makeover to make it liveable while they contemplated its ultimate transformation. By chance, a playdate for their son presented them with the perfect design duo for the job. "Our son's friend's mother invited us to her mother's house, and when we arrived we were blown away by the architecture and build," say the owner. "We asked her to put us in touch with the architect, who was Bronwyn Litera."

With a knack for making the most of limited space, introducing light into characteristically dark homes and producing elegant, contemporary spaces, Bronwyn and her business partner, Chris Trotta, helped the owners realise their home's full potential. "Initially, we were going to leave the ground floor as it was and extend to include an extra storey," say the owner. "But once we started the design process and realised what kind of house we could have here, we decided to go the whole nine yards and build our dream home."

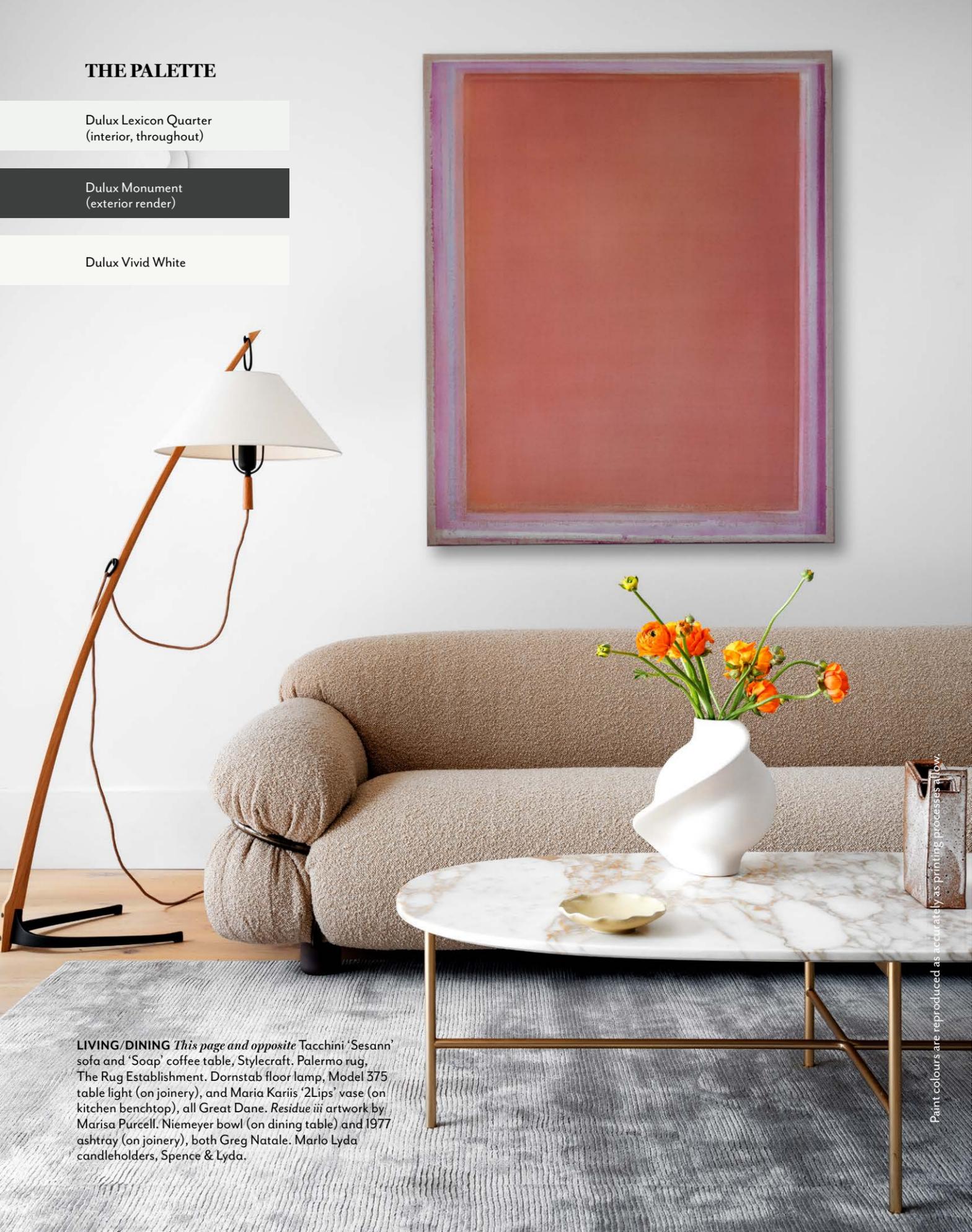
Downstairs, the existing layout was rejigged and extended to comprise an open-plan kitchen, living, dining and entertaining area, along with a new bathroom and family room that becomes a spare bedroom when ►

THE PALETTE

Dulux Lexicon Quarter
(interior, throughout)

Dulux Monument
(exterior render)

Dulux Vivid White



LIVING/DINING *This page and opposite* Tacchini 'Sesani' sofa and 'Soap' coffee table, Stylecraft. Palermo rug, The Rug Establishment. Dornstab floor lamp, Model 375 table light (on joinery), and Maria Kariis '2Lips' vase (on kitchen benchtop), all Great Dane. *Residue iii* artwork by Marisa Purcell. Niemeyer bowl (on dining table) and 1977 ashtray (on joinery), both Greg Natale. Marlo Lyda candleholders, Spence & Lyda.

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.

“The intent was to create interest in the detail and texture without being overly ‘decorated.’”

BRONWYN LITERA & CHRIS TROTTA, ARCHITECTS





the in-laws come to stay. The kitchen was designed to work for a family, with an island bench that runs the length of the space for easy circulation and a butler's pantry/laundry to hide the mess.

At the home's centre, a striking double-height window and skylight transforms the previously dark and awkward entry into a fabulous foyer. "The opening brings buckets of much needed light into the core of the home while celebrating the architecture," says Chris.

A curved staircase winds its way to the second storey, where the couple's man bedroom - including generous ensuite, walk-in wardrobe and Juliet balcony - occupies the back half of the home. Never fear, the children get their own bedrooms and a shared bathroom at the front, all of which feel luxuriously spacious thanks to the tall pitched ceilings that result from the gabled roof.

In keeping with the ground floor's "sleek and stealthy" exterior, rendered

in Dulux Monument, the drama continues on the upper level with stunning Abodo timber cladding in a dark stain. "The texture of the timber is distinct against the bottom level, but ties in with - and accentuates - the moody presence of the existing house," Bronwyn says.

Inside, the palette is clean and simple to keep the rooms feeling as large as possible: warm timber floorboards throughout with knotted carpets in the bedrooms and fresh white rendered walls for airiness. "The intent was to create interest in the detail and texture without being overly 'decorated'," says Bronwyn. "The owners professed to favour a more monochromatic palette, but they weren't opposed to exploring different finishes and designs. They might have questioned some of them at first glance, but they adore the finished product."

Case in point: the walnut joinery used upstairs. "We were keen to use a deeper tone to balance the high ceilings and bring

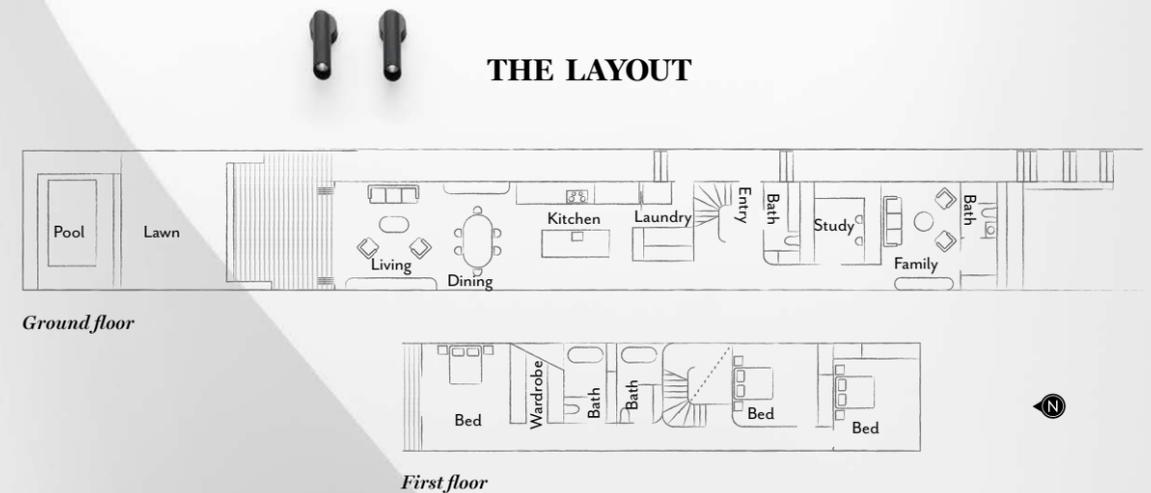
in some warmth, and the walnut finish was perfect for that," she says. "A taupe colour for the kids' rooms was also a gentle point of difference."

The owners are understandably thrilled with their new home, which gives them the space, light and flexibility to navigate the natural chaos of everyday life.

"It has always been a dream of ours to build a house from scratch," they say. "To be able to decide where rooms go, how they look and how big they are. We are very proud of what we've achieved; we have a beautiful, modern home with lots of storage. And with the pool and deck area, our garden is always used and enjoyed."

Now, when friends, family or playdate guests ask who designed their home, they happily share the details. "We hope one day if we decide to build again, Bronwyn and Chris are available." ▶

LiteraTrotta, Rushcutters Bay, NSW; literatrotta.com. Toki Construction, Randwick, NSW; tokiconstruction.com.au.



STAIRWELL A sculptural staircase celebrates the home's original character. Ink side table, Becker Minty. Miniperfetto wall lights, Inlite. **KITCHEN** *Opposite* Off-form concrete island and benchtops in Warm Grey, 2barrows. Margin pendant light, South Drawn. Mattiazzi 'Osso' stool, District. Klong 'Gloria Ring' candleholder, Great Dane.



THIS IS THE LIFE

The owners are revelling in their newfound space. "Before the build, we couldn't entertain after our kids went to bed – the front door was right between their rooms and we had to talk quietly so as not to disturb them," they say. "Now we have weekly barbecues and we look forward to late-night swimming and relaxing outside on the deck this summer."



MAIN BEDROOM Gemla 'Clara' bedhead, Great Dane. Nonn 'Journal' side table, District. Flos 'Chiara T' lamp, Euroluce. Bedlinen, Cultiver. **POWDER ROOM** *Below left* Marble Carrara mosaic splashback tiles and Eureka stone wall tiles in Bianco Naturale, Di Lorenzo Tiles. **STUDY** *Below right* W182 Pastille desk lamp, Euroluce. Swedese 'Stella' armchair, Fred International. Wall hanging, Verdent Studio. **BATHROOM** *Opposite* Reeded-glass shower screen. Dubai bath, Dadoquartz. Mobel Copenhagen 'Angel' stool, Fred International. ▶





“It feels like a private oasis, even though it’s in the centre of suburbia.” CHRIS TROTTA & BRONWYN LITERA

EXTERIOR Architects Chris Trotta and Bronwyn Litera stand on the Juliet balcony. Vulcan timber cladding in Nero oil finish, Abodo. **POOL** Bottom right Iris glass mosaic pool tiles in Perla, Ezarri.



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THE SOURCE

Sandy tones set up a softer contrast in a monochrome scheme. Go for gold for a touch of luxe.

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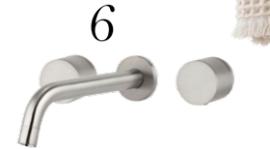
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Produced by Saffron Sylvester.

1 Australian House & Garden ‘Kiama’ vase, \$69.95, Myer. 2 Gubi ‘Timberline’ floor lamp, \$1180, Cult Design. 3 Umbra wool rug by House of Grey, POA, Armadillo. 4 Hexacorallia porcelain wall sconce, \$580, Milly Dent. 5 Ginger & Jagger ‘Rosebush’ side table with marble top, \$11,940, James Said. 6 Milani Assembly taps and spout set, \$274.80, ABI Interiors. 7 Australian House & Garden ‘Waffle’ hand towels, \$30/pair, Myer. 8 Amalfi espresso cup and saucer, \$65, Greg Natale. 9 Buxton ceramic sculpture, \$1045, Coco Republic. 10 Cassina ‘Soriana’ sofa by Afra & Tobia Scarpa, POA, Mobilia. For Where to Buy, see page 188. H&G