

AT HOME WITH ORNELLA

MAKING AN *Impression*

The casual open-plan dining area features a table, custom-made from an old piece of timber, together with rustic Hampton-style chairs that Ornela had for years. Decorative pieces such as the fabulous clock have been sourced through Ornela Botter Interiors.

An old Sydney home with a '70s extension underwent a stylish transformation to become fabulously flowing and family-friendly.

Story by Susannah Hardy
Photography by Tony Potter
Styling by Kirstin Randi-Katalinic



When interior designer and stylist Ornella Botter found an old home in need of an update on Sydney's lower north shore, she did not renovate immediately. "I wanted to work out how it felt living in it, where the sun was coming in and how we were going to utilise the rooms at that time of our life with three young children," says Ornella, who runs her own business Ornella Botter Interiors. The home, although built in 1918, had at some point been given a second storey. "Along the way people added things on and went up," she says. "When we looked at it, the house had a bit of a '70s add-on." Two years later, work was carried out on the home making it more liveable, stylish and with a greater sense of flow. Ornella was travelling to and from the USA at the time, which became a valuable source of inspiration. "I was constantly taking photos of doors and windows and bits and pieces," says Ornella who loves nothing more than hunting around for new and interesting homewares and decorative items. Now the spacious property is comfortable and airy with plenty of separate and family living areas both indoors and out and an impressive interior design that starts at the front gate and stylishly continues right through. "It's six years down the track and I still love it," she says.

TOP LEFT: Ornella installed an oversized front door, which she painted in a custom-mixed grey to match the home's exterior, creating a grand and impressive entrance.

TOP RIGHT: The hall features an old side table with an array of pieces collected over the years and a stunning light fitting custom designed and made through Ornella Botter Interiors.

LEFT: The charm of the original formal dining room was maintained with classic-style decorative pieces sourced through Ornella Botter Interiors and a traditional working fireplace.



The large kitchen island is topped with Caesarstone Snow and matched with Tolix stools.



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

For Ornella, a home should always make an immediate impression. "As soon as people walk in, I like them to get that wow factor," she says. With outdoor landscaping designed by Peter Fudge and an oversized front door painted in a chic custom-mixed grey, this home certainly has that element. "For me, there is nothing better than arriving on a front porch or deck and having a big door," she admits. "I made it taller and wider because I like bigger proportions." Likewise for the original French doors in the front that Ornella increased in height. From the front door, the home continues to shine with custom-stained Australian hardwood floorboards right through. "There were floorboards there but they dated back a long time and were all a bit rotten," she says. "They all had to go." Walls have also been re-done with Dulux Grand Piano right through, a versatile stone colour that is a particular favourite of the interior designers. "I love working with that colour," she says. "It lends itself to a lot of other colours."

The trim has then been painted with a simple Dulux white in a semi gloss as Ornella likes it to be really white against the stone colour. The bedrooms belonging to Ornella's three daughters aged 11, 14 and 16 years have also been painted in Dulux Grand Piano, creating a neutral background to which they can add their own personal bits

and pieces. "I always find if you paint children's bedrooms in a certain hue, after a few years they don't like the colour anymore," she says. "So I find if I use this stone colour or a beautiful white, I just add other colours they love."

USER-FRIENDLY SPACES

The home is spacious with four bedrooms, three bathrooms, two studies and a media room, which is important for a big family. "We entertain a lot in this house," says Ornella. "The girls are busy too so we've always got a lot of children around." Originally the back section consisted of separate rooms, one of which was the kitchen, however she knocked this through to create a combined lounge/dining/kitchen space and, essentially, a more user-friendly home. French doors now open the space out to a 10 by 3 metre deck with large table and wicker

TOP: The casual lounge features a three-metre Jordan sofa with two old armchairs re-upholstered in a fabulous striped Spanish fabric.

OPPOSITE PAGE: The formal dining room is simple yet elegant with a beautiful table and standard lamp from Sally Beresford and custom-made chairs and curtains and light fitting from Belgium.





chairs for outdoor dining as well as a second side deck furnished with comfy outdoor furniture. "It just gives more areas for people to take themselves away and relax or entertain," says Ormella. "The girls use that side deck quite a bit; they go out with their friends and sit and have a chat." And while Ormella has created a more contemporary family-friendly layout in this section, it was important that it blended with the original home. "I tend to continue the theme," she says, and for this reason she installed a sandstone fireplace in the informal lounge area. "I like there to be some sort of flow through the home."

MIXING IT UP

Ormella gave the interior a distinct Hamptons' flavour but she is not afraid to blend this with other styles. "I just pick up pieces that I like on my travels, then I come home and work out what I'm going to do with them," she says. "I do like Asian pieces so I love throwing those into the mix." As a result, the look is an eclectic one with plenty of warmth and personal charm. "I like pottering around little stores when I'm in the country," says Ormella. "I pick up funny little things, treasures that I love, that mean nothing to other people, just interesting pieces I like to add to my home." The home also features a stylish collection of furniture items, many of them she has had for years that are either custom made or sourced through her business.

Ormella's Top Decorating Tips

- Always group things in threes or fives.
- I like to paint my walls in a neutral colour and then add colour by way of accents.
- Make your home personal – have pieces in your home which mean something to you, be it something you have found on your travels, a memory or something you just love.
- Never underestimate the power of flowers! I love having flowers – they brighten up any room!



TOP: A second study area for Ormella's daughters features a fabric-covered ornamental board designed by Ormella Botter Interiors.

OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP: The master bedroom is simple, stylish and spacious with doors opening out on to an outdoor deck with bedding and cushions sourced through Ormella Botter Interiors.

BOTTOM LEFT: This bedroom for Ormella's 16-year-old daughter is fun and vibrant with bedding from Bed Bath N Table and a collection of personal bits and pieces adding charm and individuality.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The bedroom belonging to Ormella's 12-year-old daughter is pretty as a picture with an old bed, charming bedding and curtains sourced through Ormella Botter Interiors.



The beautiful table in the formal dining area came from Sally Beresford while the casual three-metre lounge, the comfy sofa in the media room and the beautiful hall light fittings were custom made through Ornella Botter Interiors. Other items have been with her for ages and she's simply added a coat of paint or new upholstery to breathe in new life. "If you buy well, they work well and they last," she says.

Ornella is delighted with her home, which was completed six years ago. Her girls are growing up and the house is ideal for teenagers and their friends with plenty of both separate and communal living areas plus a fabulous garden and pool. The look, while fresh and coastal, blends beautifully with the older-style house and has an interior design that flows right through making all the spaces feel connected. It is important to Ornella, when she is working on a client's home, that it represents who they are. "I say to them that it's their home so it's got to reflect them and their family and how their family works," she says. So too with her own home which is ideally suited to her family and their lifestyle and is furnished with real warmth and personal charm. "It's a very comfortable home," she says. "It's a great entertaining home, it's easy flowing, an easy home to live in." ■

Ornella Botter Interiors, ornella.botter@tpg.com.au

TOP: The back deck features an outdoor table with large wicker chairs, ideal for outdoor dining while steps lead to another side deck for more casual lounging.

LEFT: Stylish timber outdoor furniture from Parterre creates a little relaxing spot in front of the media room.



White sandstone paving surrounded by immaculate garden beds of box hedge, juniper and ornamental pine trees, creates a stunning courtyard area at the front of the house.