



# Finding GRACE

RENOVATING WITH AN ARTIST'S EYE HELPED TRANSFORM A DILAPIDATED HOUSE INTO A TRULY MAGNIFICENT HOME

Story SUE WHEELER Styling CORINA KOCH Photography SIMON WHITBREAD

**WARM WELCOME** The cool caress of a harbour breeze wafts through the front doors (opposite) of this refined family home on Sydney's North Shore, where owners Laura and Damian live with their three teenage sons and pet bordoodles. Both front doors are original to the house, and Laura gave the timber a handsome coat of Dulux Black. "The entrance was very gloomy, so we knocked through the wall to the lounge and installed French doors and highlight windows to bring in lots of light and air," she says. A lantern pendant (try The Montauk Lighting Co.) emits a welcome glow, and a vintage table, painted in Taubmans Trendy, fits perfectly into the scheme. In the lounge (this page), a Uniqa Collections sofa anchors the space while the Emac & Lawton floor lamp and circular mirror (see Temple & Webster) form a subtle statement and connect to antique brass accents used elsewhere in the home. >



STYLING ASSISTANT DIANE BARKER



A palpable sense of harmony imbues the interiors of this beautiful Sydney home, and it comes as no surprise they were created with an artist's eye. "Many of the skills I have as an artist are transferable to interiors," says homeowner Laura, an interior designer who also project managed the renovation of the five-bedroom home she shares with husband Damian; sons Ralph, 20, Sam, 18, and Eddie, 15; and bordoodles Frankie and Bentley. "I get as much joy from renovating as I do from my art," she says. "Colour and composition help determine how a painting makes you feel, and this is similar for interior design; get those elements right and your home can make you feel good."

However, when the couple bought the home back in 2014 it was no oil painting, despite having "good bones". "The floor plan didn't function well," recalls Laura, who admits one redeeming feature was its high ceilings. "There were too many small, narrow doors, so it was dark, dysfunctional and dying of boredom from a bland '70s makeover."

Its location, on the other hand, was perfect for a fun family life – just a barefoot wander through a laneway to the harbourside reserve and a huddle of kayaks awaiting their next outing.

Laura had a clear vision: majestic glazed French doors and sash windows throughout, introducing light and cooling cross-breezes into every room. "I started with the kitchen, which was cramped and impractical," she explains. "We took off the original roof and built a high-pitched structure that gave us a wonderful view of the garden. I also added a round feature window to ramp up the 'wow' factor'. One of the keys to transforming this grand but lacklustre home was the addition of exquisitely detailed wainscoting and V-groove panelling on every wall. "It was like the house was waiting to be dressed," says Laura.

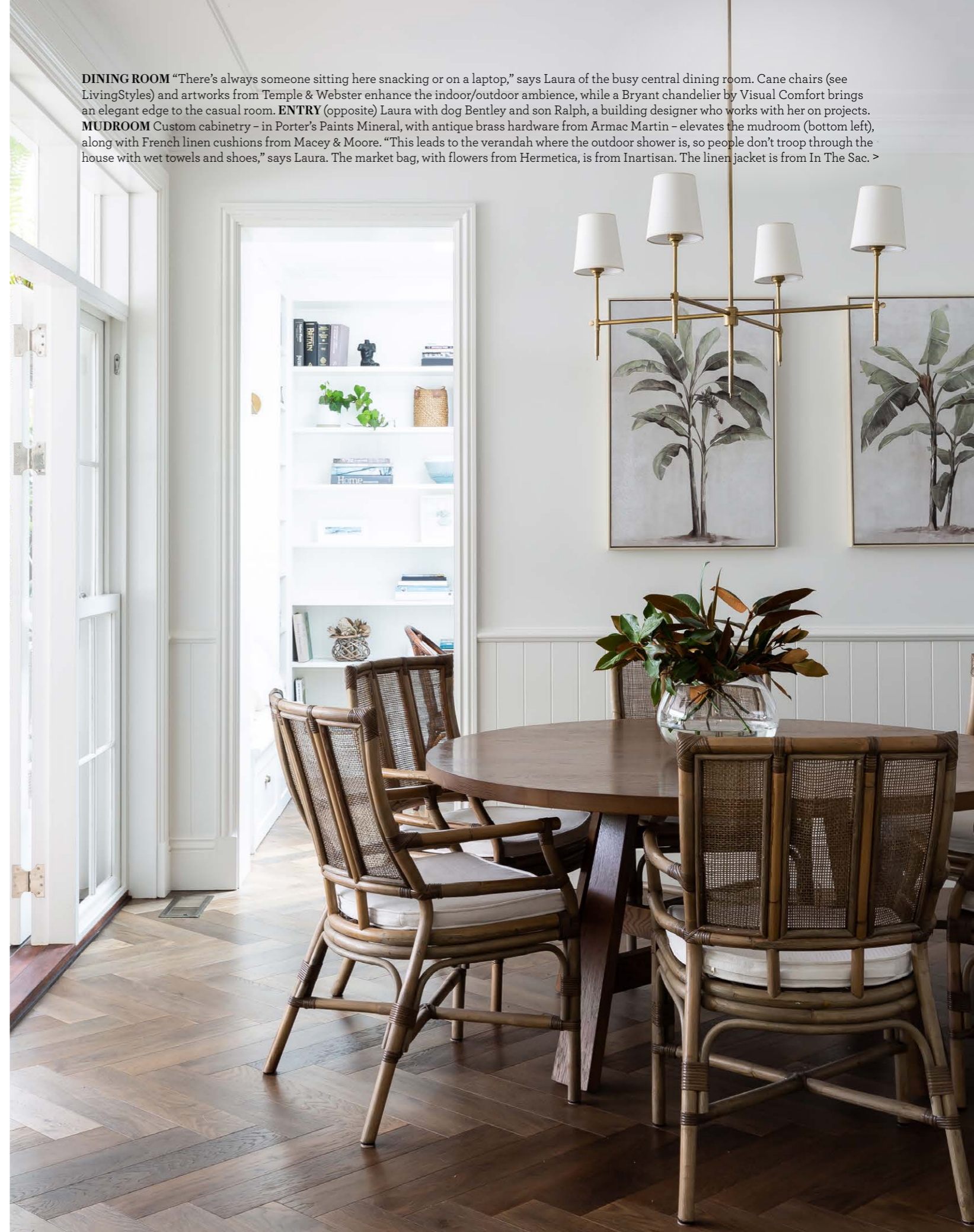
The home's "blend of Hamptons and Georgian style" tends towards traditional rather than beachy – a leaning Laura puts down to her English heritage. To enhance the graceful finishes, she chose a "neutral and natural palette", using Porter's Paints Popcorn in half strength downstairs and a muted green Dulux Spanish Olive on the walls upstairs. Laura says, "I steered away from blue – often the Hamptons go-to – and chose an earthy look, with black and warm grey accents. I also opted for dark oak floors to ground the space and complement the traditional feel of the house."

Laura carefully planned for three growing children, creating living areas that could be left open or closed off, all the while letting in light through French doors. When the family come together, an outdoor lounge and dining area make for the perfect rendezvous.

At the front of the home is a light-filled artist's studio and pretty courtyard where Laura paints in peace "but is still connected to everyone in the house".

Like an Old Master, this family home is truly classic and timeless. "I wanted a renovation that didn't look new but gave the impression the house had always been like this," says Laura, who, without a doubt, has used her creative talents to turn a blank canvas into a work of art.

**DINING ROOM** "There's always someone sitting here snacking or on a laptop," says Laura of the busy central dining room. Cane chairs (see LivingStyles) and artworks from Temple & Webster enhance the indoor/outdoor ambience, while a Bryant chandelier by Visual Comfort brings an elegant edge to the casual room. **ENTRY** (opposite) Laura with dog Bentley and son Ralph, a building designer who works with her on projects. **MUDROOM** Custom cabinetry – in Porter's Paints Mineral, with antique brass hardware from Armac Martin – elevates the mudroom (bottom left), along with French linen cushions from Macey & Moore. "This leads to the verandah where the outdoor shower is, so people don't troop through the house with wet towels and shoes," says Laura. The market bag, with flowers from Hermetica, is from Inartisan. The linen jacket is from In The Sac. >



**WE LOVE...**  
*shallow shelves*

Laura got a lot of storage bang for her buck in this bijou butler's pantry by designing shallow custom shelving. "So many pantry shelves are too deep, and you can't see or reach things easily," she says. "I wanted to find everything immediately, which is also why I used glass jars." You can DIY with narrow shelves from Bunnings and glass jars from Kitchen Warehouse.



"I DESIGNED THE *glass cabinets* WITH GLAZING BARS TO ECHO THE *French doors*" LAURA



**PANTRY** Small is beautiful in the pantry (above), where polished-nickel Perrin & Rowe taps adorn a butler's sink (try Ikea), and soft sage subways from Tiles by Kate highlight the pretty-as-a-picture sash window. **KITCHEN** Floor-to-ceiling sash windows, French doors and a soaring pitched roof create a breathtaking backdrop for Laura's timeless kitchen (opposite), crafted by The Kitchen Maker. "I wanted it to feel calm and welcoming with as much light as possible," says Laura of the space, which originally had "one poky door leading outside". A brass Boston wall light by Visual Comfort complements the island pendant, custom made from an old snooker table light. On the benchtop, a Water Tiger urn, featuring a floral arrangement by Hermetica, sits next to a Frama candle from Oliver Thom and a Toru Hatta pitcher from The DEA Store. The tractor stools are from Temple & Webster. >

KITCHEN BEAR BENCHTOP: NURTURE HAND TOWEL, TURN TURN SALT AND PEPPER GRINDERS AND TORU HATTA TEAPOT, ALL FROM THE DEA STORE

“WHEN THE window is open THE SHELL CHANDELIER jangles softly LIKE A WIND CHIME” LAURA

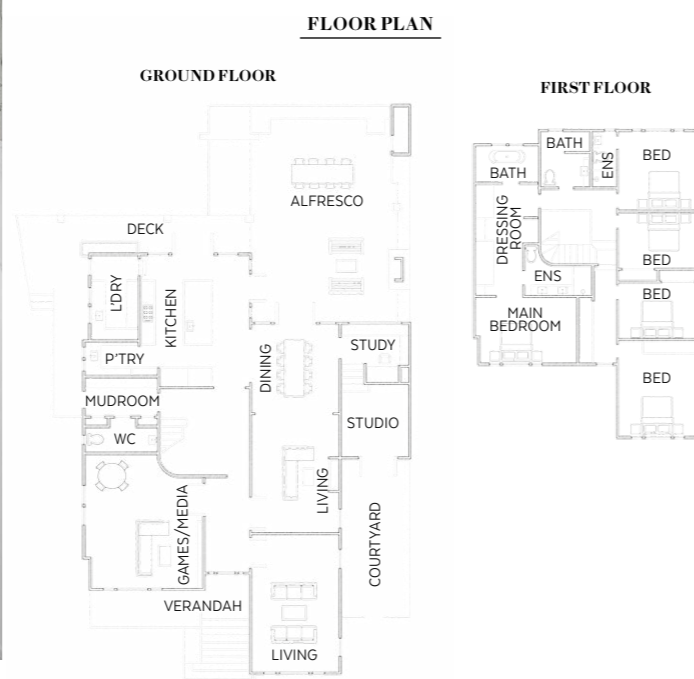
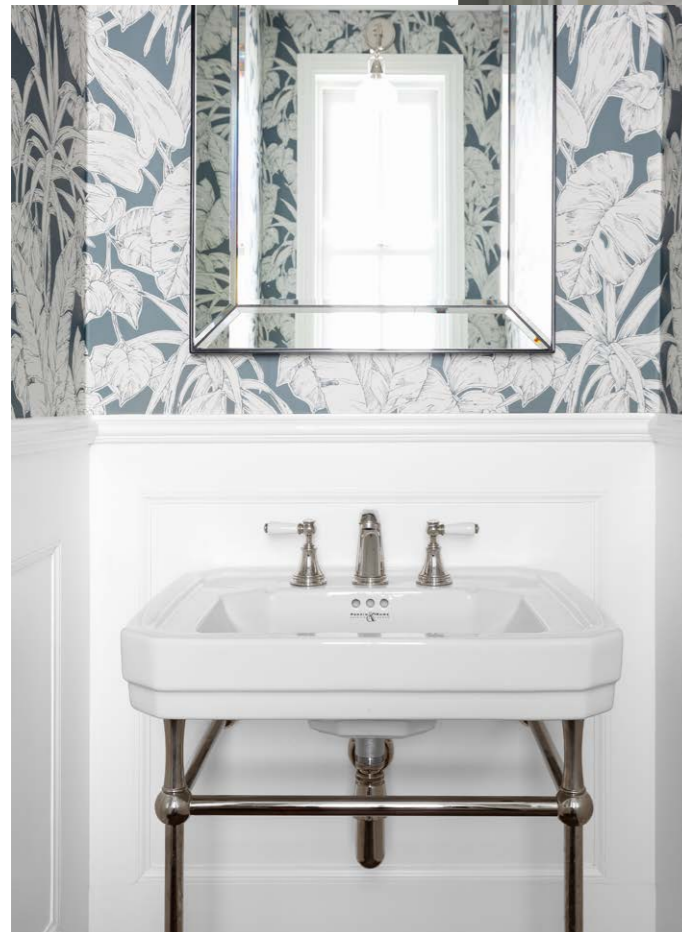


ILLUSTRATION KENZIEDSIGN.COM

**MAIN BEDROOM** Laura’s “soft, clean and simple” scheme is a serene mix of blush, white and grey with wafts of green – as seen in the Etsy prints she retouched by hand and the Dulux Spanish Olive gracing the walls. A velvet headboard from Brosa grounds the space, while a John Lewis bedside lamp and Temple & Webster table complete the classic look. The white linen pillows are from Sheridan and the grey velvet cushion is from Madras Link. **ENSUITE** Exuding the charm of a luxury hotel, the ensuite (opposite) showcases a Decina ‘Regent’ freestanding bath from The Blue Space, sitting atop marble-finish ceramic tiles from Tiles by Kate. A fluttery shell pendant brings a delicate beauty to the space. “We added more architraves and details at the top of the window to create a feeling of grandeur,” says Laura, who sought the punchiness of Porter’s Paints Squid Ink to throw everything into relief. A Timna Taylor sake cup from The DEA Store sits on a teak stool from Inartisan. The grey jacquard-weave bath towel is from In The Sac. **POWDER ROOM** Squeezing as much joy into the tiny space (below left) as possible, Laura decorated with a Pottery Barn bevelled mirror, a classic Perrin & Rowe washstand and a splash of Scion’s ‘Parlour Palm’ wallpaper in Charcoal. >



**Source book**

**Builder/joiner:** Mark Howard, Northern Beaches Specialist Carpentry, 0435 777 683; Fine Line Projects Australia, 0405 474 541.  
**Interiors:** Laura Hollingsworth, hollingsworthdesign.com.au.  
**Kitchen:** The Kitchen Maker, thekitchenmaker.com.au.

**OUTDOOR LOUNGE** A sandstone-clad fireplace (try Eco Outdoor) takes centre stage in the multipurpose covered outdoor room. "It's a great place to relax after a swim and it's also where I sit in the morning with my tea and laptop, watching and listening to the birds," Laura says of her year-round ritual, simply popping on the Jetmaster fireplace during colder months. Baskets of foliage and a Bunnings pendant hang decoratively above a Plum Industries rattan setting featuring custom cushions from Etsy store NathDesign.



CLASSIC BEAUTY

INSIDE STORY  
 Laura & Damian's home

**Who lives here?**

Laura, an artist and interior designer, and husband Damian, who works in finance. Sons Ralph, 20, Sam, 18, Eddie, 15, and bordoodles Bentley and Frankie.

**Design philosophy?**

Laura: "An interior can evoke a feeling in the same way an artwork does. A space can make you feel calm, energised or uneasy. It's all about the light, colours and composition."

**The devil in the design detail?**

"I love the pocket door leading out of the kitchen to the laundry, which gives me the option to shut out any noise."

**Project managing advice?**

"For me, the key to getting it right was having a visual reference and drawing pictures for our builder and carpenter."



1. A painting by Laura hangs outside the mudroom. De Marque oak parquetry from Preference Floors.
2. Laura with Frankie in the studio with one of Laura's in-progress works (see @laurahollingsworth\_art).
3. The side table once belonged to Laura's great-grandmother. Rug from Weave.
4. Luxe linen curtains from Pottery Barn enhance the beautiful windows.
5. The boys' shower room has a classic Shaker-style vanity by Mark Howard.
6. A brass appliance handle from Armac Martin makes a chic hanging rail in the laundry. Electrolux appliances.
7. The pantry features tapware from Perrin & Rowe. Try Ikea for a similar sink.