



AFTER A LIFETIME OF PLANNING, INTERIOR DESIGNER BELINDA HAS REALISED HER DESIGN VISION WITH A LOFTY HAMPTONS-STYLE HOME IN MELBOURNE

STORY ANNA McCOOE STYLING JULIA GREEN PHOTOGRAPHY ARMELLE HABIB

LIGHTER DAYS Belinda spent many years fine-tuning the home she has created for her family. Details are queen, as is a style inspired by the interior designer's passion for American East Coast style. This is displayed to great effect on the home's exterior cladding (opposite), where highlight windows around the front door deliver extra light to the interior. In the kitchen, she was always going to have Shaker-profile cabinetry. "That was never a question!" says Belinda (pictured, with Harry the Maltese terrier). The Roman blind in a Kravet fabric (try 'Riad') was made by BQ Design and is true to the homeowner's inviting style. "I love having soft furnishings in spaces with lots of hard surfaces," she says. >





The dreams started when Belinda – the creative force behind this divine family home – was 15. She lived in Virginia in the US at the time, and on weekends she and her mother spent their downtime visiting display villages to ogle the palatial East Coast homes. From that point onwards she was stuck in a lucid loop of oversized spaces, Shaker-profile timber, muted colour and crafted architraves. “The scale and level of detail planted a seed that grew and grew in my head all these years,” she says. And so began a planning process spanning a quarter of a century, which eventually brought Belinda here today: standing on solid oak within the real-life proliferation of endless moodboards and sketches.

With a shopping list jam-packed with wishes – classic style with contemporary pops of colour, all-day sunshine and generous proportions – Belinda, an interior designer, and her husband, Dan, found a knockdown on 880 square metres in Melbourne’s manicured eastern suburbs. During the next two years, they planned and built a home to share with their daughters, Lucy, 13, and Mia, 10.

From the outside, the two-storey light-grey weatherboard is so very Hamptons it could have been lifted from a Nancy Meyers film. Yet, the designer is reluctant to use the H-word – “It’s so overused,” she says – but admits “that’s where my inspiration comes from”. On the glossy black door, a pineapple-shaped doorknocker by Rhode Island-based designer Michael Healy hints to the lack of cookie-cutter

design within. The doorknocker, by the way, came from Home Depot in the US and was carted home after a family trip to Hawaii. It was not the only thing to return to Australia. “Everyone came home with something in their luggage!” says Belinda. “Mum and Dad had a pendant light and the kids each had a roll of wallpaper.”

Inside, graceful 3.3-metre ceilings evoke an awe-inspired response as the foyer sweeps past the front rooms, opens to a combined living and meals area, and then flows out to the garden. There’s a main bedroom downstairs and two more bedrooms upstairs, along with a low-key rumpus room for the girls. Belinda’s professional eye and affinity with this relaxed, classic style means she knows exactly how to strike the sweet spot between lightness and comfort. In communal zones she has used minimal colour but dialled up cosiness with layers of plush furniture, tactile rugs and floaty curtains and cushions. In bedrooms – “our special spaces” – she isn’t afraid to use more colour, especially indigo, pink and turquoise. “Every bedroom is different but complementary,” she explains.

After a year of building, another year of planning and decades of pondering details, Belinda is thrilled to finally see her American-inspired vision finally take form. But how would her 15-year-old self feel? “I think she’d get closure!” says Belinda. “After so many years of designing and sketching this house in my head, I now get to move on to helping other people build their own dreams.”

KITCHEN The magic of Belinda’s kitchen lies in careful planning (above). “I wrote a list of all my kitchen stuff, making sure everything had a place,” she says. Over time, the designer’s vision evolved to include a 2-pac finish in Dulux Natural White and Milton Moon on the island, along with Carrara marble benchtops. The handles are from Restoration Hardware in the US (Dan brought 150 of them back from a work trip to New York to furnish the whole house, stuffing most of his clothes into a suit bag). The Ralph Lauren pendants from Laura Kincade were Belinda’s biggest splurge. “I knew I really wanted them, so we had to tweak our budget around them,” she says. Bevelled subway tiles from Perini and a custom rangehood add interest.

DINING ROOM Set around the Boyd Blue dining table, comfortable dining chairs from Domo mark the meals area as a place to linger (below). “The comfort factor was important,” says Belinda. “We needed to be able to sit in the chairs for a long time.” The rattan texture was almost as crucial – “There was a lot of white going on,” she adds. Underfoot, stained American oak from Royal Oak Floors is one of her favourite features. “The grey and brown tones work with the scheme of the house and they’re very practical,” she says. In true Hamptons style, meanwhile, the dining area enjoys an azure outlook. “I had never had a pool before,” says Belinda, who specified blue tiles from Perini. “Looking at blue water is really nice.” >



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SITTING ROOM “I wanted something elegant but still cosy,” says Belinda of the sitting room at the front of the home, which is used largely as an adult retreat (above). “When we have people over, the adults usually end up in the front room and kids in the back,” she explains. Grey linen curtains add intimacy, while the ‘Simple Scallop’ pendant light and ‘Bryant’ sconces from Cromwell Furniture deliver soft illumination. A round mirror from Bloomingdales Lighting breaks up the square lines of the mantel. Belinda kept her budget in check by reusing her old sofa and ottoman – reupholstering the sofa in beautiful Warwick ‘Mystere’ fabric. Custom armchairs are dressed up in a peacock print from Trend Fabrics, while the Bayliss rug delivers a measure of silkiness underfoot.

COFFEE TABLE, CUSHION, DRUM STOOL (OPPOSITE) GALLERIE B. ILLUSTRATION KENZIEDSIGN.COM



FLOOR PLAN



FOYER
The wide foyer (top left) heralds the home’s generous proportions. A pendant from Regency Distribution (sourced through Gallerie B) and Meizai console create impact. The lamp and mirror were found at Bloomingdales Lighting. “The lamp ties in with the blue bedroom opposite,” says Belinda.

SITTING ROOM
A Zuster cabinet (top right) with an inlaid marble top is more contemporary than most pieces

in the home, but Belinda sees it as a future classic. “It’s so well-crafted – an heirloom piece to hand down,” she says. It is backed by one of her favourite budget finds – a Villa Nova grasscloth-look vinyl wallcovering from Marco Fabrics.

FAMILY LIVING ROOM
A traditional fireplace and Eliza Piro artwork are the stars of this cosy family space (left). Belinda reupholstered her old couch with a Warwick ‘Chambray’ Dusty Blue slip cover for a light touch. >



"I USED COLOURS THAT MAKE ME feel calm IN THE MAIN BEDROOM AND brighter hues IN THE KIDS' ROOMS" ~BELINDA

LUCY'S BEDROOM
Lucy wanted to have a blue and turquoise bedroom, but Belinda, who designed the plush bedhead (top left) and had it custom made by BQ Design, brought in a pop of pink — thank you, Lumiere Art & Co artwork and cushions — to bring the scheme to life. The valance was custom made to match the bedhead. "It finishes off the look of the bed," says Belinda. To answer the storage question — and to create a spot for Lucy, Mia and Harry to hang out (top right) — the custom banquette includes drawers and a built-in bookshelf. Belinda has always loved Martyn Lawrence Bullard's 'Sultan's Suzani' fabric, which she used for the Roman blind. "I often start with a hero print and work from there," she says. "It's a good way to build a colour scheme."

POWDER ROOM
"The powder room is not a big space so I wanted to have fun with it," says Belinda, who went all out with Thibaut's 'Donegal' wallpaper (left). The vanity has the same Shaker profile as the kitchen, but Belinda reduced her costs by using vinyl wrap instead of 2-pac and Caesarstone in Frosty Carrina.

MAIN BEDROOM
Belinda calls the main bedroom (opposite) a haven for herself and Dan. "It's cosy but elegant and we're surrounded by colours we love," she says. White linen curtains feature a full-blockout backing and the velvet bedhead from Heatherly Design gives the bed a 'dive right in' quality. The blue Sheridan quilt has been with the couple for years now (and is a drawcard for Harry).

CUSTOM BOLSTER AND CUSHIONS (OPPOSITE) | GALLERIE B



**WE LOVE...
grasscloth**

Natural in texture with a luxe metallic shimmer, grasscloth is the ultimate style-setting wallcovering. In the sitting room, Belinda opted for a vinyl faux grasscloth, but in the main bedroom she chose the real thing — Schumacher's 'Haruki Sisal' in Cornflower. Handmade from natural threads, grasscloth is a premium finish (which costs in the vicinity of \$300-\$500/10m roll) and calls for professional application as no two sections are the same. >

“NATURAL LIGHT WAS A PRIORITY – THE sun follows us AROUND THE HOUSE” ~ BELINDA



POOL
Sun loungers from Boyd Blue enjoy a view of the azure pool as well as the home's classic lines, complete with American-style shingles roofing, exterior cladding and architraves.

CONTACTS
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CLASSIC APPEAL



INSIDE STORY
BELINDA & DAN'S HOME

Who lives here:
Belinda, an interior designer at Gallerie B; her husband, Dan, who works in funds management; their daughters, Lucy, 13, and Mia, 10; and Harry the Maltese terrier.

Why the new build?
Belinda: "I'd been planning this house in my head for many years. We loved Melbourne's east but couldn't find anything to my taste. So we bought a knockdown and created something in its place that ticked all the boxes."

Tips for home builders?
"The building process – and level of detail required – is crazy. I liken it to pregnancy and childbirth – you forget the pain and you're left with an amazing reward in the end."

What room are you particularly happy with?
"The kitchen is a space we spend a lot of time in, so that's where we went all out."



ACTUAL PAINT COLOURS MAY VARY ON APPLICATION

1. Office nook in Dulux Natural White and Carrara marble.
2. Belinda, Lucy, Mia and Harry in the hallway, which has Royal Oak Floors' Architect Collection oak-engineered boards in Mink Grey.
3. Marble-look porcelain tiles in herringbone format from Perini.
4. Hygge & West 'Pineapple' wallpaper in Blue.
5. Old display shelves repaired and painted in Dulux Diplomatic.
6. Christopher Farr 'Carnival' wallpaper in Green in the pantry.
7. Dulux Natural White on the exterior's trim and Milton Moon on the weatherboards.

