

SWEPT AWAY



Dazzling surrounds and endless sea views mesmerised the owners of this quintessential beach house, now newly opened up.

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More than a decade ago, interior designer Daniela McMurdo and her husband returned to Sydney after having lived in London for years. “We decided to look for a weekender by the beach so that our children could experience Australian beach life just as I had and which James was keen to embrace as he was from the UK,” explains Daniela. “We were looking for a place not far from where we lived so we had the flexibility of using it regularly, including commuting over the summer holidays. Our search began with the northern beaches and ended there pretty quickly as we found our perfect weatherboard in Palm Beach. As soon as we walked through the front door we were mesmerised by the view out to the ocean.”

WHY DID YOU EMBARK ON THIS PROJECT AND WHAT WAS THE BRIEF? We decided to make some upgrades to our quintessential 1950s beach house as our family needs had changed. We transitioned from arriving together at the weekend after work and school commitments, to our children driving there independently with their friends and studying there in the peace and quiet. During the pandemic we would go there to unwind and spend special time together. The brief was to convert the downstairs photographic dark room and storage area to create a new bedroom and ensuite bathroom and upgrade the house entry and frontage including hard and green landscaping. We wanted to retain the relaxed feel so no matt paint on the walls, no marble, no polished plaster and no cream sofas: nothing was to be too precious.

WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES OF THE PROJECT AND HOW DID YOU RESOLVE THEM WITH YOUR DESIGN SCHEME? We were lucky and didn’t experience any major challenges as we were working with an existing home and landscape. This meant that the design for the



This page Adding its stripy presence to the living room, B&B Italia Up Series 2000 'Up 5_6' armchair and ottoman by Gaetano Pesce from Space. The antique table features favourite pieces including the Londolzi table lamp from House of Isabella and a small white urchin vase from @scalacollective. On wall, abacus from a Hong Kong antique store and a printer's drawer from London. **Opposite page, from top** A new Jetmaster wood-burning fireplace was installed in the living and dining area.

White artwork by Antonia Perricone Mrljak. Oak table from London with 'Miami' side chairs from Naturally Cane. Artwork above oak bench by Heidi Tansey. FDB Møbler 'J83B' bench in oak from Finnish Design Shop. Tall antique ebony wood sculpture from Manilla, Philippines. The kitchen was stripped back and all new carcasses, benchtops and appliances were installed with joinery by Anthony Ritchie of North Shore Custom Cabinetmaking. Splashback in mini picket tiles in Sky from Di Lorenzo. Smeg 'Portofino' 900mm oven in White. **Previous page** To expand the deck and make it more usable, a central staircase was removed. 'Palissade' bench from Hay.



LUXE COASTAL



This page, clockwise from top left A collection of vintage items on the outdoor deck off the bunk room. Secret Gardens landscaped this courtyard off one of the bathrooms. Rug from Pampa. Panelling was installed along the living room wall. The sofa was reupholstered in a "Scandi blue", says Daniela. B&B Italia 'Husk' chairs in oak from Space. Wooden coffee table from London. Sisal rug from International Floorcoverings Australia. On cabinetry, pulls in natural leather from MadeMeasure. Opposite page, from top On the newly expanded main deck is a Kristalia 'Nori' slatted extension table from Fanuli with colourful outdoor chairs from Ke-Zu. Billie the French bulldog in a favourite spot on the deck next to the Dedon sunlounger from Eco Outdoors.





new rooms had to suit the exact space we had. The new bathroom ensuite ceiling wasn't as high as we would have liked and we had to incorporate a bulkhead. However, knowing you have no choice about things sometimes makes the project easier.

ARE THERE ANY PARTICULAR CONSIDERATIONS WHEN REDESIGNING A HOME IN A COASTAL SETTING SUCH AS THIS? Yes! To access the ocean view from as many areas of the house as possible.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE IDEAS AND INFLUENCES THAT SHAPED YOUR DESIGN? The original architectural style was late 50s and even though some upgrades had taken place over the years, luckily each paid justice to the simplicity and beautiful location of the home. We were mindful to retain this mid-century design. Matt Cantwell and Nicholas Tuttle from Secret Gardens nailed the scheme for improving our entry and frontage and interpreted the look we were after, so much so that we didn't make one change to their landscape design.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE COMPLETED HOME AND WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE DESIGN ELEMENTS? The renovation we undertook has only made it all the more comfortable, open plan, slightly quirky, filled with light and, above all, inviting. Our favourite design elements are part of the hard landscape design including the addition of more sandstone, the vertical zigzag entry steel balustrade, the patterned privacy screens and the quartz carpet in the carport and entry landing.

HOW DOES THE PROJECT RESPOND TO THE SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE? The property has just been given a new lick of paint and looks like the original cottage that was built years ago when Palm Beach had several quintessential weatherboard beach houses.

WHAT INFORMED THE SELECTION OF FURNITURE, ART, FITTINGS AND FINISHES? To be honest, the furniture scheme evolved from original pieces we purchased or had made when we first bought the house 20 years ago and other pieces and art are from various moves from London and Hong Kong. I believe that classic well-designed furniture can transcend any scheme. They can be reupholstered or refinished and still be your hero pieces. The fittings and finishes were all chosen with classic, effortless, stylish and functionality in mind. All was to be easy to use including no instructions for guests!

WERE YOU HAPPY WITH THE EXECUTION? HOW DO YOU USE THE SPACE? Yes, we were happy. We had a great working relationship with Contemporary Builders and the result is a project we can all take pride in. We are continuing to use the home on weekends and for large family gatherings, including Easter and Christmas. Our adult children have recently moved to London and we hope the memories they have of Palm Beach will not only stay with them forever but bring them back to visit regularly. scalaandromano.com; secretgardens.com.au; contemporarybuilders.com.au

This page, from top In the guest bedroom, sisal floor rug from International Floorcoverings Australia. New doors and louvres were installed throughout, opening up the house to the outdoors and sea breezes. The master bedroom features a custom bedhead by Daniela and linen and pillows from Analu. On the private deck, outdoor 'Trace' sofa from Tait upholstered in Nassau In+Outdoor fabric in 'Indigo' from Westbury Textiles. Moroso 'Osorom' coffee table from Mobilia. Honore Deco 'Croisette' chairs from Bastille and Sons.

