

# VOGUE LIVING

AUSTRALIA

CONSUMER MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR

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# SPRING BLISS

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# KORNER HOUSE

*Australian beauty heir Rebecca Korner changes course following the inspired design of her London home, which marries European glamour with the sun-saturated colour of her homeland.*

PHOTOGRAPHER: JAMES McDONALD. WRITER: FIONA MCCARTHY



**OPPOSITE:** on the hallway wall, which beauty salon turned interior designer Rebecca Korner has covered in red fabric by Harlequin, is a large landscape by Andreas Schön flanked by vintage floral lights from London store Valerie Wade. In the foreground are 'Pom Pom' pendant lights by Nika Zupanc and a French Louis Philippe commode in burl walnut and marble.

**THIS PAGE:** in the dining room-cum-library are works by Fernand Léger, which sit alongside a taxidermied scarlet ibis found at Deyrolle in Paris. A photographic book by Peter Beard is displayed on a bespoke Perspex stand. The dining table was designed in collaboration with London-based Tim Gosling in burr oak and ebony, and chairs were re-covered in fabric by Tessitura di Rovazzano. Hanging above is an 1880 Murano glass chandelier. The custom rug is by New York's Fedora Design. Details, last pages.

In the drawing room, a sunny assortment of furniture, including 1950s wing chairs re-upholstered in 'Grand Crocus' linen by Nicole Fabre Designs, armchairs from a Paris flea market re-upholstered in a Tessitura di Rovizzano linen, gold *tabourets* by Hervé van der Straeten, and a 1930s French walnut burl wood and ivory coffee table are presided over by Federico Herrero's *Nube Mental (Mental Cloud)* above the mantelpiece. A hand-chain-stitched custom rug by Fedora Design hints at Australian Dreamtime motifs, its jacaranda purple contrasting with the sugar-almond blue on the walls (made up of myriad Farrow & Ball paints). "I wanted it to have a French feel so we knocked through and opened up the windows onto a Parisian-style balcony. I'm hoping one day the wisteria will grow up and in through the windows," says Korner. The artworks to the left are, from top, *Village* (2010) and *Echo* (2011) by Dan Coombs and the bronze sculpture on the Christian Liaigre sideboard is by Agostino Bonalumi.







**ABOVE:** canary-yellow linen from Harlequin offsets paintings by Tadeusz Kantor (left) and Jean-Marc Louis. A '50s rosewood side cabinet displays an ankle ring and sculpture from Botswana. Rebecca Korner, **TOP RIGHT**, designed the bronze doors in the family room, **BELOW**, with 'Pumpkin' chairs and ottomans by Pierre Paulin for Ligne Roset. **OPPOSITE, FROM TOP:** '30s furniture and '60s mirrors in the master bedroom; a replica boat found in Saint Barths sits on a '50s Scandinavian sideboard under framed old *Fortune* magazines in the study. An Egyptian camel's blanket acts as a rug. Details, last pages.



FOR AUSTRALIAN SKINCARE SCION Rebecca Korner, this one adage is true: you can take the girl out of Sydney (or Paris, New York or London), but you can't take the Sydney (or Paris, New York or London) out of the girl. Nowhere is this more evident than in her home, a light and elegant Victorian terrace in west London.

For more than 20 years, since Korner first left her hometown of Sydney, she has travelled the world, basing herself in Paris, then London, with stints in cities such as New York. Adventure on a global scale is in her blood: her family, originally from Budapest, founded Madame Korner, one of Australia's most successful beauty businesses, in 1904 and Korner launched her own offshoot brand, Körner Skincare, in 2004.

Following the birth of her twin sons Maximilian and Marcus in 2009, the ever entrepreneurial Korner changed course, putting her insatiable energy into things more domestic, notably her own home and now a burgeoning interior design business. "Interior design has always been a personal passion, where I've been mishmashing parts of my life and travels together," she says. "It is slightly surreal to be pursuing another path, simply off the back of others seeing my own home and asking me to do theirs."

Despite the inherent glamour that goes with a life that takes her from Rome to Marrakech, Saint-Tropez to Mykonos, Korner's own style is sentimental rather than slick. Much of the art and furniture are pieces she and her husband Dominic Lester have owned for decades and Korner is unsurprisingly drawn to a colour palette that fuses the elegance of her 13 years in Paris with the sunshine of her Australian heritage. "As you come into the house," Korner explains, "the first thing you see is a red wall, then in the dining room and library one which is yellow, and then in the drawing room, blue. These are the colours my mother Judit gave me and my two sisters when we were born; I am red, Jessica is yellow, Olivia is blue. I wanted to use this somehow because being so far away from home, it's like having my family with me."

Korner found the house in 2008, just pregnant with the twins, but it took two-and-a-half years to gut (except for the front façade) and rebuild, extending the back and adding another floor on top. "It was a lovely old Victorian house, with a rabbit warren





of rooms, which hadn't been touched in 60 years," says Korner, "but it had a great vibe. As a family house where there had been a lot of love, I knew immediately this was somewhere we could put down roots." Even with the Victorian home's five floors and generously proportioned rooms, no space is wasted. "Everything is multifunctional," says Korner. "There are lots of different eating areas – you can tell we're into food." The upstairs dining table is also the perfect place to sit and read, and the drawing room comes into its own at 'cocktail hour', when Korner throws open the drinks cabinet, cleverly incorporated into the hallway, and plays a beloved Ella Fitzgerald vinyl on an old-school record player.

Access to natural light was vital, particularly in the kitchen and family room, because "that's where we inevitably all end up", and colour was key, too. "I wanted to use lots of it," she says, pointing out bright linen lampshades, exquisitely hand-chain-stitched rugs of Dreamtime-like motifs, a series of framed butterflies and an 1800s Murano glass chandelier that "took five people three days to gently clean with a toothbrush".

Tactile textures add another layer of depth – the heavy bronze doors that divide the kitchen, family room and garden on the lower ground floor, the marble hammam in the master bathroom, even the panel beading and cornicing, have all been made to Korner's exact specifications. "I've used different textures throughout because it's important to be able to touch a surface or a chair and for it to feel good."

From here, she is already working on several residential projects in the UK and Europe. "I want to create uplifting and exciting spaces," she says. For Korner herself, an avid globetrotter, her home has become "very hard to leave". **VL**

