

Cultivated & CURATED

Old and new elegantly dovetail in the NSW Southern Highlands home of antiques connoisseur Sally Beresford.

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A glimpse through rustic double doors that were sourced in France reveals Sally and Chris' stately dining space and a confident curation of pieces. A 17th-century English low dresser is flanked by 18th-century Windsor chairs once owned by Sally's mother. The lamps are repurposed altar candlesticks, dating from the 18th century. The 17th-century French tapestry was bought in Paris during one of Sally and Chris' many sourcing trips. Painting (through doorway) by Ann Thompson.

H&G AT HOME WITH

Sally Beresford's name is synonymous with antiques. A fashion designer before she relented to her passion for old wares, Sally established her eponymous emporium two decades ago, based initially in the Southern Highlands of NSW and then in the chic Sydney suburb of Woollahra. She quickly built a reputation for impeccable taste and an eye for detail.

Antiques have been a constant in Sally's life. "I grew up with them," she says. "My mother was a lover of trees but also a lover of antiques, and she would say, 'You're just the caretaker.'" Fine French furniture is Sally's specialty, but her connection to

France goes beyond an appreciation of its design history. "My mother has French ancestors on her paternal side, albeit a long way back, and I like the way the French think," she says. "They think carefully about what they do before they do it."

This approach to life guides Sally and her husband, Chris, and it has served them well. In the late 1990s, they were living in Sydney and looking for a roomy weekender - and new opportunities - in the country. "Chris said 'I'll buy a farm if you grow something,'" says Sally. With the choice narrowed down to olives and grapes, the couple landed on the idea of setting up a vineyard. After months of research and site visits, they found a suitable stretch of ▶



ABOVE Sydney sandstone on the facade and a garage door made from western red cedar are just two of the beautifully textural materials to be found at this home. Roofing, Colorbond. **BELOW LEFT** Antiques aficionado and furniture maker, Sally Beresford. **BELOW RIGHT** A still-life by Charles Ponti is an ideal companion for the French-oak hall table, one of Sally's pieces. **OPPOSITE** Proportions are generous in the dining space, where hand-carved beams accentuate the ceiling height. Both beams and walls are painted Porter's Paints Popcorn, creating a clean backdrop for ornate furniture and colourful art. The 17th-century coffer once belonged to Sally's mother. Artworks by Theresa Byrnes (left wall, top, and above coffer). The dining table was designed and made by Sally.





The striking kitchen, designed and installed by Harrington Kitchens, features Caesarstone benchtops, matt-black cabinetry and a sleek live rangehood. True to Sally's design concept of marrying the old with the new in the home, the oversize glass bottles on display date back to 1850. **OPPOSITE** A handy servery between the kitchen and dining area keeps the cook connected with the action. Series 7 chairs from Design Within Reach are teamed with a Versailles-style farmhouse dining table, designed and made by Sally using 400-year-old French oak. Quick-Step 'Livyn' vinyl flooring in Grey Oak from Premium Floors. ▶



"I LOVE THE CONTRAST BETWEEN OLD AND NEW HERE."

Sally Beresford



land at Moss Vale, just under two hours' drive south-west of Sydney. Since purchasing the property, Mount Ashby Estate, they have created a stunning home and established an award-winning vineyard with popular cellar door and restaurant, which they run alongside Sally's antiques and French-style farmhouse table-making business.

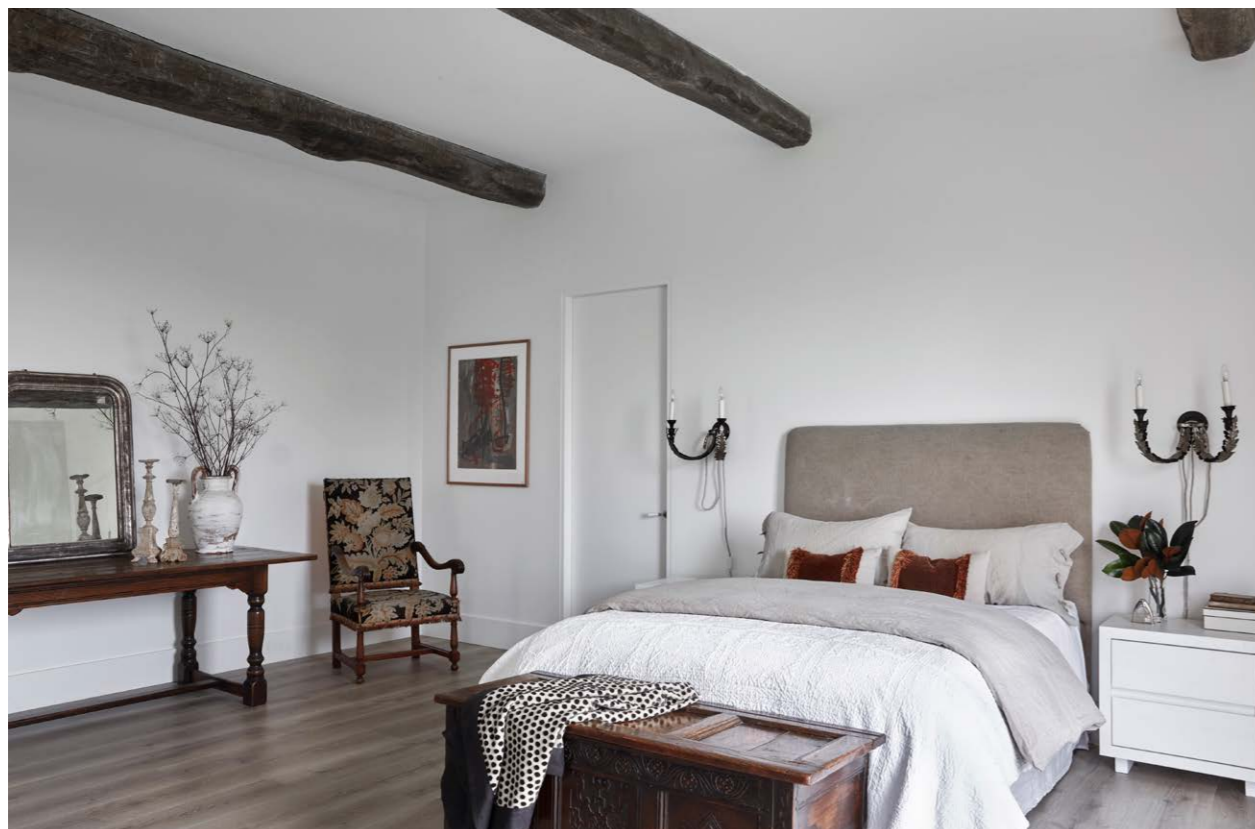
Mount Ashby Estate's original brick farmhouse had been neglected for decades, but the property's 40.5 hectares offered an idyllic outlook and gentle slopes that were perfect for a vineyard. "That's what really convinced us. You can build the house you want, but you can't change the land," says Sally. The couple split their time

between the city and the country for 13 years before moving to Mount Ashby Estate permanently in 2012. Tragically, a year later, the old farmhouse was lost in an electrical fire. No one was hurt, but many personal possessions were destroyed, and the home had to be rebuilt entirely.

Sally had a clear vision for the new design. "I wanted it to look like an old stone house that had been gutted and then added to," she says. The couple worked with a draftsman and local tradespeople to bring this concept to life.

The result fits Sally's brief exactly. The front third is clad in Sydney sandstone, purchased by Sally at auction. The stonework wraps around the first ►

The formal living room is painted Porter's Paints River Stone, a lovely charcoal colour that creates a moody, cocooning effect. The walls are adorned with a painting by an unknown artist and two Picasso etchings, purchased from Picasso's studio in France. Sofas and coffee tables, all from MCM House. The fireplace features a French limestone mantel and a hearth made from a slab of salvaged sandstone that was cut in the convict era. Sally made the cushions herself. Blanket, Hermès.



ABOVE AND BELOW LEFT Neutral layers and hints of ornamentation make the main bedroom, where generous windows offer picture-perfect views. The wall sconces were found in a French flea market. Molly bedside tables, MCM House. An artwork by Ann Thomson hangs next to an 18th-century chair. The bedhead and reclaimed-oak console are Sally's handiwork. **BELOW RIGHT** The guestroom features a dramatic modern pendant light and simple bedlinen, both from Ikea. They are paired with a rustic console table sourced in Paris. **OPPOSITE** A monochromatic palette enables the main ensuite's landscape views to take centrestage. Bath and basins from Meco. Wall and floor tiles, all Don Ceramics. For similar tapware, try Cass Brothers. ▶



"I LIKE THINGS TO HAVE PERSONALITY. IF IT'S NOT OLD, I WILL MAKE IT LOOK OLD." Sally

two rooms of the home - the formal living room and the study - while the rest of the home is clad in weatherboard. The weatherboards are painted Porter's Paints Popcorn, a crisp white, and punctuated with black-framed windows. The graphic palette of this section contrasts beautifully with the sandstone.

Through the front door, past the study and charcoal-hued formal living room, the hallway opens up to a stately dining area and kitchen, where subtle design details evoke a modern feel. "I love the contrast between old and new here," says Sally. The Australian hardwood beams that cap the soaring ceilings in the dining space were hand-hewn, then left outside to weather to a beautiful patina.

There's nothing fussy about the design: the skirting is simple, there are no cornices, and the chic black-framed windows are generously proportioned and positioned to create spectacular vignettes

of the landscape. Sally's treasured collection of antique furniture and art, some of which dates back to the 17th century, injects personality into every room, adding warmth to the otherwise monochromatic palette.

The Produce Store, the site of Sally's antique emporium on the property, is a 100-year-old tin shed from a neighbouring town that they saved from demolition. "We were able to keep almost every piece of the building and had a local signwriter restore the signage," says Chris. The store, still with its original panelling, is a fitting backdrop for Sally's artfully curated collection of storied objects and fine wares.

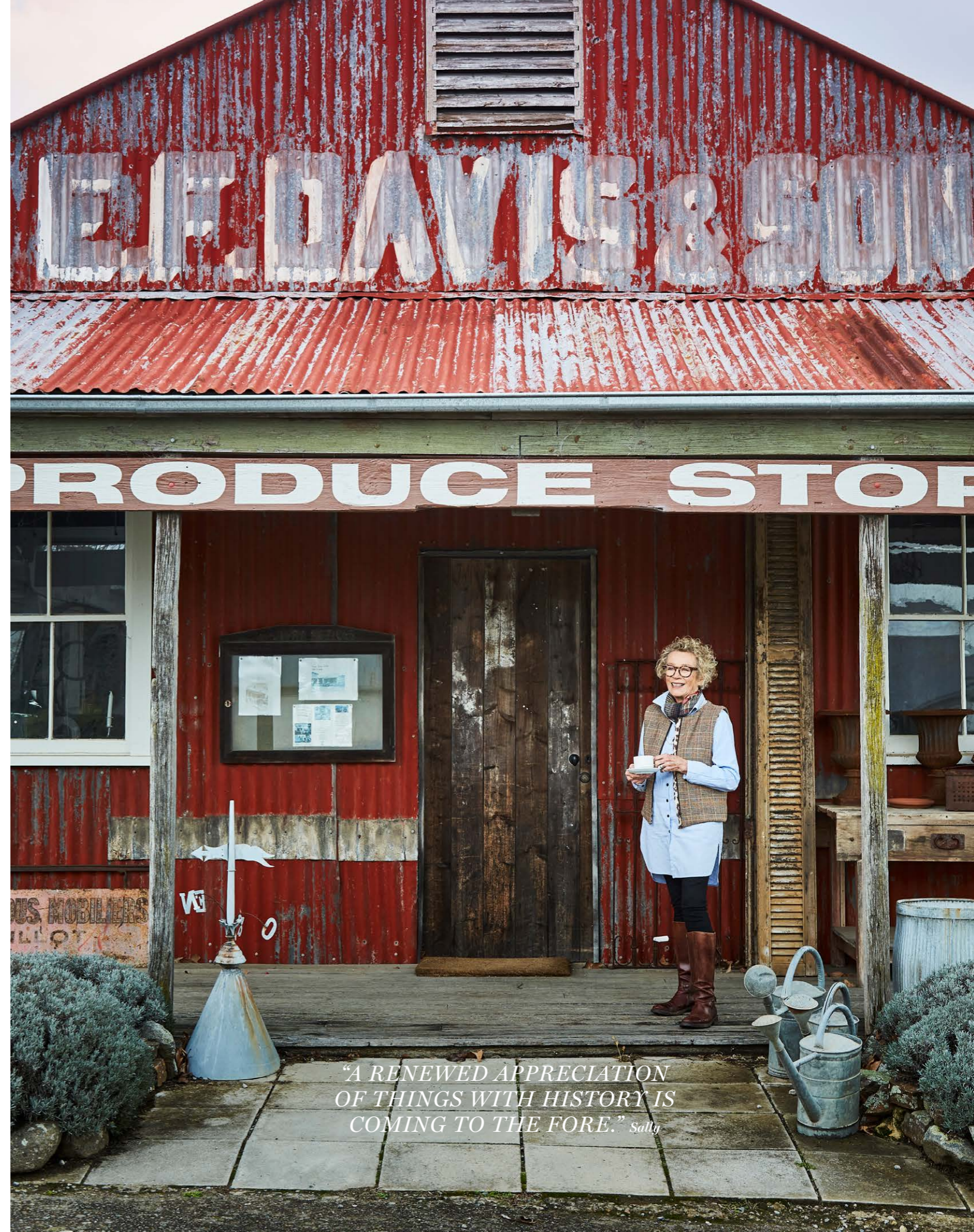
Sally's farmhouse tables are also on display in The Produce Store. The majority of the tables, designed by Sally, are made from French oak, sustainably grown, felled and milled in France before being shipped to Australia. "We buy whole trees, which allows us to match the grains and

work with very wide planks," says Sally. The tables are made locally, using time-honoured 16th- and 17th-century construction methods. Sally is hands-on when it comes to finishing the pieces, carefully and respectfully crafting surfaces that complement the inherent richness of the timber.

Following in her mother's footsteps, Sally considers herself a caretaker of the trees and antiques that bring her so much joy. She says she has noticed a new generation taking an interest in antiques and heritage buildings. "I find a lot of young people are drawn to touch-worn pieces," she says. "There's renewed appreciation of things with history - buildings as well as furniture - that is really coming to the fore." ▶

Sally Beresford French Farmhouse Tables and Antiques; www.sallyberesford.com.au. Mount Ashby Estate; mountashby.com.au.

Sally and Chris' home looks as though it has been standing among the grapevines for a century. The truth is that neither existed at Mount Ashby Estate before the couple purchased the property in 1999. **OPPOSITE** The Produce Store, built circa 1918, was relocated to Mount Ashby Estate from a neighbouring town in 2004. Today, it's a showroom for antiques and the French farmhouse tables Sally designs. *For Where to Buy, see page 176.*



"A RENEWED APPRECIATION OF THINGS WITH HISTORY IS COMING TO THE FORE." Sally



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LIFE & STYLE

Sally shares some firsts and favourite things.

FIRST ADULT HOME? A two-storey cottage in Wahroonga [on Sydney's Upper North Shore] which I renovated with my father before moving in. The owners were moving into a unit so we took over their dog as well.

BUCKET-LIST DESTINATION? Paris (2) and our favourite bar, J'Drouot, where we mix with the locals, eat duck omelette then stagger back to our hotel.

I'D CROSS THE WORLD TO... Visit my children in England and France, stopping in Hong Kong (as it used to be) for a few days on the way.

DREAM CAR? A Porsche Macan (6) with tan leather upholstery.

I LOVE A VASEFUL OF... Tall white flowers (4).

FAVOURITE ARTISTS? [New York-based Australian painter] Teresa Byrnes, Picasso, Richard Allen, John Olsen (1) and Thomas Bucich (7).

FAVOURITE FASHION LABELS? Celia Kate (9), who is my daughter! Her designs are timeless, versatile and practical. I also adore UK label Chinti & Parker, which one of my other daughters designs for.

FAVOURITE FRAGRANCE? Hermès Galop d'Hermès (10).

I'M INSPIRED BY... My late mother and father, and high achievers in all walks of life, such as my late friend, Peter Weiss, and Kerry Stokes.

DREAM DESIGNER HOMEWARES? Anything by Studio Oliver Gustav (in Copenhagen) or from James Salmond Furniture in Sydney.

ANTIQUES ARE SPECIAL BECAUSE... They were designed and made with real skill, not fancy tools, and have been cared for by many generations of owners (8).

YOUR ADVICE TO ANYONE WHO WANTS TO COLLECT ANTIQUES? Start with country-style pieces (5), which work well with contemporary art and furniture.

I LOVE THE NSW SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS (3) FOR... The distinct seasons, the deciduous trees, the misty mornings and the talented, caring and interesting people who live in the region. **H&G**



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"I'm inspired by my late parents and high-achievers in all walks of life."

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Artworks: Lake Eyre - Inland Lake courtesy of John Olsen and Olsen Gallery, Sydney (1); Relic Bundle courtesy of Tom Bucich and Whitewall Art Projects (7). Photography from Getty Images (2), Sue Stubbs (3, 8), Porsche (6), Guy Davies (9).