

LOVE AT FIRST BLUSH

Feminine energy and smart design create love at first blush in this Sydney residence

Words Lauren Clarke Photography Anson Smart



ed's fave

THE CURVED STAIRCASE IS A PRACTICAL USE OF THE SPACE THAT COMPLEMENTS THE SOFT, FEMININE ENERGY IN THE HOME

Once upon a time, there was a dated single-storey house that was destined for knockdown. The land was perfect for a pair of semi-detached homes. Yet danger lurked — the owners were concerned about the rigidity and closedness that is often present in a semi. They wanted to ensure that their house felt entire and complete, and not like a cramped part of something bigger.

Enter Shona McElroy, the First Blush home's fairy godmother. In collaboration with VRM Architects, this interior designer from Smac Studio helped create a romantic home that met the clients' brief and that will certainly see the family living happily ever after.

This family consists of a husband and wife with their two young daughters. By the time the build was complete, the clients had a third daughter on the way, which meant that their vision for a light-filled open dwelling was more important than ever. The semi was to be spaced over two storeys and include four bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms, as well as an enclosed garage and pool.

"The clients' brief was to create a family home that felt bright and tranquil as soon as you entered the door," Shona says. This was to





Natural materials are paired with diverse textures for a romantic aesthetic with undeniable appeal



include a layered sense of casualness paired with elements that would visually elevate the home and create a sense of designer style.

"As a growing family, they wanted the house to represent them but also ensure that it had longevity and a likeability so that eventually, when they did outgrow it, another buyer would fall in love with it," Shona says.

As with any project, the First Blush build started with a lot of big dreams — especially considering the site's 5.8m width. "The brief was to make the most of the space — in spite of not having a whole lot of it," Shona says. "I flipped the layout of the typical duplex to incorporate the legal side passage and, in turn, visually enlarge and soften the interiors."

A thoughtful entry foyer, which gave a separation to the staircase from the main living and dining areas, also helped make the house feel sequential and thus larger.

This idea of creating a sense of space that was larger than the actual footprint extended from the home itself and into the garden. "The house has been designed to innovatively defy its dimensional

The home enjoys an open-plan kitchen/dining/living space that helps make the most of the building's small size





“The home has been principally designed with a nuanced approach to texture and colour”

— Shona McElroy

confinement at every turn,” Shona says. “With the help of Naomi Barin from Dangar Barin Smith, lush planting adorns the new side passage and the vast open windows provide clear connectivity with the landscaping and a sense of intriguing lightness.”

These windows are a key feature of the house that’s situated a few homes down from the end of a quiet cul-de-sac that overlooks the Dover Heights cliffs. The upper-storey bedroom at the front of the house now enjoys tranquil views of the Pacific Ocean, much to the owners’ delight.

But inside the home, there’s just as much to feast your eyes on as there is out. “The home has been principally designed with a nuanced approach to texture and colour,” Shona says. “As the clients have two daughters (and another on the way), the palette and softness of the home draws its influence from the family’s strong feminine energy. And the calm and welcoming presence of the space is undeniable from the moment of entry.”

Grecian-inspired white curvature forms the basis for many design choices. Sectional mirrors are dotted throughout the house, enhancing the sense of space and light and nodding to Parisian interior designers such as Joseph Dirand.



The arched built-in display unit is another nod to the Grecian design theme present in the home



we love

THE WAY THE HOME PRIORITISES STORAGE DESPITE ITS SMALLER FOOTPRINT

The Palladian marble in the kitchen formed the basis for other design decisions, including the aged brass fittings



Both Shona and the clients fell in love with the Palladian marble used in the kitchen, which formed the basis for many of the other design choices. "For example, it has hints of rust, which we emulated in aged brass fittings," Shona says, adding that pink pops in the marble were nodded to via the upholstery. Overall, though, a neutral style was selected to ensure the joinery and design were the heroes of the home.

Storage was paramount and a key design consideration. "As Samantha loves to showcase and collect things, we ensured that the home had plenty of space to display her items and tell their tale while still feeling considered and tidy," Shona says.

Yet Samantha wasn't the only family member to have special concessions incorporated into the design. Shona lists the girls' bathroom as one of her favourite spaces in the house with its sectional panel of mirrors along the rear wall, Murano sconces and soft linen sheers. "I also love the custom-designed double-trough sink," Shona says. "It's cute and playful for the girls to share a large marble sink like that. To keep the room private, knowing that one day three girls will be sharing it, we added fluted glass to the shower and toilet areas." **HD** smacstudio.com.au

GRECIAN-INSPIRED WHITE CURVATURE FORMS THE BASIS FOR MANY DESIGN CHOICES

