

Words JUDY PASCOE Photography ANSON SMART

ART AND SOUL

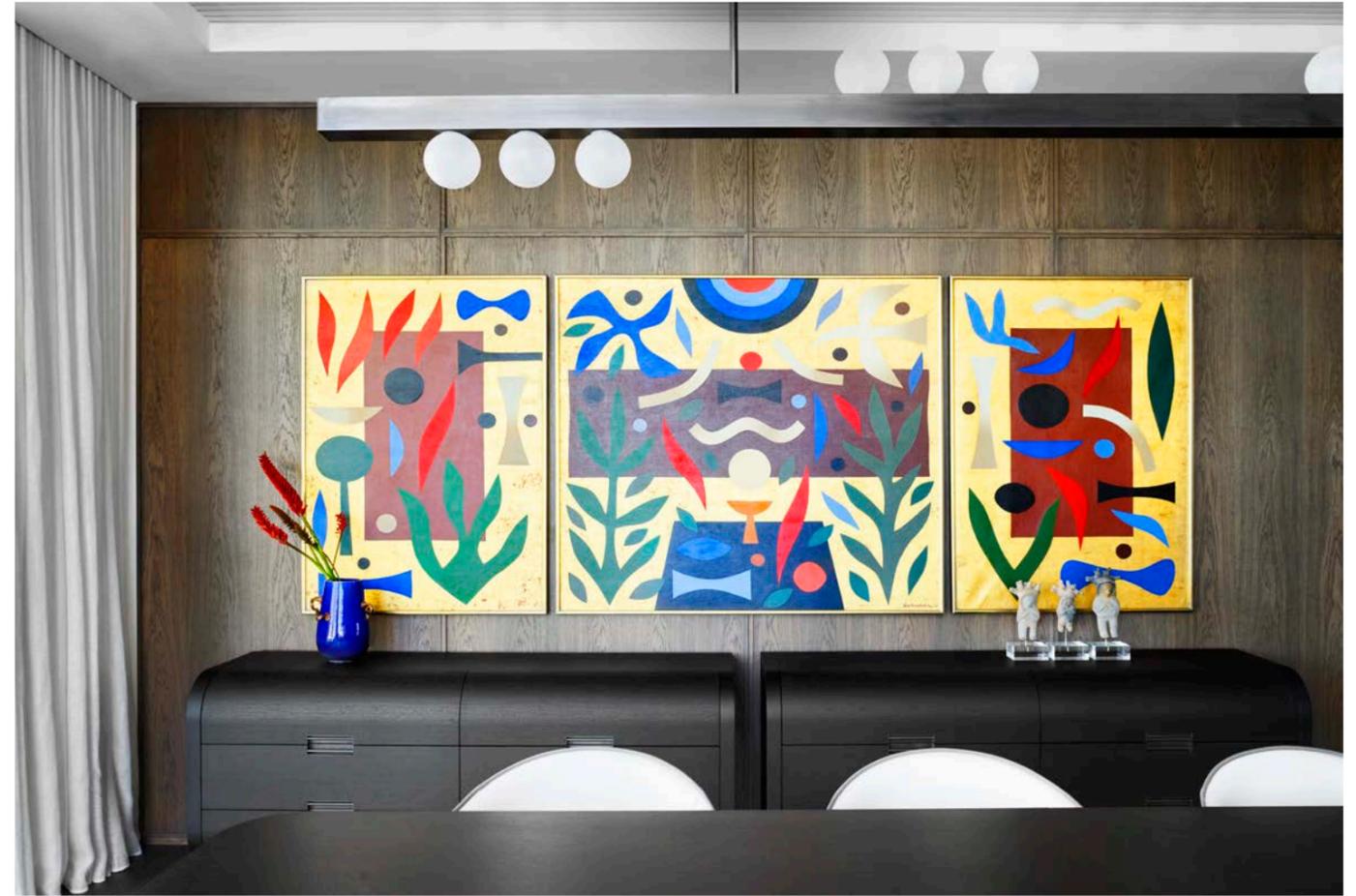


A collection of stellar Australian art is the linchpin of this house which *embodies sophisticated curation* and a relaxed approach to family living.



This page Alexandra employed a rich palette of materials throughout the house. Mattaliano 'Conique' pendant light from De Sousa Hughes hangs low over a Caste 'Bannack' table from Holly Hunt carrying an array of sculptures amassed by the clients. Curtains by Sette 'Krabi' cover the windows. Christophe Delcourt 'Jan' modular sofa from Ondene. ClassiCon 'Bell' side tables. Artwork is by John Olsen. Walls painted in Porter's Paints 'Watermark'. 'Argento' oak flooring from Tongue n Groove. 'Tapa #75' rug from Christopher Farr Cloth. Opposite page C1980 untitled sculptures by Thancoupie stand on custom joinery by Decus Interiors. Untitled artwork by Sarah Daniels. Anchor Ceramics 'Earth Light' wall sconces.

This page The dark timber kitchen joinery pops against the backdrop of white walls and ceiling. Custom joinery with a patinated bronze finish on the brass rangehood by Decus Interiors. 'Moon' pendant lights and 'Pepper' barstools, all from Holly Hunt. Il Buco Vita accessories and Society Limonta napkins, all from Ondene. Artwork by Elwyn Augustus Lynn. **Opposite page** 'Double Bulb' dining table by Eric Schmitt is attended by Poltrona Frau 'Ginger' chairs from Cult. Christophe Delcourt 'Ron' credenza from Ondene beneath a triptych by John Coburn. Eric Schmitt 'Espiritu' vase from Galerie Ibu, France. 'Cointrin' pendant light by Stéphane Parmentier. Curtains by Simple Studio in Sahco 'Nomada'. Custom timber wall finish by Decus Interiors.



Just four photographs provided the starting point for the design of this expansive coastal property that is home to a large family. With a heritage listing, the requirement was to upgrade the original house and add a contemporary wing. Presented with the photos – of a staircase, some flooring, living room joinery and an open-plan kitchen – Alexandra Donohoe Church, principal of Sydney-based Decus Interiors, remarkably was able to ascertain the owners' tastes, and her initial concepts for key areas were accepted with enthusiasm.

On a generously sized corner block with glimpses of water across a golf fairway, the house had vast potential to be a significant and substantial family home. Once the heritage requirements were determined, the new extension was built to include open-plan living, dining and kitchen, with a terrace and pool cabana set into Myles Baldwin-landscaped grounds, and five bedrooms, a rumpus room and study upstairs.

Decus Interiors sorted out the floor plan, allocating the downstairs heritage part of the house to a master suite, incorporating a bedroom, walk-in robe, ensuite and study, accessed through its own foyer. The open-plan living extension presented a few challenges with its very large footprint. "This took a few iterations to get right," says Alexandra. "We wanted to create pockets of depth and compression before expanding out again." This she was able to do by tucking in the formal dining to the right of the main entry, which then leads into the open-plan kitchen and butler's pantry and on to the informal living room that connects with the outdoors.

This living area is furnished intelligently with an "island" in the middle with two-way seating facing in and out. "They can all lounge around, some watching television, others having a conversation. It

can deal with a lot of people in the room and is very reflective of the family and their aesthetic – an indoor/outdoor space leading straight out to the pool," says Alexandra.

When it came to the decoration, other than the direction provided by the photographs, the owners gave Decus Interiors free rein. "We had a lot of freedom to come back to them with what we thought was the best response," says Alexandra. "We picked up on cues such as how they dressed and their taste in artwork and that informed our decisions. The result was that we made some choices that were probably not the most conventional but they worked, and very little was changed from our initial presentation."

A layer of complexity was added as the project is located interstate from the Decus studio, and the logistics were considerable. "We didn't have a lot of communication with the client but we did have eight-hour marathon sessions every now and then when we presented everything. We were very involved in the administration of the project – remotely organising the builder, joiner, upholsterer, as well as a lot of emailing and site visits. It was a different way of working for us but we threw everything at it and it was great to have that trust," explains the designer.

The owners' extensive collection of Australian art inspired a lot of the design decisions, although Alexandra says she never envisaged any particular artwork for a certain space. "We didn't consciously think we had to match things, but so many of the choices were serendipitous. The study, for example, is a really dark and moody room and there were two John Olsen works that hadn't been allocated anywhere, but when we came full circle it just seemed that the palette had miraculously been designed to suit them." The triptych by John Coburn in the dining room was an unexpected »

These pages The open-plan living room leads to the pool and outdoor area. Custom banquette by Decus Interiors in C&C Milano 'Ernesto' from South Pacific Fabrics, with custom cushions in Andrew Martin 'Orillo' from Unique Fabrics, Elliott Clarke 'Sonoma' and Zak+Fox 'Pampa'. Side tables (from left) are 'Arch' and 'Kettle' from BDDW, and Adam Goodrum 'Nest' from Cult. Living Divani 'Extrasoft' sofa and ottoman from Space. Eric Schmitt 'Couteau' console from Maison Liaigre. Ceiling lights from Inlite. Serge Mouille 'Applique 2' wall light from Cult. Ligne Roset 'Pumpkin' chair from Domo in Pierre Frey 'Bridget' in Meringue from Milgate. 'Drop' side table from BDDW. Rug from Robyn Cosgrove. Oblica 'Gyrofocus' suspended fireplace in front of 'Rainforest' honed marble wall finish. Aboriginal artefacts by unknown artist.



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This page Alexandra made good use of the existing bay window to position the vanity for the master ensuite. The mirror is a custom design by Decus Interiors. Vanity is in 'Bianco Carrara C' marble from CDK Stone with Vola '590-19' tapware and Vola 'T39/4-19' heated towel rails, both finished in raw brass. Jonathan Browning Studios 'Amboise' wall sconce from Milgate. Society Limonta accessories from Ondene. Shutters from Simple Studio. 'Argento' oak chevron flooring from Tongue n Groove.



This page, clockwise from top Custom bedhead and base in Loro Piana 'Cannemara' from South Pacific Fabrics. Society Limonta bed linen from Ondene with cushions in C&C Milano 'Oscar' from South Pacific Fabrics and de Le Cuona 'Heritage' in Calm from Boyac. Custom chaise in Lee Jofa 'Hollyhock' mohair from Elliott Clarke. Serge Mouille 'Antony' wall light from Cult. Lindsey Adelman 'Branching Bubble' floor lamp. Jorge Zalszupin 'PO-801' chair from Espasso in Weitzner 'Heathcliff' in Wave from South Pacific Fabrics. 'Azucena' stool from The Apartment in Hermès 'Equateur Imprimé' from South Pacific Fabrics. Window seat in Pierre Frey 'Hanoi' in Béton from Milgate with Society Limonta throw from Ondene. Artwork by Tim Storrier. The study has custom joinery and a desk by Decus Interiors in 'Coco Burl' veneer from JP Finsbury. FK 'Bucket' chair from Living Edge. Robyn Cosgrove rug. 'Huntley' wall light from The Urban Electric Company. Christophe Delcourt 'Max' side table from Ondene. Artwork by Sidney Nolan. 'Diz' chair from Espasso. 'Mushroom' side table by Eric Schmitt. Window seat pad in Dedar 'Nido' from South Pacific Fabrics with custom cushions in Dedar 'Nigella' and 'Alexander' with Pelle Leathers trim. Artwork by John Brack.





« choice – “yet the more we looked at it the more it seemed to work”. Similarly, when the project was almost completed a Tim Storrier work appeared – which was just right for the main bedroom, and faces a Jeffrey Smart artwork across the room. “It looks amazing and colourwise it pulled it all together,” she says.

Alexandra says there is a lot of eclecticism in the house. “All the rooms speak to each other but are quite different. The owners are not formal people but they have formal spaces. They have incredible art and you want it all to blend in so it’s comfortable for them to live with but still allows the pieces to sing. Otherwise you’re doing the artworks a disservice.”

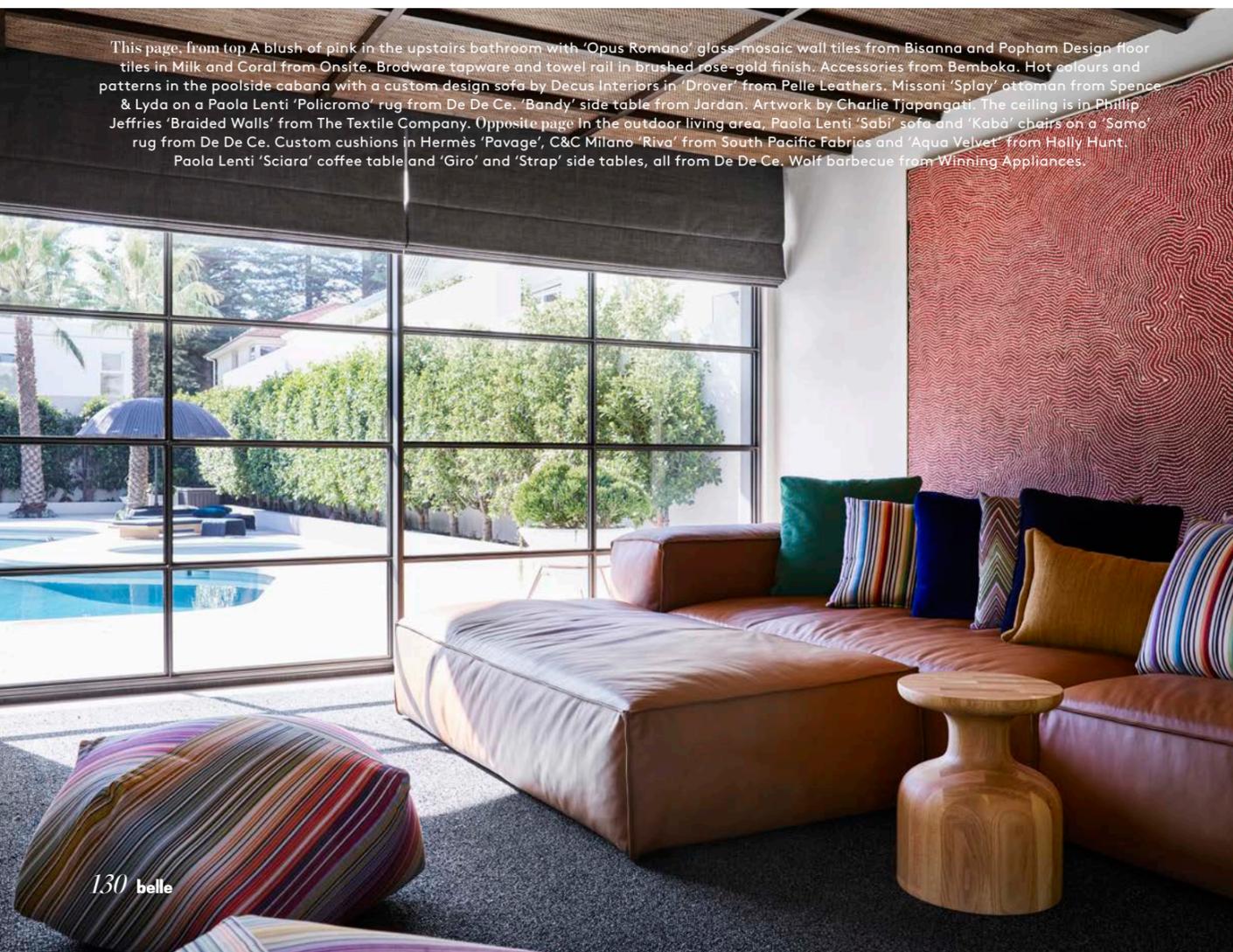
While the colours in the downstairs rooms are in a muted palette, the bedrooms upstairs are high octane, with artworks by Howard Arkley, Jasper Knight and Johnny Romeo providing punch in the rumpus room, and paving the way for a mash-up of bright colours, textural pieces and shapely furniture.

Throughout, the attention to detail is impeccable, from the vintage bronze door at the entrance and the custom bronze patinated finish on the brass stair rail to the unexpected choices in lighting and furniture which provide an element of surprise.

“It was a really fun project,” says Alexandra. “We got to import some beautiful pieces that we haven’t had the opportunity to use before, such as some classic Brazilian designs and a lighting fixture we saw in Milan, and we ended up choosing everything right down to the cutlery and napkins.”

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This page, from top A blush of pink in the upstairs bathroom with ‘Opus Romano’ glass-mosaic wall tiles from Bisanna and Popham Design floor tiles in Milk and Coral from Onsite. Brodware tapware and towel rail in brushed rose-gold finish. Accessories from Bemboka. Hot colours and patterns in the poolside cabana with a custom design sofa by Decus Interiors in ‘Drover’ from Pelle Leathers. Missoni ‘Splay’ ottoman from Spence & Lyda on a Paola Lenti ‘Policromo’ rug from De De Ce. ‘Bandy’ side table from Jordan. Artwork by Charlie Tjapangati. The ceiling is in Phillip Jeffries ‘Braided Walls’ from The Textile Company. Opposite page In the outdoor living area, Paola Lenti ‘Sabi’ sofa and ‘Kaba’ chairs on a ‘Samo’ rug from De De Ce. Custom cushions in Hermès ‘Pavage’, C&C Milano ‘Riva’ from South Pacific Fabrics and ‘Aqua Velvet’ from Holly Hunt. Paola Lenti ‘Sciara’ coffee table and ‘Giro’ and ‘Strap’ side tables, all from De De Ce. Wolf barbecue from Winning Appliances.



SPEED READ

» Alexandra Donohoe Church, principal of Decus Interiors, was approached to curate the design and decoration of a substantial coastal property for a large family. » With a heritage listing, parts of the house had to be maintained with other sections upgraded and a substantial extension added. » The owners’ significant art collection provided the starting point for Alexandra’s scheme that balances formality with a more casual vibe and contrasts neutrals with punchy colour. » With unexpected choices in furniture and lighting providing punctuation points against the sophisticated backdrop, the mood is one of relaxed living within exquisitely detailed surrounds.