

PITCH PERFECT

Craftsmanship and exquisite detail have elevated this Sydney home into a striking showpiece, with a newly formed design duo's diverse talents on full display.

By Chris Pearson Photographed by Anson Smart Styled by Megan Morton



THIS PAGE at the staircase in this Sydney home, turned timber **handrail** designed by Duet; **stairs** in Carrara marble; custom-stained solid oak Versailles parquet **flooring** from We Love Parquet; walls in Dulux Rice Crop Half **paint**; **wall mouldings** designed by Duet, produced by Intrim; **sculpture** (with plinth) by The Visuals. **OPPOSITE PAGE** a view of the home's exterior, Levante basket **urns and pedestals** from Mercer & Lewis; **landscape architecture** by Studio Rewild. *Details, last pages.*



THESE PAGES in the formal lounge, custom **sofa**; velvet ball **cushions** designed by Duet; Etcetera **lounge** and **foot stool** by Jan Ekselius from Tigmi Trading; Elle Monument marble **coffee table** from GlobeWest; Pillar **side table** from House of Orange; Heat & Glo 3X enclosed gas **fireplace** from Jetmaster; **ikebana bowl** (on coffee table) from owner's collection; vintage Venini **vase** and **clam shell** from Shapiro Auctioneers; vintage **Bilia lamp** by Gio Ponti for FontanaArte from Smith Street Bazaar; **curtains** in Zimmer + Rohde silk produced by Simple Studio; **rug** designed by Duet, produced by Tapetti; walls in Dulux Rice Crop **paint**; **sculpture** by The Visuals; **flowers** throughout by Sophia Kaplan.





Designers Dominique Brammah and Shannon Shlom struck such a resonant chord in this handsome home in Sydney's inner west that it became the prelude to a new business, called Duet. In 2019, Brammah received a call from Shlom — the two had worked together at interior design firm Arent & Pyke. “I have landed a large project I can't do by myself. Do you want to collaborate?”

asked Brammah. When Shlom saw that project was this generous 1916 Tudor Revival home, she couldn't resist. That moment became the catalyst not just for the pair's dramatic transformation of these spaces but also a creative partnership that led to the launch of a design studio earlier this year. Sharing a similar aesthetic, they proved a harmonious team, in chorus with a design-savvy owner.

Drawn by the stained-glass windows, arches, pitched roof and generous grounds, including a tennis court, the owner and his wife purchased the two-storey brick home for their three — now four — children in mid-2019. “It had so much history, having been featured in *Decoration and Glass* magazine in 1937 and owned by tennis champion Daphne Akhurst,” he enthuses. But a by-the-numbers renovation, embracing an open-plan layout at the back had stripped the home of its character. “While it was grand on the outside, inside there was no big moment,” says Shlom. “The interiors did not speak to the architecture and there was no flow,” adds the owner. “I wanted to adapt it for both family living and entertaining, with magical finishes.” Having long followed Brammah's work, he knew who to call. “She and Shannon are true explorers, with no two properties the same. Like a DJ mixtape, they combine materials, colours and shapes and somehow they all work.”

The well-travelled owner presented the duo with captured Instagram moments from French and English hotels. Those images revealed recurring themes — wall panelling, moulded ceilings and cornices, ornate joinery, deep skirtings and sinuous curves, combining the Belle Epoque era and manor-house traditions. With these striking influences as a starting point, the new team instilled the ho-hum home with some serious *je ne sais quoi*.

“I wanted luxurious and warm, colourful and playful, and each room to tell its own story,” says the owner, and on a practical level, a functional family home that also opened itself up for generous entertaining. While he handled the project management, he gave the duo virtual *carte blanche* in a 16-month passion project.

“We stripped it back to the stud work,” says Brammah. A pivotal moment was moving the staircase from the entry to the open-plan area. Not only did the house instantly shed its old stuffiness — together with its varnished panelling and picture rails — the linearity of the old stair was swapped for a sculpted sweeping spiral.

“After we moved the stairs, the rooms arranged themselves,” she says. “We then played up the entry hall, making it grand and spacious.”

While the designers retained two formal rooms at the front, a living room and a study, the back was devoted to family living.

A formal dining room reemerged as the children's playroom beside the open-plan zone, attached yet also separate. Within the open plan sit two kitchens — one a showpiece, the other behind for daily use, robust and hidden away. At the rear, a games room replaced a home theatre. Beyond that, beside the tennis court, sits a freestanding apartment. Masterminded by architect Adrian Hernandez of AJH+, both those additions are crafted in brick, with the latter's sweeping arches taking their cues from the home's architecture. Meanwhile, five bedrooms occupy the reinvigorated property's upper level.

While the formal living room is muted and sophisticated in its palette, deeper earthy and leafy hues adorn the informal living area and the playroom. “We wanted to keep things serene,” says Brammah, “but ramped things up in the kids' playroom, with stripes on the ceiling for a playful space. It has both grandeur and joyfulness.”

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THE HOMEOWNER

Exquisite craftsmanship runs throughout. Oak parquetry and marble inlay floors rub shoulders with a plethora of panelling and flowing curves expressed in the stairway, mouldings and arches. “The curves create flow and movement,” says Brammah. For the custom bathroom and games room floors, the tiler chopped up slabs to create unique patterns. “We worked with the artisans in the mouldings and workshopped the internal doors. It was a labour of love, with everything so detailed.”

Furnishings, meanwhile, offer a crisp counterpoint. “There's plenty of ornamentation, but we bring in a twist with the contemporary

furnishings,” says Shlom. “We did not want a European pastiche, so we respected the house's original features and then moved it into something more appropriate for family living.”

The dynamic duo scoured the world for furniture. But plenty of what they wanted they couldn't find, hence custom sofas, bedheads, pendant lights and carpet — including the signature harlequin checkered floorcovering in the main bedroom — were again meticulously handcrafted. Luxe finishes such as velvets, durable leathers, marble and gold highlights abound.

“It was a dream first project, showcasing all we can offer — we even sourced cutlery and tea towels,” sums up Shlom. “And, with seven bathrooms and four kitchens, it was what we might have designed over four projects, not one.”

“I love how each room has different textures, materials and colours, and I am in awe of the detailing. As you walk through, you start with a wow and keep wowing,” says the owner. **VL**

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THIS PAGE, FROM TOP in the family living area, Joy **chair** from Jordan; Elle block angled **coffee table** from GlobeWest; Esedra **pouf** from Poltrona Frau, enquiries to Mobilia; custom **sofa** designed by Duet; vintage Venini **bowl** and **vase** from Shapiro Auctioneers; vintage **Fabergé eggs** on custom plinth; **rug** designed by Duet, produced by Tapetti; Stellar Grape **floor lamp** (at left) by Sebastian Herkner for Pulpo from Domo. The homeowner with his prized vintage Mercedes-Benz vehicle in the driveway with Luca Filetti natural stone **pavers** from Eco Outdoor.





THIS PAGE in the main bedroom, **bedhead**, **bedside table**, **bed linen** and **pendant light**, all designed by Duet; **LagunaB tumbler** from Pan After; **carpet** designed by Duet, produced by Tapetti; **grasscloth wallpaper** from Ascraft. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the children's playroom, **sofa** designed by Duet; custom-upholstered **Lobby bench** from House of Orange; vintage mid-century Italian **side table**; **cabinetry** designed by Duet with drawers in Dulux Cuddlepot paint; **candlestick** from Kirsten Perry; **Pomponette vase** from Maison Balzac; **B-4 table lamp** from Gubi, enquiries to Cult; **rug** designed by Duet; **Rex pendant light** from Arteriors, enquiries to Boyd Blue; **striped ceiling and wall detail** in Dulux Rice Crop Quarter with Murobond Terracotta; **artwork**, stylist's own.



THIS PAGE, FROM TOP in the kitchen and dining area, **island, benchtop and rangehood surround** in Calacatta marble; **island benchtop** in Verde Chambray marble; custom-stained crown-cut American oak veneer **cabinetry** in Porter's Paints Half Dusty Mule and Triple Newport Blue; Perrin & Rowe **tapware** from The English Tapware Company; **cooktop** from Pitt Cooking; **ovens** from Gaggenau, enquiries to Winning Appliances; integrated **fridges** from Fisher & Paykel, enquiries to Winning Appliances; Iva **bar stools** from Grazia&Co; **vase** from McMullin & Co; Benjamin Ripple Oval **dining table** and Franklin **dining chairs** from GlobeWest; Drop System **chandelier** from Lindsey Adelman. In the guest bedroom, **bed linen** from The Stitching Project; **artwork** by S A S Veer.



THIS PAGE in the main ensuite, Victoria + Albert York **bath**, enquiries to Harvey Norman; **vanity** in Carrara marble; Perrin & Rowe **tapware** from The English Tapware Company; **wall and plaster dome** in micro cement from Idea Creations; steel and reeded glass **showerscreen** designed by Duet; vintage Barovier & Toso **pendant light**; vintage **wall sconce** from Duet; Nero Marquina, Carrara and Super-white Dolomite marble parquetry **flooring** designed by Duet.



A photograph of a tennis court. In the foreground, there is a small tree with yellow fruit and various green plants. A vintage-style metal table and chairs are set up on the grass. A brick wall with arched openings runs along the left side. A tennis net is visible in the background. The sky is clear and blue.

THIS PAGE at the tennis court, vintage **chairs** and **table** with upholstery designed by Duet; **landscape architecture** by Studio Rewild. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the games room, Elle Monument **coffee table** from GlobeWest; Arc **loungers** from Worn Store, with custom **bolsters** designed by Duet; Kennedy **ottoman** from GlobeWest; Miami **dining chair** from Naturally Cane; American oak and rattan **cabinetry** and Calacatta Viola, Verde and Nero Marquina marble **flooring** designed by Duet; Precision Large Flush Mount **ceiling lights** from Kelly Wearstler. *Details, last pages.*