

# E A S Y

Building upon the character of a Federation house, Decus focuses on getting the balance right for a busy Sydney family through considered detail and relaxed living.

*By VIRGINIA JEN Photographed by ANSON SMART Styled by ATELIER LAB*

# C H A R M

*This page* in the sitting room of this Mosman home, Sesann sofa by Gianfranco Frattini for Tacchini from Stylecraft; custom **banquette** designed by Decus and upholstered by Atelier Furniture in Pierre Frey Marius fabric in Tabac and produced by Granite Marble Works in Paonazzo marble; India Mahdavi, Rattan Bishop **side table**, Floris Wubben Tiny **table** and Crown **vase**, all from Alm; IBO **low table** by Christophe Delcourt from Ondene; Zephyr **bowls** from Jordan; Turkish Rewoven Deco flatweave **rug** from Cadrys; Joe Colombo **chair** from 506070; 9602 **floor lamp** by Paavo Tynell for Gubi from Cult; Akari **lamp** by Isamu Noguchi from Fineworks Paddington; Stella 4 Lune **pendant light** by Angelo Lelii for Arredoluce; **fireplace** produced by GNC Quality; **fireplace hearth** in Paonazzo marble produced by Granite Marble Works; wall finished in Venetian Plaster Marmorino from Venetian Plaster Gallery; **flooring** from Tongue & Groove; *Window of Colour* (2021) **artwork** by Tammy Kanat from Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert. *Details, last pages.*



*These pages* in the kitchen and dining area, **island bench**, **splashback** and **rangehood trim** in Montreal granite from SNB Stone; custom **cabinetry** in American oak with custom stain designed by Decus and produced by Blank Joinery; **rangehood** finished in Venetian Marmorino from Venetian Plaster Gallery; **cooktop** from Pitt Cooking; brushed stainless-steel **tapware** from Vola; Hinterland **stool** from Daniel Boddam; small **bowl** (on benchtop) by Lia Klugman from Art Hop; vintage **vase** (on island) from Secondi Oggetti; Cab 421 **dining chairs** by Mario Bellini for Cassina from Mobilia; vintage **dining chairs**, Tenshin Juba **bowl** (on table), **candleholder** and **vase**, all from Fineworks Paddington; Lutetia **pendant light** from Garnier & Linker; *Electrotype V* (2019) **artwork** (on wall) by Jack Lanagan Dunbar and *Begin Again* (2019) **artwork** by Justin Williams (on benchtop) from Coma Gallery; **flooring** in Bistre from Tongue & Groove.





# T

Taking on the duty of crafting a home is an aspect of interior design Alexandra Donohoe Church enthusiastically embraces. The founder and managing director of Decus sees her role as a conduit of a client's needs and a guiding hand in opening up possibilities, often before they're even aware of them. "It's an intuitive thing," she muses. "There's cues that you pick up on, the clothes they wear, the art they like, the colours they gravitate towards, the way they communicate, and the way they live. We are part therapists — we have to be able to read a client because just giving them what I like or what's hot right now isn't doing my job."

The job becomes a little easier if the client is someone you've worked with in the past and have known for the best part of a decade. Donohoe Church has seen the busy young family of five grow not only with the passage of time but a change of lifestyle, having moved from a contemporary glass-and-steel dwelling in Sydney's Balmoral to an early 1900s red-barrel-brick Federation home just around the corner in harbourside Mosman. "They came into it open-minded and were really trusting," she says. "And trust is crucial in any project because it's such a long process — it's three or four years and you're making thousands of decisions across that time period."

"We just knew that we needed to give them something that was easy and smooth," continues Donohoe Church. "The whole thing, right down to the aesthetic, had to be easy to process. We didn't want to give them a fiddly home, something that felt too detailed or too overcooked, because then it feels like you have to maintain that kind of life."

"Everyone that I've walked through the project with — they're in awe of all the details, which is really lovely"

In order to marry the house to the active family's lifestyle, the footprint of the original home was added upon by Luigi Rosselli Architects, smartly fine-tuning natural light

cast into new spaces. The delicacy of the filtered light against robust materials formed the foundation for Decus to weave in detail and warmth, a contrast to the sleeker aesthetic of the client's previous home. "It is much more layered, it's more nuanced," says Donohoe Church. "We've paid particular attention to wanting the house to feel just as fresh in 10 years. We've invested more energy this time around in getting the balance between pushing it a little bit but also pulling back."

Getting the right mix of interest and introspection is expressed here through a potent blend of eye-catching material and contrasting texture realised in moments where the elements seem to be conversing with one another. Pour your eye over the entry foyer floor, a polished patterned inlay of three neutrally toned stones grounding the space and echoed in the home's bathrooms, albeit with a bolder palette. Towards the rear of the home where the kitchen, living and dining spaces open up to pristine water views, fluted glass and banks of refined timber storage — complete with finger pull-out handles and smooth double-bullnose edges — bring tactility that is perfectly complemented by the soft curves of the archways and the vaulted ceiling. This combination is epitomised by the sitting room with details that draw upon the home's Federation heritage. Sitting pretty under stained-glass windows is built-in upholstered seating that was "probably the furthest we could push the client with colour," says Donohoe Church.

Knowing when and where to influence all comes back to the serenity the designer wanted in a space tailored for easy living. In the upper-level main bedroom, the solution was obvious with framed ocean vistas proving a relaxing salve, while other decisions needed further scrutiny to provide effortless relaxation. For Donohoe Church, "there's a sense of actual comfort. It's a combination of all of the things you physically touch and making sure those choices are right, as well as a visual calm, finding things that are appealing and soothing to someone's eye. Designing is about teasing that out of the client — what they find calming — and then weaving that into what we find calming, and then looking at it in context."

As to that context, it's proven to be a bit of a surprise for the designer. "It's kind of a quiet achiever — I didn't expect it to be such a crowd-pleaser," says Donohoe Church of the home. "Everyone that I've walked through the project with — they're in awe of all of the details, which is really lovely." ▼ [decus.com.au](http://decus.com.au)

*This page* in the rumpus room, Camaleonda sofa by Mario Bellini for B&B Italia from Space Furniture; vintage side table and vase from Fineworks Paddington; paperweight from Love After Love; vintage bamboo stool from Secondi Oggetti; ceramic vase by Andres Benavides Santa; custom cabinetry in American oak with custom stain designed by Decus and produced by Blank Joinery; Newport curtains in washed Belgian linen produced by Simple Studio; Panama rug in Papyrus from Armadillo.



*This page* in the study, custom **desk** and **cabinetry** in American oak with custom stain designed by Decus and produced by Blank Joinery; Basket **rocking chair** from DePadova; Lampe De Marseille **wall light** by Le Corbusier for Nemo from Cult; **vase** (on left) by Bitossi Ceramics from Hub; **vase** (on right) and **sculpture** (on floor) by Lia Klugman from Art Hop; **bowl** by Tenshin Juba from Fineworks Paddington; **flooring** in Bistre from Tongue & Groove. In the lounge room beyond, vintage Artifort F444 **chair** by Pierre Paulin; internal steel **doors** produced by Enviro Windows. *Opposite page* in another view of the rumpus room overlooking an internal courtyard with Japanese maple, Erei **chaise longue** from DePadova; vintage bamboo **side table** from Secondi Oggetti; **vase** and **plate** from Robert Plumb; Illume 02 **lamp** by Lana Launay from Saint Cloche; Paragon **rug** (on left) in Primrose and Panama **rug** in Papyrus from Armadillo; **builder** GNC Quality; **landscape design** by Spirit Level.







*This page* in the main bedroom with a view of Sydney Harbour looking out to the headlands, custom **bedhead** in American oak with custom stain designed by Decus and produced by Blank Joinery; Society Limonata **bed linen** from Ondene; steel **doors** by Vitrocsa. *Opposite page* in the main ensuite, **vanity** in Cipollino Verde marble from Granite Marble Works; 590G **tapware** in Black Chrome from Vola; PSL blackened **handles** from Studio Henry Wilson; **mirrors** designed by Decus; Bianco Carrara wall **tiles** from Bisanna Tiles; EOS **wall sconces** from Garnier & Linker; **vase** by Lia Klugman from Art Hop; **bowl** by Tenshin Juba from Fineworks Paddington; **bath gel** and **soap** from Santa Maria Novella.





*This page* on the balcony, Swisspearl Dune Centre **chair**, Porto **stool** and Porto **low table**, all from Robert Plumb. *Opposite page* in the first-floor bathroom, **vanity** in Grigio San Marco marble from Euro Marble; City Plus Wall Spout **tapware** from Brodware; Potato Cabinet Knob **handles** from Rocky Mountain Hardware; **wall** finished in Venetian Plaster Marmorino from Venetian Plaster Gallery; custom **mirror** designed by Decus; Anton ceramic **wall light** from Volker Haug; *Skip* (2021) **stool** by David Tate and *Brown* (2022) **sculpture** (on vanity) by Olive Gill-Hille from Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert; **vase** (far left) by Lia Klugman from Art Hop; Tamegroute Sunflower **candleholder** from Love After Love; **flooring** in Aren Bianco limestone from Onsite. *Details, last pages.*



