

Floral tribute

Known affectionately as the Magnolia House during its refurbishment, this home on Sydney's north shore has been transformed, both inside and out.

Photographs ANSON SMART Words CARLI PHILIPS



This page: Given a clean slate, the formal living and dining area had a completely new furniture fit-out. Befitting the adults' space are ClassiCon 'Bibendum' armchairs in coral felt and a semi-round Minotti 'Seymour' sofa from De De Ce, with a Cassina 'Rio' coffee table in natural oak and rattan. Opposite page: Above the sculptural, redesigned staircase hangs an Apparatus 'Tassel' pendant in aged brass, while a Kelly Wearstler 'Fairfax' chair in ivory and charcoal stripe complements the linear looks of the hallway.



This page, from top A new fireplace and custom joinery grace the formal area, with a vintage Italian brass framed mirror sourced by Arent&Pyke from a flea market in Paris. Artwork by Laura Jones, from Olsen Gallery. Opposite page The hallway was transformed with floors by Tongue N Groove in 'Graupa' herringbone oak, a large walnut mirror by Sarah Lavoine from Bastille & Sons and, the pièce de résistance, the sculptural staircase.



In the 18th century, south-east Asian plant hunters discovered huge, glossy-leaved flowering trees in the region. Now known as magnolias, their deciduous foliage is not only beautiful, blooming with perfume in winter and showing off with shiny green leaves in spring, but therapeutic, used in alternative medicine as a remedy to soothe and calm. In the thousands of years since their discovery, hundreds of new hybrids have been cultivated. A pair of these stand pink and proud in the garden of this four-bedroom residence on Sydney's lower north shore that has been revived by Arent&Pyke, the Surry Hills-based interior design studio founded by principals Juliette Arent and Sarah-Jane Pyke. Bar a sole frangipani tree, it was the only flora left standing in the re-landscaping of the property by Secret Gardens. Throughout the duration of the refurbishment, it was known among office staff simply as the Magnolia House.

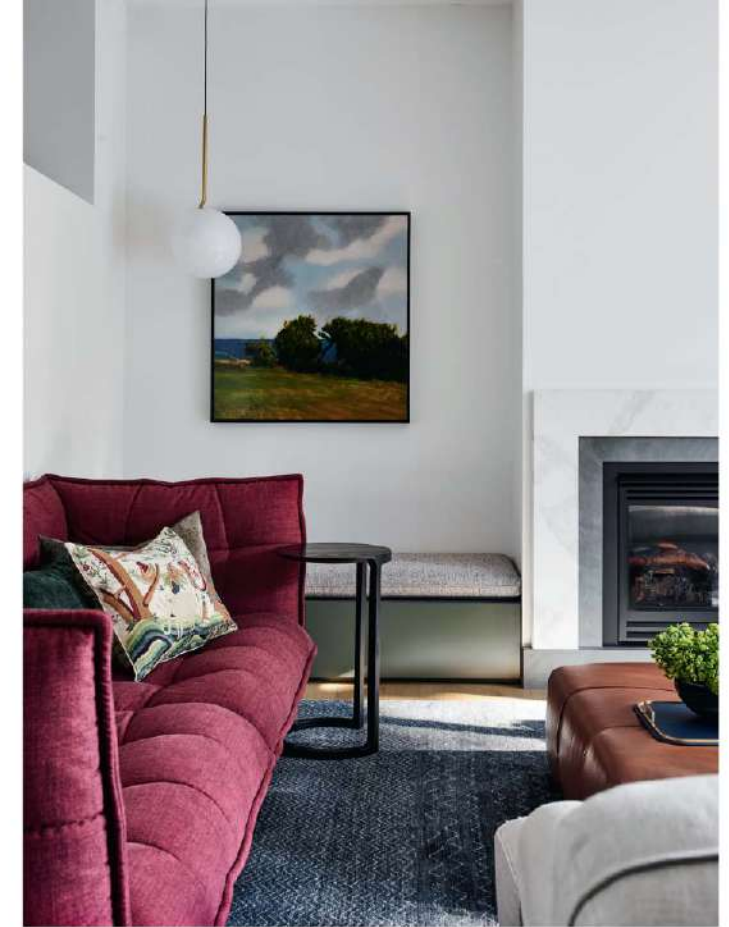
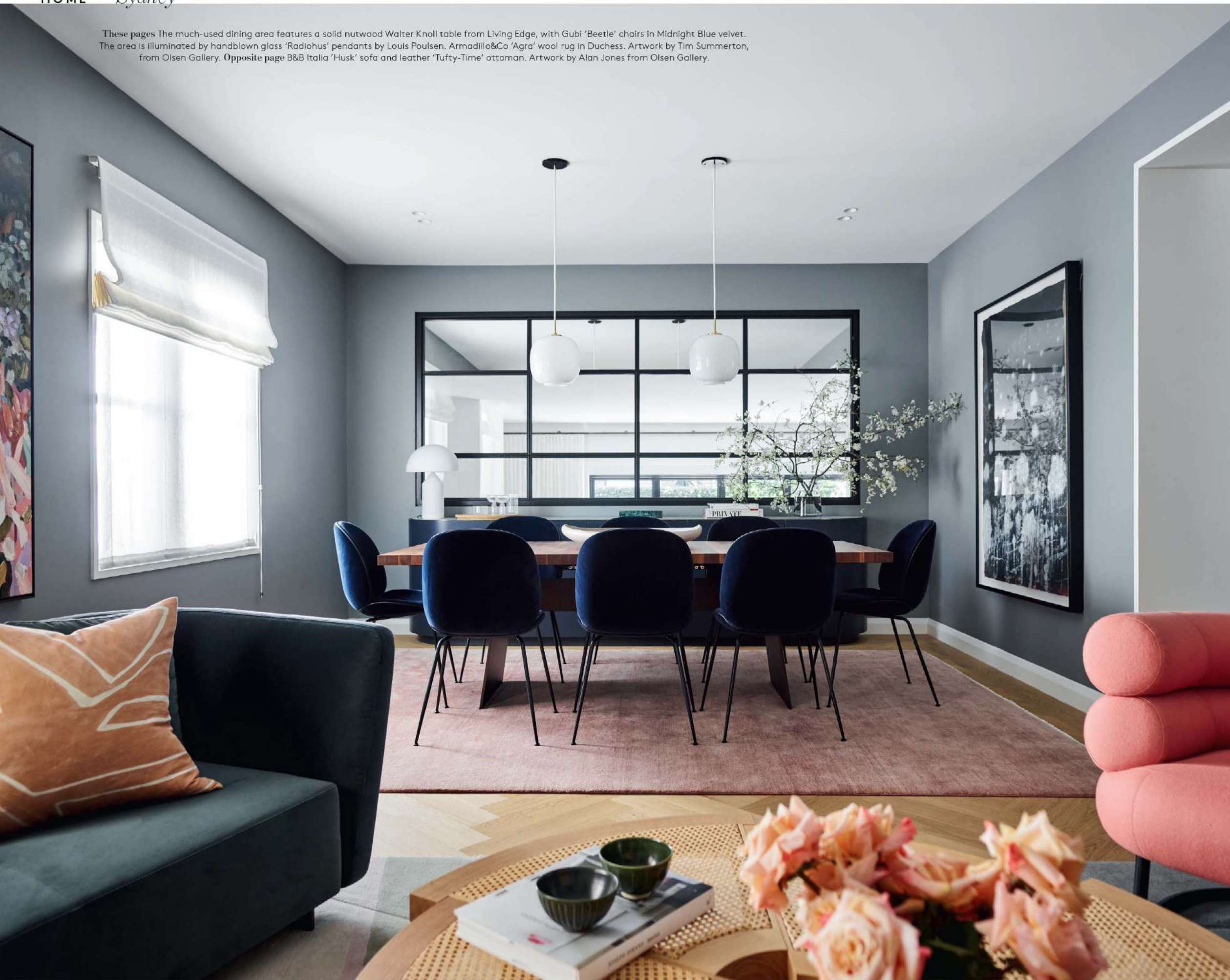
Originally engaged to help reconfigure the kitchen and bathrooms, the project scope took a turn when Arent&Pyke did a surprise sketch of a new staircase. It was the start of an unexpected conversation that evolved over two years as the entire property underwent a renovation. A family-friendly house with light-filled living spaces and a Hamptons-style look, indecision had initially prompted the owners to make safe adjustments. "They told us that they had made it white for neutrality, but it ended up being too neutral and they desired more texture and warmth." Yet light touches never eventuated, recalls Juliette Arent of demolition day. "When we started working on site, I think the clients were initially shocked at how little of the house was left. The volume remained the same but we stripped everything back and started again."

One of the home's biggest shortcomings was the foyer, with its overbearing timber balustrade and long, dark internal alley. Limestone



"The volume remained the same, but we stripped everything back and started again."

These pages The much-used dining area features a solid nutwood Walter Knoll table from Living Edge, with Gubi 'Beetle' chairs in Midnight Blue velvet. The area is illuminated by handblown glass 'Radiohus' pendants by Louis Poulsen. Armadillo&Co 'Agra' wool rug in Duchess. Artwork by Tim Summerton, from Olsen Gallery. **Opposite page** B&B Italia 'Husk' sofa and leather 'Tufty-Time' ottoman. Artwork by Alan Jones from Olsen Gallery.



floors were replaced with Tongue N Groove 'Graupa' herringbone oak in creamy undertones and a sculptural, redesigned staircase, its treads lined in a sisal runner. "We added details to soften what was there previously and give it more architectural interest. We wanted it to have a timeless and elegant appeal, so introduced rhythm and tactility." While the outcome was hugely successful, it's unlikely the staircase will be reproduced elsewhere. "It was a real technical challenge – the manufacturer said he will never do it again!"

To the left of the entry is a new formal living and dining area regularly used by the couple for its proximity to the children's bedrooms upstairs. It was treated to a new fireplace, custom joinery and a completely new furniture fit-out. Befitting an adults' space, a Cassina 'Rio' coffee table in rattan is ringed by a Minotti semi-round 'Seymour' sofa in petrol blue and a pair of tubular ClassiCon 'Bibendum' armchairs in coral felt. Adjacent, a nutwood dining table is paired with Gubi 'Beetle' chairs and underfoot, a rose-hued Armadillo&Co 'Agra' woollen rug.

To the right of the corridor a panel door conceals a powder room and study lined in House of Hackney's punchy peacock hues with a workspace in salmon. Although hidden behind flush joinery, the doors are often left open with the lights on, says Juliette of these "jewel boxes of joy". A generous hallway leads to new aluminium doors and a "pause moment" on the threshold of the lower level, marking the formal and informal separation of the house. "It's all about comfort and big relaxed style," she says of the casual living zone. By way of the kitchen, colour has been introduced with "Shaker detailing in eucalypt tones", an oversized Apparatus pendant lighting up the room with glowing porcelain cups.

Upstairs is the private domain, with two children's bedrooms and a neat navy banquette on the landing perfectly suited for bedtime reading. In a home where everything was reimagined top-to-toe only the master bedhead remained, upholstered in a Christopher Farr fabric the owners had selected themselves after seeing the design in another Arent&Pyke project. "We feel very connected to this job and these clients. I don't think they realised the drastic impact it would have on their family. They just can't believe it's theirs." 15

For more go to arentpyke.com.



SPEED READ

» Designers Arent&Pyke were first engaged to reconfigure the kitchen and bathrooms of this Sydney home, but the scope changed when they did a surprise sketch of a new staircase. » The owners originally planned to make 'safe' adjustments to the Hamptons-style house, but it was too neutral and they decided on more texture and warmth. » The foyer was one of the home's biggest shortcomings, but the redesigned sculptural staircase has now created a stylish focal point. » Aluminium doors separate the formal and informal areas of the house. The casual living zone is all about comfort and big relaxed style, while upstairs is the family's private domain.



This page, clockwise from top left Custom sideboards were installed in the formal dining area. In the study, a Gubi 'Beetle' chair in tan complements the salmon-hued joinery. On the landing, a marine linen custom bench seat by Arent&Pyke provides a stopping-off point before bedtime. Artwork by George Byrne from Olsen Gallery. The powder room has a custom mirror by Arent&Pyke. Alt Manos tiles from Onsite Supply & Design. Atelier Areti 'Plates' pendant light. Opposite page In the kitchen, the Apparatus 'Trapeze 10' pendant from Criteria. Moller stools from Great Dane.

