

# A PLACE FOR US

A simple yet elegant mix of patterns, fabrics and custom-designed furniture adorn a self-taught decorator's home, creating a cosy and family-friendly nest

STORY JOSIE GAGLIANO STYLING JO McCOMISKEY PHOTOGRAPHY SHARYN CAIRNS



DINING ROOM (this page) Having spent three years in Thailand, the McIntyre family have collected a beautiful range of custom-designed furniture, like this sturdy dining table, which is masterfully teamed with replica Wishbone chairs from Matt Blatt. Commanding colourful attention, *Unfamiliar Ground II* by Rosetta Santucci hangs bold at the head of the table. The Bird's Nest pendant light from Hermon & Hermon brings the outside in, while glass Country Road candles maximise the absorption of light streaming from the window. FAMILY ROOM (left) Walls are painted with Dulux Berkshire White to highlight the chairs covered in Tulip, a 1980s Designers Guild fabric. >



**Mornings are a breeze** at the McIntyre household. Imagine floating through the daily ritual of getting the kids off to school with nary a “Where’s my bag?” or “Where’s my hat?” This state of household nirvana is exactly what Jo McIntyre intended to create in the renovated Edwardian house she shares with her husband Steve and children Annabelle, Sophie and Henry in Melbourne’s Surrey Hills. “I’m a neat freak,” she admits, “and fanatical about decorating!”

The adage ‘everything has its place and a place for everything’ could have been invented for Jo, who has no formal training but caught the decorating bug when she bought her first home to update and re-sell at 21. She now has her own colour-consulting, extension and interior design business, Beautiful Home (a name we here at *Home Beautiful* are rather keen on!). “I can’t draw as such but I designed the floor plan roughly then gave it to an architect,” says Jo. “I designed it all from there; the windows, doors, kitchen, bathrooms. I chose all the finishes, paint colours, light fittings and fine-tuned the floor plan. Everything, literally, from the front fence to the back fence.”

It’s this all-encompassing approach that has seen the home that was in Jo’s words “a dump”, transformed into a clutter-free dream. Starting life in the early 1900s as a small, two-bedroom home with two living areas and devoid of the detailed wooden fretwork typical of Edwardian homes, it has morphed into an abode with four bedrooms, two formal rooms, two-and-a-half bathrooms, a rumpus room and a huge family room. The outdoor areas have also undergone a major overhaul and the pool completes the transformation. “I took the house back to a frame and carved off the back. It was a tiny cottage and the front steps were so rickety you were frightened you were going to fall off!” says Jo.

Keeping only the front two rooms, the four front windows and front door, Jo removed the corner fireplaces in the two formal rooms, >



**KITCHEN (top left)** “I designed the kitchen myself,” says Jo. “It’s 2pac cabinetry and I used a cabinetmaker and stonemason and co-ordinated it myself. I wanted something simple and classical that wouldn’t overpower the room.” Caesarstone ‘Nimbus’ bench tops and splashback are hardwearing against the gloss lacquered cabinets, while Victorian ash floorboards hark back to the home’s 1900s origins. “I stain them chocolate brown and do a low sheen finish for a lovely matt effect,” says Jo. “Victorian ash is a good strong wood. It’s actually a bit pink, but it stains up beautifully.” The Square Barstools from Thonet (visit [www.thonet.com.au](http://www.thonet.com.au)) match the floorboards.

**HALL (left)** Adding to the family’s eclectic collection of international wares is a striking red lantern from India set aside a birdcage sourced from Pottery Barn, America’s home-furnishing chain store giant. Along the hallway, elegantly suspended float lights (available from Beautiful Home) highlight the colourful treasures and gently warm the space.

**FORMAL LOUNGE (opposite)** *Naughty Nun* by Monica Costa casts a cheeky eye over the room from on top of the fireplace, while the more demure *Untitled* by Caz creates a striking focus above a 150-year-old Chinese medicine cabinet made of elm wood. Two eye-catching ‘Coco’ armchairs covered in Angkor Wat Driftwood fabric by Mokum face the two-and-a-half seater ‘Maison’ lounge covered in Amalfi Sea Salt by Mokum; all from Jardan. Jo loves the contrast between traditional period features and sleek modern furniture; ceiling roses, deep skirtings and cornices were all enhanced. “The original cornices were very small and I felt the formal rooms needed more grandeur,” says Jo.





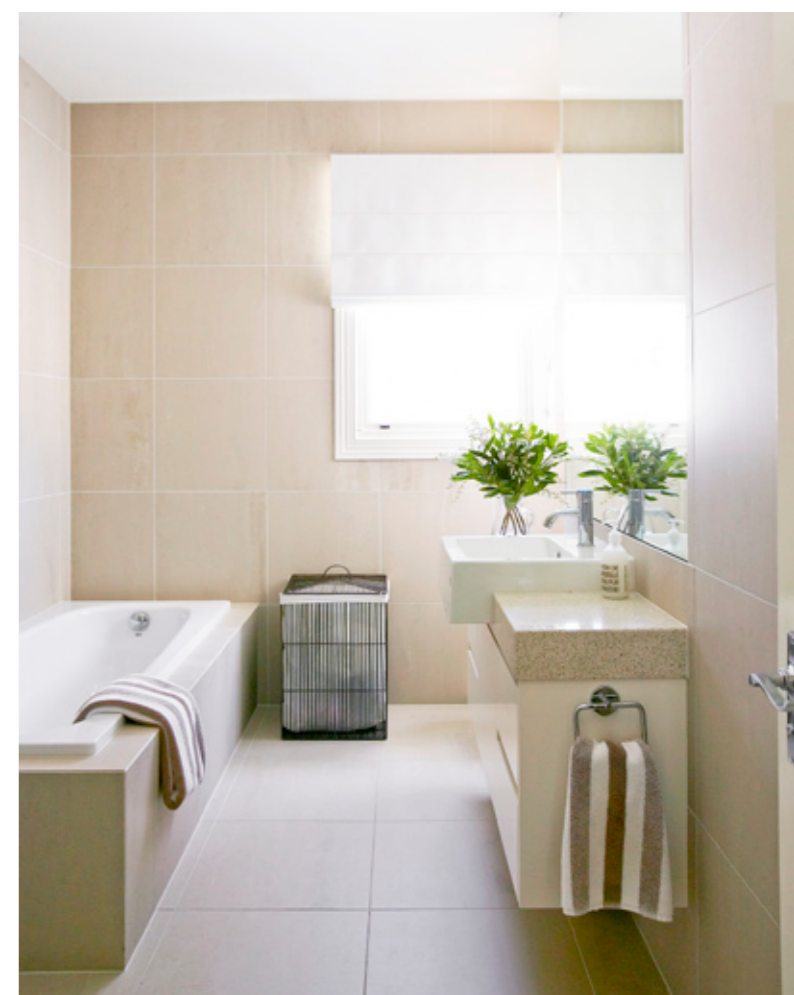
< “because I like everything symmetrical”, replaced and stained the floorboards, replaced the small cornices with large ones and added ceiling roses. She also had “tonnes and tonnes of storage” custom-made to fit sports bags, straw hats and tennis racquets. Even a void under the staircase has been utilised. “I created a wine cupboard, which can hold 800 bottles of wine,” says Jo.

Her passionate persistence has paid off and the home is now valued at more than four times what she originally paid for it – and she has by no means finished yet. “I spend every spare minute looking on the internet at houses for sale all over Australia,” says Jo. “I love to look at floor plans, just seeing new ideas.”

**SOPHIE’S ROOM {opposite}** “When I do children’s rooms I don’t use typical children’s fabrics – they outgrow them too quickly,” says Jo. “Instead, I buy good quality linen in more classical styles and accessorise according to their age.” Gant ‘Tree of Life’ linen from Petite Living shares the neutral palette yet has a gentle girly edge thanks to the sophisticated floral pattern.

**MAIN BEDROOM {top right}** The Jardan ‘Leila’ bed is sumptuously adorned with Abode linen and topped with comfortable Country Road throws and cushions. Roman blinds from Beautiful Home flank the *Reclining Nude* artwork by Anita Dammersmith. Timber bedside tables from Asian Tide ground the aesthetic, while Godfrey Hirst carpet distinguishes the bedrooms as luxurious retreats.

**BATHROOM {right}** Jo casually throws plush Country Road towels over porcelain tiles in a natural travertine hue from National Tiles to soften the floor to ceiling flow. The sparkling stainless-steel tapware is from Rogerseller. >





**SIDE TABLE {above}** Every nook and cranny is a gallery in itself and this side table expertly fills a void next to a fireplace. The table is from Burma, the Buddha lamp and baskets from America and the puppets hanging proud on the mantelpiece hail from Indonesia. Looking over it all is a painting aptly called Two Faces by Caz.

**HENRY'S BEDROOM {right}** Sticking to a classic red, blue and white colour scheme, Jo chose this striking linen from a range at Petite Living. The fabulous cowboy accessories, all picked up at Twiggywinkle, gallop along the wall adding energy and colourful highlights; they can be conveniently removed without the need to redecorate the entire room! The timber furniture from Mattresses Galore is cute but masculine and is a great choice to appeal to all age groups.

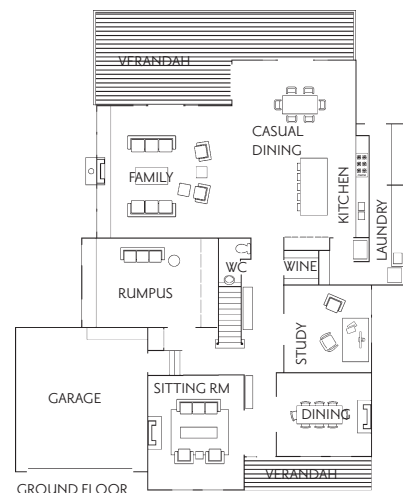


## we love ...

### the laundry {right}

When the building process was at its worst, Jo would visualise using her laundry, with a bank of six drawers for school bags, a huge linen cupboard, and an ironing cupboard with hanging room and storage space for the iron and ironing board. "I also have a drying room, which opens to an outside clothes line, which is large enough to dry all of our washing, including king-size sheets," says Jo. "It's the laundry of my dreams!"

To contact Beautiful Home, call Jo McIntyre on 0417 341 853, email [jomcinty@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jomcinty@bigpond.net.au) or visit [www.beautifulhome.net.au](http://www.beautifulhome.net.au).



## Inside story

**Who lives here?** Jo McIntyre, an interior designer, her husband Steve, an executive, and their children, Annabelle, 10, Sophie, eight, and Henry, five.

### Where did you learn to decorate?

"Nowhere, I'm self taught. When I was 21, I just started buying houses, doing renovations and the renovations got bigger. I've recently put a sign out the front of the house and have been inundated with requests based on the strength of what people see outside."

**How would you describe your interior design style?** "Classic, with eclectic touches. I love cushions, rugs and artwork."

**What state was the house in?** "It had been a rental for years. Inside was pretty dilapidated and outside, every floorboard was rotten with dry rot. My eldest daughter, who at age seven could read a floor plan, said, 'Oh please don't tell me you bought that scrappy house!' So ever since it's been called Scrappy House."

**And your biggest splurge?** "The pool. It was a lifestyle thing we really wanted. It is gas and solar-heated, and is also self-cleaning."

