

Shanghai SUNRISE

Life in Asia inspired the dazzling palette in this renovated family home on Sydney's upper north shore

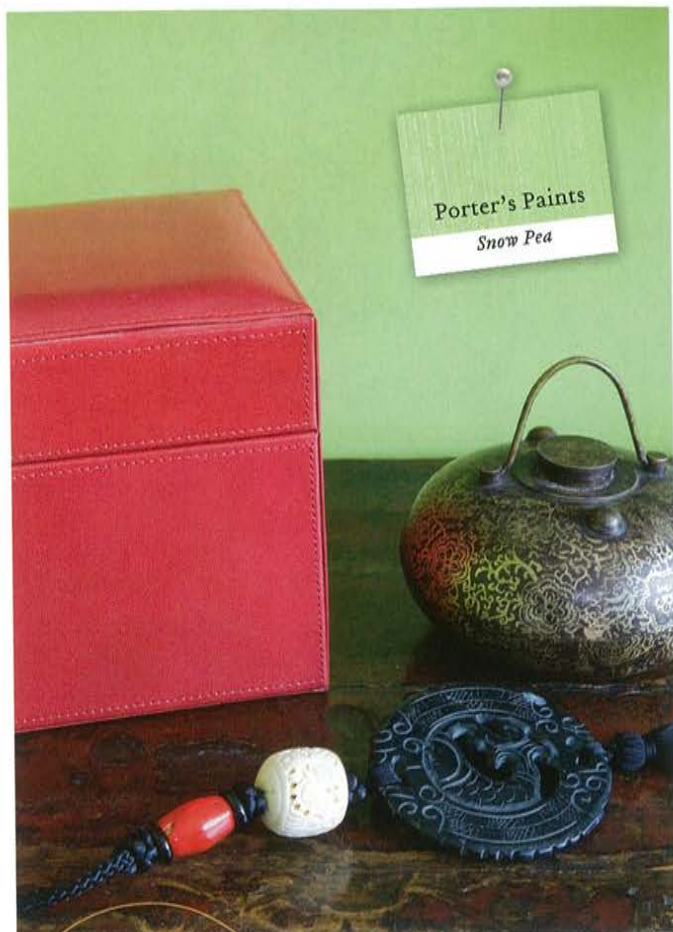
STORY JODIE THOMSON STYLING MARIE NICHOLS PHOTOGRAPHY SUE STUBBS



Several years living amid the vibrant colours of Asia inspired Julian and Helen's taste for bold hues, which they indulged unashamedly when renovating their Sydney home. Every room has been treated to a serve of upbeat colour, from whole walls painted in spicy tones to small displays such as this grouping [opposite](#) of a striking orange lamp from Shanghai Tang with a stripy cup from Chee Soon & Fitzgerald. There's a quieter palette in the living room [this page](#), with walls in the subtle grey of Dulux's Nolita Half. Joinery in soothing taupe shows off an elegant portrait by Vietnamese artist Hoang Hai Anh. "We bought the painting in Hanoi and the whole built-in unit had to work around it," says Helen. The sunset tones of the painting are repeated in scatter cushions from India and, most strikingly, in the dried legumes displayed in the unique coffee table, found in Cambodia. "It's one of our favourite and most unusual pieces of furniture," says Helen. >

FORMAL DINING ROOM "This is our most 'Asian' looking room; we chose wide, dark timber flooring to team with the antiques and Chinese birdcage," says Helen. "The room has a recess on one side that opens to two huge skylights which allow lovely natural light to stream in." Modern furnishings sit easily with antiques in the room, united by sombre tones of dark wood; an antique sideboard works well with a modern teak table (both were found in Hong Kong), and chairs from Sydney store Brescia Furniture. A subdued pale gold in a portrait by Vietnamese artist Dinh Quan is reflected in a geometric-patterned pendant and table runner, both custom-made.





There's a sheer joy that comes from living with big doses of seriously bright colour. Just ask colour-confident homeowners Helen and Julian, who recently renovated their house on a leafy block in Sydney's north, lavishing plenty of colour on the interiors in the process. Racy reds and pretty apples sit with zingy lime, fuchsia and mandarine hues on the walls and finishes, while accessories and artworks in equally vivid shades add dazzle to every room. "I've always loved bright colours, but this scheme just works, with a splash of colour in every room," says Helen.

The renovation, designed by architect Melonie Bayl-Smith of Liquid Architecture, has transformed the humble, red-brick home into a modern, split-level residence, tailor-made for the couple and their two children, Thomas, nine, and Georgie, seven. It now offers excellent natural light in every room, while separate casual and formal living areas and a generous outdoor area will suit the family as the children grow.

The renovation process was no straightforward matter, as the family bought the house and started the planning while living and working in Hong Kong. Friends had spotted the house for sale and Helen and Julian didn't even see it until the day they signed the contract. "It was a good piece of land, in a great location in terms of local schools and friends in the area," Helen says.

From Hong Kong, they hunted for an architect and found Melonie via the internet. "I still can't believe we did all this from a distance," Helen says. "But we liked Melonie's approach and knew she was up and coming."

The couple's brief to the architect was rather unusual. Along with the usual requirements of a young family, they wanted the interiors planned around their extensive collection of furniture, antiques, art and artefacts picked up during their years living in Asia. And of course, lots of colour. "We sent her pictures of the things we wanted featured in the house, like the Tibetan sideboard and the Cambodian coffee table," Helen says. "I wouldn't say it was an easy brief."

The result is a spacious home packed with colour and life. Treasured pieces fit snugly into purpose-built recesses, while artworks shine on walls in an array of happy shades. "We've only had to buy dining chairs; everything else we already had and it works really well," Helen says.

Helen and Julian aimed for a burst of cheery colour in every room. Along with painted walls, the kitchen features a vivid red splashback, and each bathroom in the house boasts a unique colour scheme.

"It's such a comfortable house," says Helen. "It's not just stylish, the rooms are nice and big and we've got the original ceilings so there's a great feeling of light and space. We're so happy with it."

ENTRANCE (top left & right) Visitors to Helen and Julian's home are greeted by a pretty apple-green foyer painted in Porter's Paints Snow Pea, the vibrant shade offering a fitting introduction to the couple's colourful style. "Most people wouldn't think of having a colour like this in the entrance, but it works so well," says Helen. The apple hue contrasts nicely with a painting by Chinese artist Zhang Guoning and a Tibetan antique chest, bought from a Hong Kong antique store and used to display treasured objects from their travels. >

Dulux
Red Stop



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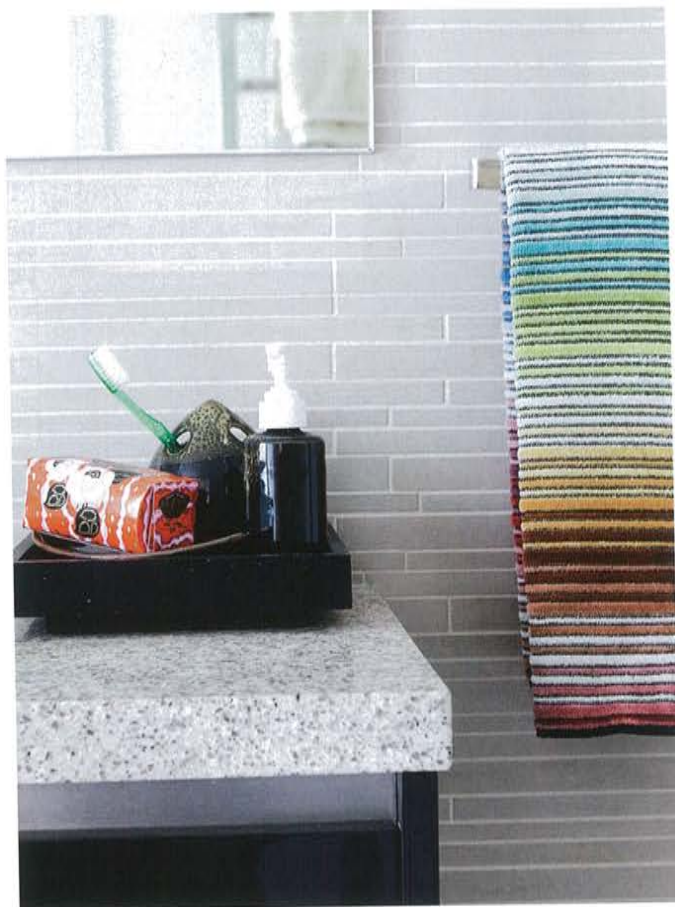
FOYER The space from the central foyer through to the casual dining area and kitchen has been decked out in pristine white tiles and walls – all the better for showing off feature walls and accessories in racy red. Stairwell walls in Dulux's Red Stop are echoed in a 'Pixel' candlestick from Hart & Heim, Marimekko cushions from Nordic Fusion and a brash 'Stockholm Figur' rug from Ikea. The furniture has been kept deliberately simple in contrast, with a seamless white sideboard from Freedom (opposite, top left) and a Calligaris dining setting from Brescia Furniture in modern metal and glass – the hub of this family home. "It's perfect to sit around for a casual meal," says Helen.



KITCHEN (top right) The kitchen's colour scheme is designed for maximum impact, with a DecoGlaze glass splashback in Zoom Red and a black CaesarStone benchtop adding high drama to the glossy white cabinetry, designed by Mona Vale Kitchens (call (02) 9997 1866). "It's supposed to be sleek, but not too 'out there'," says Helen. A subtle sparkle in the benchtops and LED lighting beneath the cupboards add an extra dimension of glamour at night. Storage space is maximised in the kitchen, with overhead cupboards stretching to the ceiling. "To reach the top shelves I've got to get on a ladder, but I like that because it's good for storing things you might only use once a year," says Helen.

LAUNDRY (right) Even the laundry boasts a burst of colour, with a bright benchtop in Laminex's Olympia Red, Rokoco tea towels and red canisters from Spotlight bringing life to the functional space and connecting it visually to the kitchen and central foyer. "That was Melonie's idea, the concept of the red as a linking tool," Helen says. The laundry cabinets are in softer tones, with Laminex's Fossil overhead and Vanilla below. >





MASTER ENSUITE (top left) Helen and Julian's elegant ensuite was inspired by London boutique hotel The Hempel, where they had their wedding reception. "I'd always wanted a Hempel-style bathroom with these neutral shades, and 10 years later I've got one," Helen says. The soothing, neutral-toned tiles are dressed up with a dark vanity and speckled CaesarStone benchtop.

CHILDREN'S BATHROOM (left) The kids' bathroom is the perfect place to let loose with another dose of colour, with lime-green floor tiles adding life against the white-and-grey tiled walls. "I wanted to go with something bold on the floor to make it a bit of fun," says Helen. "I think it's a good kids colour and, importantly, it will still look funky when they're teenagers."

MASTER BEDROOM Tucked upstairs, away from the family noise below and with its own balcony looking out to the garden, the master bedroom is a peaceful escape for Helen and Julian. Helen has chosen a restful taupe shade for the bedroom walls, but there's still plenty of colour in vibrant cushions, custom-made in Thai silk, and a pair of quirky bedside lamps bought from their favourite store Shanghai Tang, which sit on side tables from a Hong Kong antique store; visit Shanghai Tang online at www.shanghaitang.com. On the opposite wall (opposite, top right) is one of Helen's prized possessions, a painting by artist Nicole Hohn, commissioned for her 40th birthday. >



Inside story

Who lives here?

Julian and Helen, both solicitors; and their children, Thomas, nine; and Georgie, seven (both pictured, inset, with Helen).

Describe your home's style.

Helen: "We were attracted to architect Melonie Bayl-Smith's work – modern but practical."

Any difficulties picking paint colours?

"No regrets at all and no major stress. Melonie was a very good guide and I took her advice. I'd say I wanted a particular colour, like the apple in the hallway, and she'd drop off a lot of samples. And I do like to make a quick decision!"

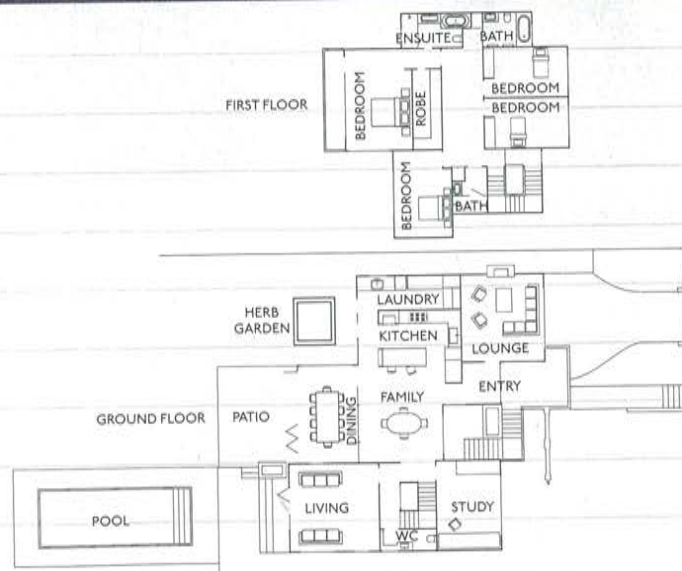
What's your favourite space? "I love sitting in the alfresco area and looking out to the garden, even when it's raining. It's a bit indulgent but I really love our bedroom, with the massive concertina doors that open onto the balcony. There's a beautiful, flowering tree outside the window that I love to look at while lying in bed."

What's the most successful ingredient in the renovation? "I probably love the joinery most. We had a good joiner and Melonie came up with lots of good ideas, like the study desk and the shelves in the living room. To be able to put stuff away is great."

What makes the house work for a family? "Separate casual living spaces for the kids and us. They have a TV/rumpus room, and we have the kitchen/casual dining area, which is a bit open plan and has a TV, too."



STUDY Cheerful and functional, the study uses black, white and touches of red to make a strong statement. The desk and wall shelves were designed by architect Melonie and built by Mona Vale Kitchens. "It's really spectacular in the shiny red," Helen says. Scarlet storage boxes from Kikki.K and Officeworks help keep this practical space feeling warm and welcoming. "On the odd occasion when I get time, I like to go and sit there and read," says Helen.



FOYER (far right) Architect Melonie designed recesses in the red stairwell to show off favourite items like these bright blue and green Buddhas. "These were the sort of things she had to fit into the design," Helen says. "We'd collected all these things and wanted to show them off, not stash them away."

ENSUITE (centre) A frameless shower screen helps to maximise the feeling of light, which streams into this airy bathroom. "The shower runs the width of the bathroom and has a full-length louvred window running down the wall, overlooking the garden," adds Helen.



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colour & materials

1 Living room paint Wash & Wear 101 Advanced Low Sheen in Nolita Half, \$63.90/4 litres, Dulux.

2 Entrance paint Eggshell Acrylic in Snow Pea, \$39/litre, Porter's Paints.

3 Master bedroom paint Wash & Wear 101 Advanced Low Sheen in Mocha Magic, \$77.15/4 litres, Dulux.

4 Foyer paint Wash & Wear 101 Advanced Low Sheen in Red Stop, \$92.85/4 litres, Dulux.

5 Kitchen benchtop Quartz composite benchtop in Night Sky, from \$500/lineal metre, CaesarStone.

6 Kitchen splashback Glass splashback in Zoom Red, \$420/sqm, DecoGlaze.

Stockists, page 175

Due to the printing process, actual colours may vary.

CONTACTS: Melonie Bayl-Smith of Liquid Architecture, (02) 9958 7950, liquidarchitecture.com.au.

colour cue

< an exotic palette

A five-year stint in Hong Kong fine-tuned Helen's eye to a vivid, spicy Asian palette. In particular, the couple are fans of fashion and homewares chain Shanghai Tang (shanghaitang.com). "They use a lot of the Chinese bright red, the lime green, orange and hot pink together and we'd bought a lot of their stuff and loved it," Helen says. Souvenirs of their time abroad, such as this lacquered box from Shanghai Tang (opposite, bottom), are displayed alongside similarly bright purchases from closer to home, such as this felt placemat from Hart & Heim (left).

