

INSIDE renovation

DINING AREA Artworks by Hilary Herrmann and Rex Turnbull add soft tones to the bright space.

LIVING AREA (opposite) All the light and life of the garden floods into this relaxation zone, beckoning guests, including designer Suzanne Gorman.

DREAM IT. DESIGN IT. DO IT.

next chapter

To start their new life phase, this couple wanted the right home tailored to suit their passions and lifestyle

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Who lives here: Retirees Judi, who enjoys knitting textiles, and Al, who has a love of cooking – both in their 60s.

Style of house: A contemporary home built on a subdivided block in North Sydney. It boasts vaulted ceilings, is bright, airy and features smart design, especially in the entertaining areas.

Timeline: Two to three years, from starting the subdivision process, planning with the architect, the interior design process, council approval, construction and decoration.

Budget: From building to decoration, \$1 million plus.



FRESH OUTLOOK

Traditionally, retirement is a time for stepping back and settling down but, for Judi and Al, traditional was never going to be on the cards. The couple, who had lived in their house for 30 years, saw this stage as the perfect opportunity to create a light and bright contemporary home that many would dream of growing old in. "We were looking to build something brand new that was easy to live in and maintain," says Judi. To do that, they subdivided the generous-sized block where their family home stood and got the best of both worlds: a fresh start in a postcode they loved.

The block has a north-facing aspect to the rear and is very quiet, private and leafy, which was ideal for their dream of a home with vaulted ceilings and a flexible interior. Judi and Al agreed on elements of their plans, but needed to nut out the finer details of the interiors. Here's how the couple tackled the project.



DREAM IT.

When it came to getting started on the project, Judi had done her research and had a fairly good idea of what were 'must-haves' and what were 'nice to haves'. To help her focus on what she loved, Judi had a folder of tear sheets she had collected from magazines over the years. "You end up seeing repeated patterns in the pages you are tearing out to keep," she says. "So I had a good idea of how I wanted my house to look and feel."

On the top of the wishlist was an overarching theme of big bright rooms. "We wanted spaces flooded with light, large windows on all sides and high vaulted ceilings," says Judi. She and Al were also in agreement that the bathrooms needed to be warm and textural spaces with natural finishes. "We wanted an understated and relaxed luxury feel in bathrooms and we were very keen on natural stone," says Judi.

Judi's love of colour and experimentation was central to her vision, but called for a neutral base palette. "I've always enjoyed changing spaces around, moving furniture and art, to see new combinations. I wanted flexible rooms that could be used in different ways," she says.

the woodboard



Judi and Al's wishlist

- + central kitchen** We want an oversized square island bench where family and friends can gather
- + both our styles worked in** Al prefers neutral and pared back, while Judi loves colour and texture
- + storage** Both of us need different things stored, so we'd love a custom design with minimal lines



LIVING AREA (opposite)

Vaulted ceilings and abundant light were top priorities for Judi and Al, and this space delivers all that and more. "A connection to the garden was part of the original brief," says designer Suzanne.

KITCHEN Muuto pendant lights illuminate Al's entertainer's zone, their tone complementing the Corian benchtop with stools from Great Dane adding a glint of brass.



* island bench

Al's priority was a connected kitchen that had enough space to indulge his love of cooking. The square island keeps things social and orderly, with the 'Warm Grey' Corian surface aligning with his preference for a pared-back colour palette.



colour code Judi and Suzanne's moodboard featured a Mediterranean-style colour palette. The home's neutral base amps up the impact of the sporadic bursts of iconic Klein blue, such as on the front door. A Rachel Castle artwork offers colour on a more mellow scale.

DESIGN IT.

The couple agreed they needed expert help with the project however, Judi wanted to have hands-on involvement, so finding an interior designer who could understand her needs was imperative.

Enter Suzanne Gorman of Studio Gorman, who was tasked with finding a balance between the couple's competing ideas. "With AI's preference for white and Judi's love of colour and adventurous style, it was important to listen to each client and work their wants and needs into the home," she says.

Some of Suzanne's biggest amendments had maximum impact on the flow of the home. "When I look at a client's plans, I visualise walking through the unbuilt house and seeing the changes we need to make," she says. "The best decision we made in space planning - a seemingly simple change - was relocating the door to the powder room away from view of the kitchen and tucking it behind the stairs."

Then came the fork in the design road for the couple, with Judi prioritising some elements and AI leaning towards others. "AI is an expert home cook and wanted a central and minimal-fuss kitchen where family could be nearby when he cooked, but not get in his way," says Judi. A large kitchen with an oversized island was a must.

ARTWORK: THE PROJECT BY REX TURNBULL, REXTURNBULL.COM

LOUNGE (above) Suzanne designed contemporary joinery with minimal lines. "We help our clients to make accurate lists of what they want to store and where, then we design the joinery accordingly," says Suzanne.

ENTRY (right) A 'PP68' chair by Hans J. Wegner sits ready to catch incoming handbags and car keys.





floor tiles Natural stone was central to Judi's vision for the bathrooms. In keeping with the brief, large-format travertine tiles with a rich grain were chosen. Cabinet fronts in limed oak veneer pick up on the floor's base tones, adding another layer of texture.



ENSUITE (top left) Green details bring a fresh feel to the space. **LAUNDRY (above)** It's all about white in this crisp zone, from the glossy tiles on the splashback to the paper basket from Country Road. **MASTER BEDROOM (opposite)** Vibrant Kip & Co bedlinen and a Penny Hudson artwork offer the colour boost that Judi wanted. A Hay rug from Cult adds a hit of texture.

DO IT.

Suzanne oversaw construction, ensuring that everything from the big decisions to the finer details were executed with finesse. "Architectural drawings are open to interpretation. By being involved on site, you can ensure that everyone understands them the way you do," she says.

Another win was having Suzanne from the outset, before the DA was approved. "She gave me confidence in my ideas. And knew where to source all the products and materials, saving me time," says Judi.

With the walls going up and the house's foundations emerging, the interiors became the focus. "As the process developed, texture became the most important design element used in the palette," says Suzanne. Tonal levels were mixed up for subtle contrast throughout the home. Timber flooring from Porter's Paints welcomed a rich tone in line with the overarching vision. Extra boards were applied to the wall above the stairs and atop the custom-made storage unit in the lounge area.

The project took over a year to complete, with Suzanne making weekly site visits and being reachable by phone at all times. "I like to be on site when finishes, such as tiles and floorboards, are laid," says Suzanne. "Tile layout makes a huge difference to a bathroom, so you need to check where cuts are made. Attention to detail creates a polished finished product." **10**

To see more of Suzanne's work, visit gormanprojects.com.

lessons learnt

"Plan ahead. Find an interior designer early on – before DA. Being organised before building makes a big difference to the process and saves on expensive changes" JUDI, OWNER



the best bits

- + **both styles conveyed** AI's desired kitchen with a neutral look gives Judi's colourful features impact, such as the Klein blue front door and in the guest bathroom tiles.
- + **interplay of textures** The original brief of 'warm and textural' has been met, with timber floorboards, travertine bathroom tiles and soft furnishings working together.
- + **outdoor in** Custom-designed glass panels in the open-plan living space ensure a strong connection between the garden and the central zone for easy entertaining.