

Timeworn materials, warm textures and

soothing natural tones make for an ultra-relaxing retreat.

# SENSE OF SHELTER

**These pages** The living room's walls, fireplace and built-in banquette are coated with a soft microcement from Creative Wall Solutions. Limestone floor tiles from Surface Gallery. Custom sofa by Matters + Made. Antique chair upholstered in blue cowhide. Stool from Orient House. Coffee table from Moku Collective. Rug from Cadrys.

Words **STEPHANIE HOPE** Photography **SIMON BROWN**



**This page** At the entry, a tree is planted in a custom boulder sourced by and carved for Matters + Made. Botticino marble crazy paving from Aeria Country Floors. **Opposite page** In a corner of the playroom, a woven rug, cushions and a custom ottoman from Cadrys add layers of natural texture. Chair from GlobeWest. Timber block from Moku Collective. Lamp from Orient House. Owners' artworks by unknown artists.



At a time when burnout, mental overwhelm and the state of world affairs can play havoc with our wellbeing, our homes can and should be places of refuge. It's a concept that interior designer Melissa Penfold feels strongly about – so much so, she has written a book on the subject. *Natural Living by Design* delves into the six key aspects that go into creating a home that enhances mood and lifts the spirits: ease, flow, light, nature, timelessness and awe. The book also features stunning homes from around the world to illustrate these principles. "Life is so much better with nature and we need it now more than ever," says Melissa. "With a few simple considerations, we can design spaces that nurture our bodies, elate us, keep us connected, inspire our best work and facilitate a good night's sleep."

One of the homes in Melissa's book is this divine new build in Sydney's Bellevue Hill by architecture firm KA Design

Studio, with interiors by Matters + Made. Its lashings of light; natural, non-toxic materials; easy flow; outdoor connection; and general feeling of serenity make it the perfect example of the design strategies Melissa prescribes. "It's a soothing space with a wonderful energy," she says. "As soon as you walk in, you feel like you've been transported to another time and place."

The owners – a couple with three teenage boys – had a clear brief from the very beginning. "They wanted a home that felt calm, textural and connected to nature," says Chloe Matters, founder and designer at Matters + Made. "Their vision centred around barefoot luxury – something elegant without trying too hard, grounded in natural materials and with that quiet sense of serenity that you feel rather than see."

It starts with the layout: three generous levels, each with their own purpose. The middle floor toes the line between casual, everyday living and hosting more formal gatherings. »







**This page** Two oversized 'Faina' pendant lights from Tigmi are suspended over the custom-made limestone table from Aldini. Rug from Cadrys. Artwork by Jan Maarten Voskuil from Freeman Gallery. **Opposite page** (clockwise from top left) A circular skylight illuminates two artworks by Celia Gullett from Jan Murphy Gallery. The ceilings are lined with timber floorboards from Tongue & Groove. // The scullery and its built-in cabinetry keeps the kitchen clutter at bay and creates a stress-free existence for the owners. // A custom vanity in laser-cut onyx from Aldini makes a statement in the bathroom. // At the end of the hallway is a braided totem chair from The Vault Sydney. Woven botanical wall art by Tracey Deep from Saint Cloche Gallery.







**Opposite page** In the kitchen and dining space, the joinery is 'Woodstock' from Briggs Veneers. 'Savannah Antiqued' bush-hammered stone benchtops from Aldini. Bar stool and pendant lights from MCM House. Custom table and bench seats by Matters + Made. Memorial poles from M Contemporary. **This page (from left)** The Mediterranean-style terrace looking out to the water becomes a second living space for the owners in warmer weather. Custom Matters + Made seating and table by Remington Matters. Rug from Cadrys. 'Bondi' pot in corner from Cranbrook Workshop. // Custom Matters + Made sofa in Designs of the Time fabric from Mokum. Custom Matters + Made coffee table by Iideek. Textured rug from Armadillo. Lamp from Serax.



« The kitchen is at its heart, linking easily to the light-filled living, formal dining and sunny terrace overlooking the harbour. Upstairs, all the bedrooms have their own ensuites to enhance that feeling of retreat, with a pyjama room in the middle that acts as an unofficial hangout space. The lower level has all the essentials for a restful wellness zone with a side of indulgence; there's a cinema, wine cellar, gym, sauna and heated magnesium pool. "Flow and ease of living is essential for wellbeing and the circulation between these rooms is superb," says Melissa.

For the interiors, Chloe and her team devised a Mediterranean-style sanctuary that heroes natural materials, textural warmth, greenery and beautiful light. "Stillness was the goal," says Chloe. "We wanted that feeling where your nervous system settles the second you walk in, like arriving somewhere familiar."

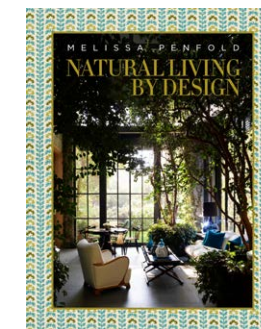
Each material selection was central to this outcome, starting with the microcement plaster, which coats the walls as well as the fireplace surround and built-in banquettes, its soft matt texture bringing a gentle calm to the rooms. Natural stone, timber and wicker make up the supporting cast, ticking Melissa's box for timelessness. "They're materials that have stood the test of time, and they look as fresh today as they ever did," she says.

The sense of ease comes from the neutral white, cream, bone and grey colour palette, as well as the floating curtains that control the glare and heat, and the minimalist furniture arrangement that optimises flow. Circular skylights illuminate the rooms while introducing a touch of dramatic shadow play,

and oversized pendant lights dial up the texture. There are plenty of wow moments to solidify this home's position in the 'very special' category, but as Chloe points out, "They're all gentle ones that reveal themselves slowly." At the entry, an indoor tree in a striking stone planter is definitely one of them, bringing an ancient, soulful quality to the space and tapping into the Mediterranean-sanctuary theme. The bathroom vanity made from laser-cut onyx serves as an amazing art piece, and the sculpted plaster fireplace in the main living space "gives the room a grounding presence and feels like it has always been there", says Chloe.

As hoped, the owners lean into the home's calmness and move through its rooms with ease. "The adults drift between the kitchen and the terrace, which has become their second living room because the light's so beautiful there," says Chloe. "And the kids use everything: the media room, the tennis court, the pool, the pyjama room. It makes the house feel alive and loved – not precious."  **mattersandmade.com; kadesignstudio.com.au**

*Natural Living by Design* by Melissa Penfold is \$69.99 for the hardcover version (Vendome).





## SPEED READ

» Architects KA Design Studio and interior design firm Matters + Made joined forces for this new harbourside home in Sydney's Bellevue Hill. » The owners requested a serene, soulful family retreat with an easy indoor-outdoor flow and a quiet sense of luxury. » Their home is spread across three floors, each with its own purpose. The middle level is dedicated to living and entertaining, the upstairs bedrooms are individual places of retreat, and the lower level is all about wellness, with a pool, spa and gym. » Natural materials and textures, neutral tones and beautiful light combine to deliver a home that is calm without feeling cold, understatedly luxurious and incredibly emotive.

**This page** The main bedroom has 'Nueve' floors from Tongue & Groove. Custom bedhead in Designs of the Time fabric from Mokum. Society Limonta bed linen from Ondene. Custom Matters + Made wall light by Ideek. Artwork by unknown artist. **Opposite page** (from top) 'Savannah' limestone slabs from Aldini in the ensuite. Bathtub from Concrete Republic. Tapware from Brodware. // The bedroom's sitting area has a sofa in white Designs of the Time fabric from Mokum. Custom Matters + Made ottomans by Ideek. 'Norton' occasional chair from Boyd Blue.

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SIGNATURE STYLE  
KEY PIECES

2



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- 1 'Owan' pendant light in White Resin, \$1195, MCM House.  
 2 Boyd x Kate Nixon 'Walton' ottoman, \$1890, Boyd Blue.  
 3 French flax-linen sheet set in Charcoal, \$420 for queen size, Bed Threads. 4 'Como' cushion in Mocha, \$99.95, Weave Home. 5 'Simmy' coffee tables, POA, Sovereign Interiors.

