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Smac Studio gives a young family of five's semi-detached home in Sydney's eastern suburbs an elegant yet practical finish with a warm touch of blush



who lives here?

Sam and Michael and their three daughters.  
Interior design by Shona McElroy, Smac Studio  
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**Home hues** Homeowners Sam and Michael opted for a neutral palette with a highlight of blush. "We tried to incorporate it everywhere that we could," says Sam. "The blush colour is supposed to be very calming. It's the colour that you see when you're in the womb and it's supposed to make you feel warm and calm and at home. It was a huge part of what we wanted in keeping everything light and bright." Here, a vessel from Spence & Lyda and a dish from Palmer & Penn sit on the Palladian marble kitchen counter with blush veining. ->



"I THINK THERE'S WARRIOR WOMAN ENERGY in my house with all the girls, so we wanted the space to be very relaxed," says Sam, who lives with her husband Michael, their three young daughters and their dog in a semi-detached home overlooking the ocean. Sam engaged Shona McElroy of Smac Studio for the design and emphasised that she'd like the home to have a calming energy to balance the family's vivacity, while making the most of space and light. Practicality for the kids was also top of mind.

**PERFECT FIT** Even though the home was a new build, there were still some adjustments to be made before Sam's interior goals could be realised. "There's always challenges with the build," admits Sam. "I think one of the biggest things is that you have your architectural plan, and then once they start building, the space is never exactly as it's been mapped out." Sam had the foresight to bring Shona in at the development application stage and, thankfully, Shona was able to bring her architectural skills to the project. The powder room under the stairs wasn't fitting so it was redone and given a curved roof. A wall was cut from the entrance to bring in natural light down the staircase, and the children's bath was moved seven times to make everything fit. "That was unbelievable," says Sam. "I don't think anyone could have done that but Shona... she is a spatial acrobat."

**BLUSH CRUSH** Sam's original colour brief included a lot of earthy, neutral tones which Shona adhered to closely, with one exception – she suggested adding blush for a bit more colour. The elegant powder room displays this comforting hue, with blush also running through the marble in the kitchen counters and the bathroom tiles. The end result is a dream come true for Sam and her family. "I couldn't be happier. Every little detail in this house was so agonised over. I wouldn't change a single thing. I love it... When you walk in, you get a sense of light and comfort and an easy feeling, which is exactly what we wanted," says Sam. 🍷

**Practical magic** "The whole kitchen is very easy to clean – and that was part of the brief to Shona... because you know how kids are," says Sam. Palladian marble with blush and bronze veining was chosen for the kitchen counters, which offered just the right balance of aesthetic appeal and usability. "Everything is as elegant as it can be, and at the same time really practical," confirms Sam. **Totally lit** The curved staircase leading to the entryway by the kitchen is flooded with natural light, and a Rousseau asymmetric pendant from Kelly Wearstler hangs beautifully by the stairs. The bench seat in the kitchen (opposite) serves the dual purpose of providing ample lounging space for the family while adding storage. The niche above the seat was created especially to showcase Sam and Michael's growing collection of sentimental pieces that they've gathered over the years. →







**Let me entertain you** With the family regularly hosting up to 50 people, the bar was a must-have requirement of Michael's. Shona backed the bar with an antique French mirror and completed the shelving with curved bronze rails for a classic touch. Sam and Michael chose lights from Coco Republic for the dining area, adding a sculptural curve and a beautiful halo effect above the dining table. The artwork above the couch is by family friend, Vicki Lee. **Clean and light** While it can be a risky choice opting for lighter shades of furniture with a house full of young children, Sam points out that, "although we used light colours we used special fabrics that are basically indestructible, so it all just sort of wipes off. We took all of that into consideration." →





**Guest glam** The powder room is Sam's favourite room in the home. Shona gave it a curved ceiling to mask that it's under the stairs and used Venetian plaster in blush for the ceiling and walls with panelled mirrors above and below the vanity. The Monet marble vanity is described by Sam as "an absolute piece of art. It was just sort of the finishing touch." Shona brought in ambient lighting with a swinging pendant light from Spence & Lyda. **Dressed for success** The bespoke dressing table in the main bedroom (opposite, top) is where Sam braids her daughters' hair. "I have memories of my gran's dresser with her beautiful bottles of perfume and silver brushes," she says. "It was a special, magical place where I'd sit each night while she did my hair. Maybe one day my girls will feel the same way about this dressing table." **Sheer bliss** The main bathroom (opposite, below) originally had high, small windows so Shona replaced them with floor-to-ceiling fluted glass plus James Dunlop curtains. The vintage Murano glass sconces were a specific request by Sam. "I really want something old in my house. I didn't want it to feel like one of those over-modern houses that have no soul." →

3 ways to bring beauty to the bathroom

**1** Bring in the light. In this home, floor-to-ceiling windows with sheer curtains give the main bathroom a soft, luxurious look while providing privacy.

**2** Add brass. It doesn't have to be brass faucets – brass mirror frames, towel hooks or even trinket trays can add an easy dash of style.

**3** Consider statement lighting. Here, vintage Murano glass sconces bring a hint of old-school glamour to the main bathroom.





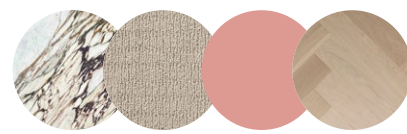
**Custom credentials** In the main bedroom, the custom-designed bed, featuring built-in lighting and side tables, is upholstered in the same lovely pale linen as the door panels of the wardrobe. Designer Shona allocated space between the bed and the wardrobe doors to serve as a neat dressing area. The bed is completed with cushions from Great Dane Furniture and Montmartre store, a bolster cushion from House of Ise, and a throw from Tigger Hall Design.



shop it! Just add blush to bring warmth to a neutral palette

- 1 Handmade conical wall sconce, \$880, Lighting Collective.
- 2 Agra rug in Pearl, from \$4900 (2.4m x 3m), Armadillo.
- 3 Lucci Connect 'Circa II' ring LED 600mm dimmable smart pendant in White, Beacon Lighting.
- 4 Home Republic 'Navara' cotton-bamboo towel in Mustard, \$29.99, Adairs.
- 5 Stadium wall mirror, from \$309, Temple & Webster.
- 6 Winnie oak and faux shearling chair in Cream, \$1600, Fenton&Fenton.
- 7 Home Republic 'Cubist' clear glass vases, from \$39, Adairs.
- 8 Round travertine stone tray, \$195, Behr & Co.
- 9 Amira lustre vase in Grey, \$64.95, April & Oak.
- 10 Astra coffee table in brushed copper and black glass, \$5800 for set of 2, James Said.
- 11 Cloud 4-seat sofa, \$2999, Lounge Lovers.
- 12 Maddox ceramic stool, \$219, Domayne.
- 13 Sloane vase with 'Lava + Bone' glaze, \$325, Marloe Marloe.
- 14 Heavy linen rectangle cushion in Hazelnut, \$139, Aura Home.
- 15 Ava throw in Chalk, \$286, L&M Home.
- 16 Caramel Biscotto candle jar by Girls That Brunch, \$39, Hardtofind.
- 17 Megan wide bedhead, \$799 for queen size, Brosa.

still-life styling alice ierace



**Colours and finishes**  
 FROM LEFT Calacatta Viola Antica marble, POA, Marable. Brease 'Evaro' carpet in Lucas, around \$245/linear metre installed, Choices Flooring. Eggshell paint in Nude, \$144/4L, Porter's Paints. Wonderwood 15mm engineered oak flooring in Herringbone Tinge Clay, \$101.38/1.15m<sup>2</sup> pack, The Flooring Guys.