

GOING

By BEC WHISH
Photographed by DAVE WHEELER *Styled by* ATELIER LAB

Tones of eucalypt green echo the Australian landscape, a verdant source of inspiration for Decus when it came to recasting this 1930s dwelling for a young family.

FOR GLORY

THIS PAGE in the casual dining area of this Sydney home, Smalto table by Barber Osgerby and MR chairs by Mies van de Rohe, both for Knoll from Dedece; custom bar **cabinetry** designed by Decus in Emerald haze quartzite from CDK Stone; **bowl** from StudioLevine; Horsehair **sconce** from Apparatus; Filetti Scala travertine **flooring** from Onsite Supply + Design; **artwork** by artist unknown, clients' own. *Details, last pages.*







THIS PAGE in the living area, custom **sofa** designed by Decus and produced by Jonathan West; Utrecht **armchairs** by Gerrit Thomas Rietveld from Cassina, enquiries to Criteria; custom **coffee table** designed by Decus and produced by Jonathan West; Oki **side table** from Living Edge; custom **fireplace** in sandblasted Grigio Imperiale limestone from Granite & Marble Works; **bowl** from Greg Natale; *Watching (2022)* **vessel** by Laith McGregor from Station Gallery; custom **rug** by Decus from Whitecliffe Imports; Atelier De Troupe Dome **pendant light** from Spence & Lyda; vintage **floor lamp** from Orange; Cast **wall lights** from Rose Uniacke; *Aquarius Rising (2020)* **artwork** by Clare Milledge from Station Gallery (on right wall). **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the dining room, custom **cabinetry** produced by Blank Joinery; custom **dining table** designed by Decus and produced by Jonathan West; Gubi Coco **dining chairs** from Cult; *Drop Bottles* **artwork** by Katie-Ann Houghton from Michael Reid; Oddball **pendant light** from Volker Haug; *Shift* **sculpture** by Olive Gill-Hille from Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert; custom **rug** by Decus from Whitecliffe Imports.

Australians may think of their national colours as green and gold, but truthfully, the hues we actually live among are closer to sage and bronze. Vivid sunshine slants between eucalyptus trees give our landscape a burnished, earthy quality — it's ancient, evocative and incredibly unique. This straight-from-nature palette is also what inspired Alexandra Donohoe Church of Decus when renovating and decorating this home in Sydney, a dwelling she feels is a true representation of her personal aesthetic, despite it being created for someone else.

"I'm in a funny job," says the acclaimed interior architect. "People ask you to make their homes reflect them, so you try to walk in their shoes and design to match their taste — but in this particular project, the clients and I shared the same aesthetic, so the finished home really resonates with me personally."

The brief evolved over time as the client's needs changed. At the start of the four-year process — significantly delayed by Covid lockdowns — the clients were simply a couple, a husband and his Swedish wife, but by move-in day, there were a couple of young children in tow. "We definitely added more storage and fleshed out the functional spaces," says Donohoe Church. The goal was to reinvigorate and elevate a tired 1930s building by reconfiguring a dark rabbit warren of rooms to bring in light while adhering to the Swedish concept of *lagom*, a word meaning 'not too much and not too little — just right', a Goldilocks tale for interiors.

While the patterned natural stone nods to European design, the timber and green tones are taken directly from the Australian landscape, as is the consideration of natural light. The house features not one but two oculi windows: one over a spiral staircase at the entry and another in the main bedroom's walk-in robe. "I've done skylights in a wardrobe before, but never an oculus," she says. "We actually decided to do it because the ceiling's not that high — only 2.7 metres — and we wanted to create a generous sense of space."

Sweeping curved cupboards add to the voluminous optical illusion. "Sharp corners and flat ends can feel narrow, like a hallway, when you don't have much room to play with," she adds. "Curved edges feel much more ergonomic and generous to move through." The beauty of the main bedroom configuration is that one can get up early, close the walk-in robe door, and get ready without disturbing their partner at all.

The entrance's oculus highlights one of the most beautiful and challenging elements of the build, the spiral staircase. According to Donohoe Church, its four-tonne steel double-helix structure was craned into the house "slowly, meticulously and terrifyingly". The space now occupied by the stairs was previously a gloomy guestroom, which created a strange, unwelcoming ambience from the outset. "We said goodbye to that dark bedroom and hello to bright northern light," she says. "By changing the roof structure, we maximised the height of the oculus, which was tricky, but it turned out great. It just goes up and up."

'Let there be light' was a constant mantra for the Decus team on this project, and it succeeded in bringing sunshine in spades. "I think it's in Australian DNA; we must have natural light wherever possible," says Donohoe Church.

"This house plays with Australian light and Australian colours, weaving them together with tones that shapeshift." Spaces with verdant eucalypt tones, like the powder room, are balanced next to pearly greys, such as the colour found in the kitchen. "We've played with so many different shades of green in this house," she says. "Some are jewel-like, some are earthy. It's the clients' favourite colour."

Not only is the home dressed in emerald tones, it also connects to the natural green space of the front and rear gardens. The bright, expansive cooking zone overlooks the backyard via a Juliet balcony. "When the house was built in the '30s, the kitchen was hidden behind closed doors, but we now live differently," she says. "You can stand in this kitchen and have a conversation with someone almost anywhere in the house, it's so open." This considered space also features granite benches that are unbelievably hardy. "You can spill red wine all over them, go to bed and just clean it up in the morning. I always encourage

clients to use granite or quartzite in working kitchens because you don't have to be precious about it."

Continuing the green theme, the living room opens directly onto the backyard and doors to the front garden can be opened at the same time, facilitating a refreshing cross-breeze. "It's all bookended by the jade shades of the gardens," says Donohoe Church. "You can sit on the terrace at the front or walk to the back and watch the kids in the pool." It all comes together in a balance of high-end beauty, relaxed family living and down-to-earth touches. As both Goldilocks and Swedish *lagom* adherents would say, the finished home is not too much and not too little — it's just right. **VL** decus.com.au



THIS PAGE in the kitchen, **island bench** in Antique granite from SNB Stone; custom **cabinetry** designed by Decus and produced by Blank Joinery; custom **rangehood** designed by Decus; Pitt natural gas **cooktop** from Winning Appliances; Applique Araignee 3 Bras Fixes **light** by Serge Mouille from Cult (on wall); Kaneko Koyho **cup** from The DEA Store; Moon **jar** from The Finery Company (at rear).
OPPOSITE PAGE Alexandra Donohoe Church of Decus.





THIS PAGE in the home office, custom **cabinetry** produced by Blank Joinery; Knoll Pollock Executive **chair** from Dedec; custom **window treatments** designed by Decus and produced by Simple Studio; ceramic **vessel** by Gillian Hodes; **letterbox** from Michaël Verheyden, enquiries to Ondene (on top shelf). In the walk-in wardrobe, custom **cabinetry** designed by Decus and produced by Blank Joinery; custom **window treatments** designed by Decus and produced by Simple Studio; custom suede **stool** in Light Elephant Grey from Thomas Haarmann. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the powder room, **shroud** in Cipollone Verde marble and **basin** and **sink** in honed Carrara marble, from Granite & Marble Works; CEA Design MIL46 **tapware** from Pure Interiors; custom **mirrored cabinetry** designed by Decus and produced by Blank Joinery; **vase** by Terunobu Hirata from The DEA Store; Catch **wall light** from Lindsey Adelman.



THIS PAGE in the main bedroom, custom **bedhead** and **cabinetry** designed by Decus and produced by Jonathan West; Tinja Oiseau **plate** from Clo Studios; Vitra Akari YA2 **lamp** by Isamu Noguchi from The Finery Company; Society Limonata **bed linen** from Ondene; Biny spot **wall lamps** from In Good Company. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the stairwell, custom **staircase** designed by Decus and produced by Critharis, Quality Fabrications and Precise Painting; raw European oak **flooring** from Insight Flooring; **artwork** by artist unknown, client's own. *Details, last pages.*



