



# Beyond the vogue

This stylish bayside home proves that holding out for the pieces you love is the key to decor that stands the test of time, writes **DANIELLE WRIGHT**

**F**ASHION stylist and presenter Anthea O'Connor is the picture of elegance in her leather skirt and silk blouse. She's perched at her kitchen bench, Givenchy handbag and green smoothie by her side. As a former Melbourne editor of *Vogue*, her house is a reflection of her carefully curated fashion sense.

"As one of three girls, I remember always having a love of clothes and my mum took great pride in finding beautiful outfits for me to wear on special occasions," Anthea says. "I grew up with very definite ideas about fashion and personal style, which now translates into my home because the two are closely linked. I'm clear on what I love."

What Anthea loves is warmth and a sense of elegance in her surroundings — from the bronze taps and copper light fixtures to the oak timber throughout, the Rutso Concrete benchtops and the floor-to-ceiling glass doors with steel casings, each element has been carefully considered.

"The things I've chosen tend to project a lived-in feel, rather than being too shiny or perfect, and I've always known I didn't want what everyone else has," Anthea explains. "I'd never buy everything from one brand, it's about having confidence to mix things you love."

She shares the home with husband Matt and their three children — Violet, 12, Tom, 10, and Will, 8 — and says working within realistic parameters and financial reality created a boundary and a need to be creative, as well as patient.

Working with David Neil from Neil Architecture —

who she calls "incredible, amazing, clever" — Anthea and Matt designed the home in stages over the past eight years.

The length of time worked in their favour, enabling them to spend time in the house while they were considering big decisions.

"What we thought we might do at the start wasn't what we ended up doing," Anthea says. "You need to give yourself time in a house to see how it functions, what the light does, how these things can inform your design decisions."

Small elements, such as turning a dead hallway space into a study area behind a moveable bookshelf "wall", sit alongside larger elements — the living room has been "flipped", so the oak is on the ceiling and the concrete is on the floor — and make the home full of surprises.

"I'm not a slave to social media. I'm not informed by trends, I just know what I like," Anthea says. "I've also had a long time to consider my pieces. It's taken time, but I'm happy to say that I love everything we've chosen from the B&B Italia Le Bambole tan leather sofa to the Douglas & Bec chandelier."

She says she's most proud of the fact the family has survived the process and created an inviting family home that they now love to invite their friends to share, without it being a gallery or showpiece home.

"From the front gate the house is quiet, modest and humble. I like to think that it whispers, it doesn't shout," Anthea says. "But, once you come in through the house, it reveals itself. I've really come to love that about it. It's a confident home that doesn't follow the crowd."



## style

## All in black and white

An interior sans traditional colour is more than possible, writes **KAREN MCCARTNEY**

**D**ON'T ever let anyone tell you black and white is a lazy decorating option. While it is the ultimate controlled palette, making it hard to get wrong, there is one great decorating tip for those who fear it will look too cold and mannered.

And the tip is, wait for it, to just add timber. The tones of wood, from American oak to a rich walnut, bridge the extremes of black and white and deliver an interior that balances style and warmth.

Albert Park's Whiting Architects are maestros when it comes to this look; not only with how they treat the architectural envelope but the attention to detail in their interiors.

"I'm more comfortable laying a monochromatic or simple palette to build on," creative director Carole Whiting says. "It's about a peaceful space — the client has to live in the space and look at it every day, so big statements and strong colour can be great in a magazine but difficult to live with."

And indeed her interiors play with textures — painted lining boards as interior cladding, dark stained floors, honey-coloured timber stair treads and then the surprise flourish of boldly patterned black and white cement tiles in the bathroom.

The furniture choices need to be confident and unfussy to pull off this look. Think over-scale pendant lights, butcher's tiles, and a mix of pale timber stools and chairs around a generous dining table with texture achieved through large knitted pieces, cushions and throws.

Then channel a place where Japan and Scandinavia meet aesthetically, add a flash of light industrial, and you are almost there.

I do have a word of caution — don't add anything red — it feels dated. Sadly, yellow is decoratively speaking past its sell-by date; better to choose a beautiful blue and use it judiciously.

But having said that, interiors always defy the rules and I am sure if I put "red/black/white interiors" into a Pinterest search something that blows me out of the water would show up.

**Karen McCartney is editorial director of Temple & Webster**



(From top) The Winston timber desk lamp, \$169; charcoal Geometric cushion, \$69.95; Artisana rug, \$299.

All products available at [templeandwebster.com.au/weekend](http://templeandwebster.com.au/weekend)



## Inside knowledge

Style matters: former Melbourne editor of *Vogue* Anthea O'Connor has designed her bayside family home to reflect her personal elegance and style, saying, "I'm not informed by trends, I just know what I like".

PICTURES  
ANDREW HENSHAW

### What first attracted you to the property?

The size of the land, that it was close to the beach and had a pool, as well as it having real potential. It was the worst house in the street, but it was a good street.

### Favourite room?

It has to be our newest room — the living/dining area at the back of the house looking out on to the garden and pool. We've only spent a summer in it so are really looking forward to lighting the fire and sitting inside in the warm on a cold winter's day.

### Favourite piece of furniture?

I don't have a large volume of art, but what I do have is very considered and has huge sentimental value. One of my favourites is a piece by an old family friend, Sally Joubert. It's a landscape oil painting of Lorne, where I spent my childhood summers.

### What's been done to the house?

Everything! We moved into the house in 2007, painted and dyed the carpet as well as landscaped the back garden and upgraded the pool. A bathroom was renovated the following year. In 2012, we did the ensuite, put down floorboards, created the front room and re-carpeted. In 2013, we did the whole kitchen and shifted the house around to face the back yard. In April last year we started the back rooms and created a new bathroom. We did everything backwards by starting with the garden, but it's been lovely to see the garden grow over those years while the rest of the house had an overhaul.

### Bit you've learnt to live with?

The original footprint of the house and learning how to turn that into a positive. I thought the way the house flowed into the back area through a small hallway was a problem, but my friend saw it differently. She thought it was a nice way for the house to reveal itself slowly. I now like that it's unexpected, it opens up and it's not a cookie-cutter home.

### Still on the to-do list?

There's one final piece of the puzzle left — turning the front dining space into a library with plenty of storage space for all our books and the kids' toys.

### Favourite country for sourcing items for the home?

I have a lot of imported pieces, but my favourite place to source items has to be Melbourne. There are just so many incredible pieces and clever designers here. I got to know so many when I was at *Vogue* and I remember thinking I'd be back when I could afford to buy their items for my own home. It was worth the wait. I've loved discovering designers such as Anna Charlesworth, Bill Wright-Smith's concrete benchtops and Loom's fabulous rugs.

### Biggest party the house has hosted?

We had some great summer get-togethers. One of them was with six families with a total of 20 kids. The house holds everyone easily and works well.

### Styling tip/advice?

Purchase things you love as investments for the future. There's so much choice, so you need to be focused on your style and what it is that you love. Make do until you can afford the piece you love because you will have it forever if you choose well. Take your time and remember that things find a place eventually.

