

Bright SPARKS

The inspired transformation of this old sandstone cottage in Sydney makes light work of bridging three centuries.

STORY CHRIS PEARSON • STYLING ASHLEY PRATT • PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS WARNES

Storage, sorted!

Clever storage ensures this home's clean lines are not completely blank. A cantilevered storage unit in the living area is both practical and sculptural. "It floats off the ground and its round nosing gives it a wonderful visual quality," says architect Christopher Polly. The kitchen cupboards go right to the ceiling and the balustrade on the landing doubles as shelving for books.

KITCHEN/LIVING Megan Rippe and Glenn Elliott, with son Miles, feed in the lofty, light-capturing social zone at the rear of their home. I've stove, Winning Appliances, Armchair, Great Dane Furniture, Stools, Anibou, Neutra pendant lights, Space Rug, Armadillo&Co. Flowers from Poho Flowers. For Where to Buy, see page 188.



Expect to be surprised when you enter this three-bedroom home in Sydney's inner west. From the front it's a modest 19th-century sandstone cottage but at the back, it shrugs off the past and basks in sunlight and fresh air. There, a new addition has created luminous living spaces, shaded and protected by the majestic canopy of a huge camphor laurel.

When Megan Ripper and Glenn Elliott bought the cottage in 2006, it was a warren of rooms following an '80s renovation, with one huge saving grace. "It had the potential for airiness and natural light, because it was not built in or overlooked on the northern side," says Megan. "We knew we could exploit that better."

A large living area had been created from roof space but, strangely, the home had just one bedroom, which was downstairs. The earlier revamp had included an extension overlooking the courtyard, yet it shunned the light and leafy aspect. To cap it off, the staircase was alarmingly steep and, at just 60cm wide, ridiculously narrow.

"The upper area was totally disconnected from the ground floor," says Christopher Polly, the architect hired to effect a deft transformation. His brief was to unravel the maze of rooms at the back, soak living areas in natural light, create a stronger link between levels and deliver extra bedrooms. The last would come in handy upon the arrival of son Miles, now two.

Christopher repainted the facade and spruced up the hallway. The front room, its antique ceiling mouldings left intact, became a guest bedroom. Beyond this point, everything was gutted, while the clumsy addition and old lean-tos were demolished. >

'IT'S GREAT TO HAVE EVERYTHING OPENED UP. MILES CAN DO HIS CHALK DRAWING ALL OVER THE CONCRETE PAVERS AND WE CAN KEEP AN EYE ON HIM.' MEGAN

KITCHEN The streamlined joinery in two-pack polyurethane in Dulux White on White contains an integrated Fisher & Paykel dishwasher and fridge. Caesarstone benchtop in Ice Snow. Eames DSW chairs, Living edge. Eames bird figure, Space. Muuto Four glass vase, Forest For The Trees. Menu black rubber vase, Make Designed Objects. Framed print (left), Country Road. Screenprint (right) by James Gulliver Hancock.

DOWNSTAIRS LIVING Open risers and a clear glass balustrade create a seemingly weightless connection between floors. Opera sofa in Tango fabric, King Furniture. Marimekko print cushion, Nordic Fusion. Yellow cushions, Rapee. Designer buy: Lilla dining table, from \$1415, Moss Furniture. For Where to Buy, see page 188.



This is the life
 "I love this open space," says Megan of the new open-plan area downstairs. "In the daytime, we spend all our time down here." Come evening, the family retreats to the elegant living area upstairs, with its views of the city skyline on one side and a floodlit camphor laurel at the rear. The revised layout works for the whole family, including parents, child and feline Charley. "It's a good cat and human house."



◀ Within the footprint of the original cottage, the main bathroom was extended and an elegant reworking of that scary staircase moved to the rear of the house. The back of the ground floor has been opened out to create one light-filled kitchen, dining and living space, its structural-steel framework fitted with walls of glazing.

Upstairs, Christopher was able to double the space by extending the pitched roof. This allowed him to add two bedrooms and a bathroom without sacrificing much of the generous living area.

"This is the hero upstairs," says Christopher, casting his eye over the new main bedroom with its pivot windows. "The windows have a 3D effect when open, inviting you to look out. It feels like you're living in a tree house." Adding to the lightbox effect, translucent polycarbonate sheeting separates the rooms at ceiling height, while clerestory windows look straight out into the branches. "These rooms grab light from all directions," says Christopher. "And at night, with the polycarbonate all lit up, it's just wonderful."

Furnishings and fittings, including many classic Modernist pieces, have slim, uncluttered profiles to accentuate the airiness. Megan has added her personal touch with vases and bowls in natural white, green, amber and stone hues. Crafted of glass, timber and ceramics, they reinforce the all-important connection to the outdoors.

"It's so nice to have all that greenery and it's lovely to look out into the canopy," she says. "You can lie in bed and see the sky... and sometimes possums looking back at you." ▶

Christopher Polly Architect, Newtown, NSW; (02) 9516 5994 or christopherpolly.com.

'THE BEDROOM WINDOWS HAVE A 3D EFFECT ... INVITING YOU TO LOOK OUT. IT FEELS LIKE YOU'RE LIVING IN A TREEHOUSE.'

CHRISTOPHER POLLY, ARCHITECT

MAIN BEDROOM The top section of the internal wall is light-transmitting Makrolon polycarbonate in Opal. New windows and doors were custom-made in western red cedar by Woodsense Joinery. Vinci bed, Beyond Furniture. Quilt cover, Sheridan. Cushions, Country Road. Muuto bedside lamp, Surrounding Australia.

UPSTAIRS LIVING The flooring on this level is in recycled blackbutt, given a dark Faast Watson stain and tung oil finish. Jasper sofas in Tango fabric, King Furniture. Credenza, Matt Blatt. Rug, Armadillo&Co. Green vases and yellow outdoor chairs (on balcony), Domayne. Flowers from Poho Flowers.

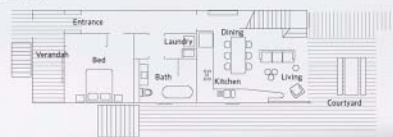
Designer buy: Noguchi coffee table in Walnut, \$3695, Space. For Where to Buy, see page 188.



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR





MILES' ROOM Quirky, colourful pieces fire a young imagination and can be updated as the child grows. Chair, Great Dane Furniture. Throw, Country Road. Illustrated prints (in frames, left), Barkingbirdart. Vintage toys print (right), Ixli. Smart buy: Ewe storage unit, \$79, Kartem.

LANDING Streamlined pieces make the most of this circulation space. Bench seat, Great Dane Furniture. Credenza, Moss Furniture. Screenprint by James Gulliver Hancock.

UPSTAIRS BATHROOM A frameless glass shower enclosure maintains the open and airy ambience. Basin, mixer taps and heated towel rail, all Reece. Towels, Country Road.

COURTYARD Concrete pavers offer an economical solution for outdoor spaces, says architect Chris Polley. Here, they're laid in a staggered pattern for visual interest. Pavers, Standard Concrete Products. For similar table and benches, try Robert Plumb.

For Where to Buy, see page 188. **ELMS**

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.



Dulux White On White (interiors, throughout)

ADD A DASH OF

Haymes Paint April Sun

Paint Place Carrot Juice

Porter's Paints Aniseed

Yellow and orange bring the warmth of the sun indoors, while black adds definition.