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HOUSES

RURAL GLAMOUR

This farmhouse south-west of Sydney takes a walk on the wild side, thanks to splashes of colour that roar and exotic fabrics that trumpet of style.

STORY ANDREA JONES PRODUCED BY MAYA KELETT PHOTOGRAPHY MAREE KOWLER





An intoxicating blend of cultures greets you in the living room. Wall in Dulux Grey Square. Rugs from Robyn Cosgrove. Sofa upholstered in Boyac Buffalo. Chair upholstered in Boyac Drochier Lorraine. Cushions in Museum Artdecora Trinidad and Boyac De La Cueva. Ottomans and tables from Three Wise Monkeys. Picture by John Bald. For Where To Buy, see page 106.





It's hard to believe that 18 months ago this dramatic home in the Southern Highlands of NSW was a simple farmhouse. The owners, Louise Green and her husband, Warwick, wanted their country weekendender – which is set on 48 hectares of lush farmland – to be a glamorous and exotic retreat for their large family and many friends.

Louise engaged her sister, architect Suzanne Green, and interior designer Melissa Collison to turn the 1980s house into a modern home that made the most of its spectacular setting. Suzanne and Melissa run Site Interior Design Studio and had previously worked with Louise on her Sydney home.

"We're on the same wavelength," Louise says. "And we all love colour."

In order to make the most of the home's sweeping views, Louise converted several of the ground-floor windows into french doors. "I wanted to be able to sit back on the sofa and look out and feel that I was in the country," she says. "It wasn't a cheap exercise, but it's made an amazing difference."

In addition, all the existing windows and door frames were enlarged and the wall between the passage and dining room was knocked down to create a bigger, more open space, which was vital to the owners' lifestyle.

"We have four children [Eliza, three, Tom, eight, Ed, 10 and George, 12] and we wanted something spacious, with ▶

The owners wanted a grand entry to the house and the spectacular result was achieved by framing a vast blade door with orange glass panels.

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

Sometimes in decorating, the best things happen by chance. In this case, owner Louise Green knew she wanted her country house to have a funky edge, but it was only when she and interior decorator Melissa Collison happened upon Three Wise Monkeys, a homewares store in nearby Bowral, that they saw the Moroccan pieces that have given the house its exotic flavour. "We just decided to run with the whole Moroccan hubbub feel and make the house a bit of a feast for the senses," Louise says.

THIS PAGE The massive
wicker bench is a great spot
for family gatherings. Benchtop
in Peppercino Natural Stone.
Stools from Thonet. Splashback
by Academy Tiles. Cabinetry in
Duke Burnt Bark. Stainless-steel
cabinet handles by Madrox
Architectural Hardware.
OPPOSITE from left Duke
Manzanillo-Gula wall (1/2)
wavy against a dark wicker bench,
wicker by specification; Cot 00
by Michael Jeffrey; Rug from Lee
Manufacture Artiques; Tabletop
from Genevieve Lettis; Chairs
by Thonet; Pendant by George
Hobbs. Walls and glass panel
in Duke-Chinese Lanterns. For
where to buy, see page 106.







◀ lots of room for other children to visit," Louise says. The U-shaped house has four bedrooms downstairs. The upper level has been extended and is now a children-only retreat, with a new bathroom, a bedroom that sleeps four and an enormous games room with two large boxes under the windows that are used for storage but – with mattresses placed on top – can also double as beds for another four children. "I might not go upstairs the whole weekend. The beds don't get made; they don't have to pack things away. They can completely relax. It's their space."

The original small kitchen was opened up to create a large family living area. To make it feel even bigger, the ceiling of the whole area was raised to double height and the existing metal beams were veneered with recycled hardwood to give them a rustic feel. And the once-small fireplace is now a dramatic, stone-clad chimney wall, home to an imposing moose head (a whimsical addition inspired by skiing holidays in the US), which creates a ski chalet atmosphere. At breakfast time, guests congregate around the vast granite island bench that is about five square metres.

"There are only nine stools around it, but we have ordered more. We often all sit around that big bench, it's fabulous," Louise says.

The living room decor has been refreshed and vintage pieces, along with the couple's existing furniture, were given new life ▶

PAINT COLOURS



Dulux
Mossedge
Delta (foyer)



Dulux White
Swan (kids
bathroom)



Dulux Grey
Squirrel
(living room)

All paints used were full strength.

ABOVE LEFT Afghan runners from Robyn Coogrove Rugs line the hallway.

ABOVE RIGHT In the main bedroom, a Cambodia House Reservoir Velvet throw covers up the bed. Walls in Dulux Buffy. Curtains in Designers Guild Linen.

OPPOSITE "You don't understand the enormity of

that moose head until you try to load it into the back of a truck," says interior designer Melissa Sandstone fireplace by Sandstone Sandstone. Pendant lights by George Nelson. Sofas in Designers Guild Rapiro. Rug from I&B Peryman Oriental Carpets. Moose head from Lee Hardcastle Antiques. For Where To Buy, see page 196.



◀ in their weekend home. "I didn't want everything to feel new," Louise says. Two revamped pieces in particular stand out: the sofa has been re-upholstered in a soft velvet and the chaise longue, covered in zebra print, provides a touch of drama. Tribal rugs add warmth to the mahogany floorboards and the Moroccan cushions, hexagonal tables and beater pots - all chance finds in the local township of Boweral - lend an exotic flavour.

With lamps glowing against the stone-coloured walls and the fire crackling, this is a room meant for lingering long into the night. "We were very conscious that these are spaces [where] you want to spend time in winter," Melissa says.

The home is now a place designed for entertaining, much to Louise's delight. "It was quite a carefree project - everything we did just seemed to work," she says. "Hopefully it's going to be a happy home that's used by family and friends for a long time." *Site Interior Design Studio, Wollalaba, NSW, (02) 9328 3301 or www.sitedesignstudio.com.au*

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The upstairs area is a children's retreat, with plenty of space for sleepovers and games. Bright and quirky touches of colour add to its appeal.





THIS PAGE Neutral Dye
Buffy wools and/or linens
in William Howard Knolls from
Richard Purcellings. Curtains
in Designers Guild Liven.
Throws and ottomans from
Three Wise Monkey.

OPPOSITE From left The
children's bathroom is part of
their upstairs haven. Floor-to-ceiling
linens. Toilet by Vibron &
Boch. Basin by Paris. All jewelry
in Dulac White Swart. Tiles
imported from Italy. For Where
To Buy, see page 136.