

COUNTRY CHARMS

THE COLOURFUL REIMAGINING OF THIS SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS HAVEN CAME FROM A CHANCE MEETING AND A SHARED VISION.

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Homeowner Lisa and interior designer Cameron Kimber in the dining and gallery space of Lisa's NSW Southern Highlands home. **FACING PAGE** A delicate Colefax and Fowler wallpaper in the entry sets the scene for the charming interiors.



The French parterre gardens bring the sisters endless joy. "We couldn't have a garden in Sydney, and it was always our plan to have a big garden down here," says Lisa. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP** Lisa sourced the 16-seater dining table, which is used to host dinner parties, from a local auction house; a Brunschwig & Fils wallpaper and antique mirror in the powder room.

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DECORATIVE TROPES of the much-loved English country interior style include a relaxed mix of charming patterns and antiques, with a ruffled hem and potted colour dotted here and there. Cushion-laden sofas beg to be plonked onto, and layers of art and meaningful objects tell comforting stories. It's pretty, but not stifflingly precious. It teeters on maximalism but rarely overwhelms.

The home of sisters Lisa and Jan nods to this classic style and accords with the quaint village surroundings of the Southern Highlands, on the traditional lands of the Gundungurra people, in New South Wales. The house is not historic – its build was completed in 2005, and the sisters purchased it in 2006 – but the proportions and architectural details, such as French doors and decorative millwork, are traditional design mainstays.

The New Zealand-born sisters bought the property as a weekend reprieve from their high-intensity work schedules and apartment living in Sydney. "We didn't call it our weekender, though – it was always our 'haven,'" says Lisa, who is winding down her transcontinental career in telecommunications and currently living in the Highlands full-time. Jan, who works in the university sector, will join her soon.

Lisa has taken to village living, enjoying the slower pace, cooler climate and a convivial community where neighbours socialise over Friday evening drinks. During one of these gatherings in 2019, the sisters met Cameron Kimber, a local who also happens to be a high-profile interior designer. It was a timely meeting, as Lisa and >





In the living room, the sisters' existing armchairs were reupholstered in Jean Monro 'Polyanthus' fabric. The coffee table is an ottoman covered in Carlucci Velluto 'Di Cotone' and trimmed with green bullion fringe. The artworks were sourced from Hunter & Gatherer Collections in Moss Vale.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT The pink salon is Lisa's favourite room, with its large aviary bird painting found at Lydie du Bray Antiques in Mittagong; a Colefax and Fowler 'Bowood' wallpaper covers the walls and ceiling of Lisa's bedroom; green velvet chairs, an Oriental rug and antique birdcage in the dining area; a cosy window seat; Lisa grows geraniums in the outdoor greenhouse and then brings them inside for added colour. **FACING PAGE** A green striped Farrow & Ball wallpaper is a feature of the guest bedroom.



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Jan were looking to inject colour and pattern into their fairly neutral home. “We were invited to Cameron’s place for drinks, and Jan and I took one look at each other and said, “This is exactly the style we have in our minds, but weren’t able to put into words,” Lisa explains. They promptly engaged Cameron to update their interiors and instigate light structural work to create a sitting room and a sun terrace connected to the garden.

Trust was established early on between Cameron, Lisa, and Jan, with the designer sharing fabrics and colour palettes to gauge the sisters’ likes and dislikes. “A country feel with an emphasis on floral prints was the order of the day,” he shares. Lisa was initially thrown by Cameron’s suggestion that they wallpaper the walls and ceiling in her bedroom. “Would I have ever thought to put wallpaper on the ceiling? No. But do I love it now? Absolutely!” she says. “My sister and I are career people, so we’ve always had the attitude that if you engage people because of their expertise, you need to listen to them.”

Cameron worked with the sisters’ furniture and collections, rearranging, repurposing and recovering pieces to create inviting cohesion. As such, the new sitting room purrs with soft pink walls, freshly upholstered seating, treasured books and souvenirs, and curated artworks.

French doors open up to the parterre garden’s roses and buxus hedging. “We put that garden in while the 2019 summer bushfires were happening, and the buxus has grown in the short time since and looks magnificent,” says Lisa. “This area is quite well known for its excellent soil. Plant the right things, and you will be rewarded.”

The five raised vegetable beds by the formal section contain herbs, lettuce and other edibles, which are slowly being enveloped by florals. “Last year, for the first time, I successfully grew dahlias. I’m just about to plant more flowers to make it into a cutting garden,” says Lisa, who delights in the fact that she finally has green space and a stunning greenhouse for pottering after years of apartment dwelling. English conservatory in style, the glass building was constructed by a local tradesman and completed with Edwardian double doors gifted by Cameron.

Beautiful flourishes and skilful curations aside, the property continues to be a relaxed and welcoming haven for Lisa, Jan and their guests from near and far. “This home wraps itself around me,” says Lisa. “And the important thing is that it’s a practical house to be lived in. When people bring their dogs, they can be on the sofa. Shoes off at the door? No, you just come in. It’s all about living and being comfortable.” *CS*

ABOUT THE HOUSE:

- Interior designer Cameron Kimber worked with the sisters to achieve the desired look and feel for their home; cameronkimber.com
- Pretty wallpaper and upholstery by classic design houses Colefax and Fowler, Farrow & Ball, and Jean Monro bring home the refined English country aesthetic.
- A custom pink paint colour by Cameron brightens the sitting room walls.
- Lydie du Bray Antiques, local auction houses, and The Vault Sydney were key sources of antiques and art.



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Lisa enjoys potting up geraniums in the greenhouse: “I get a buzz about the fact I’ve kept them alive!” **FACING PAGE** “When we looked at the house, it was on a single quarter-acre block, and the quarter-acre next door was vacant. We said we’d only buy the house if we could also buy the block next door – it was a big house, but there wasn’t a lot of garden, which we wanted to focus on in our transition to country life,” says Lisa.