

# INSIDEEE

INSPIRING HOMES WITH HEART

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# light work

A couple's shared talents are put to work creating a new family home that looks like it's always been there

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AU PLATES (ON TOP SHELF), ZAKKIA, ZAKKIA.COM.AU. HERMAN MILLER MOULDED PLASTIC  
ARMCHAIRS BY CHARLES & RAY EAMES, LIVING EDGE, LIVINGEDGE.COM.AU

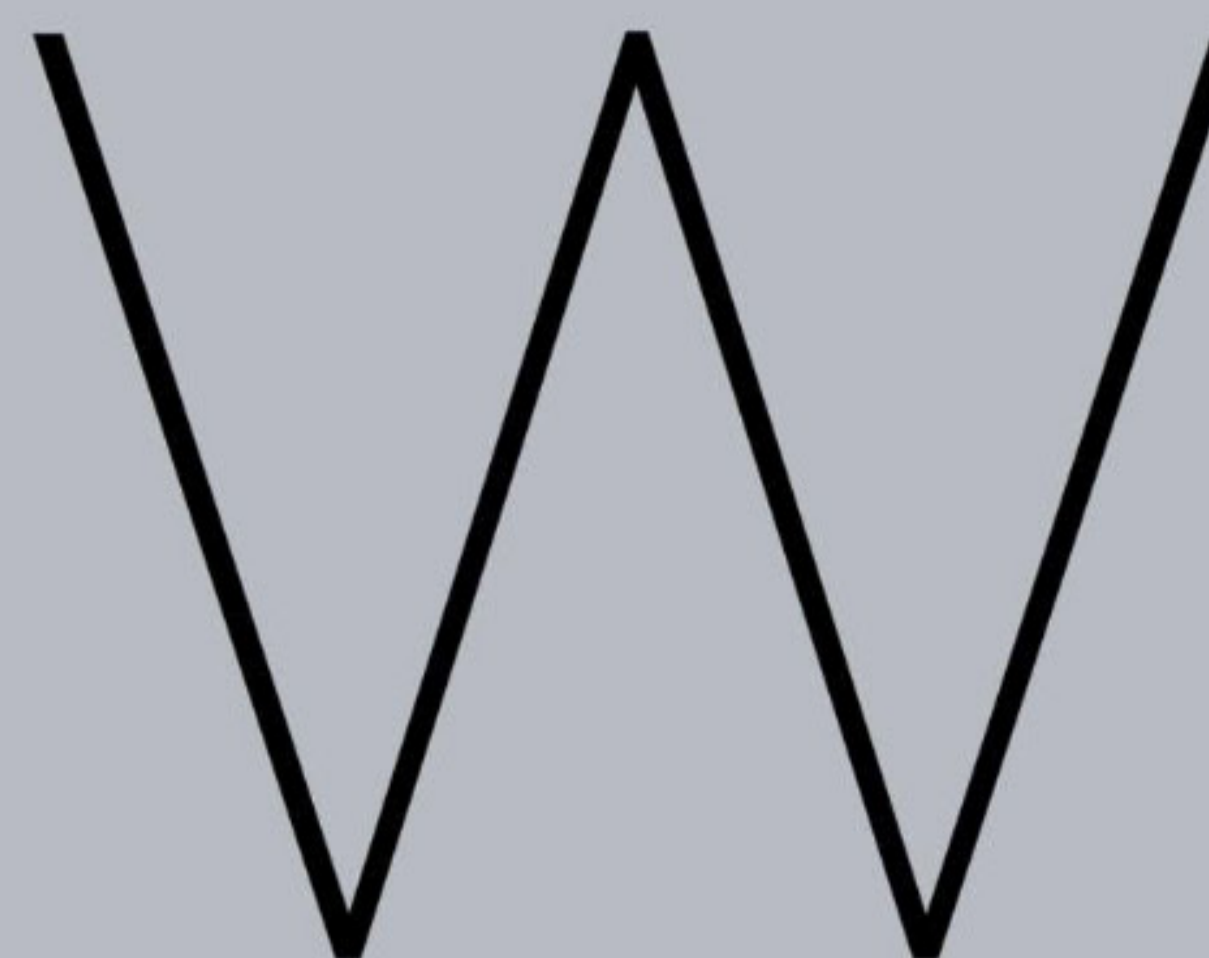




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**KITCHEN** In this new build on Sydney's Northern Beaches, homeowners Ali and Michael combined their talents to create this spacious abode. Builder Michael made the table, while cabinetry designed by Ali and installed by Janz Designs runs the length of the space.

**MASTER BEDROOM (right)** Soft grey and white creates a calming palette.



When an accomplished stylist and set designer joins forces with her builder partner to design and build a family home, the result is something pretty special. With their shared passion for building and an eye

for detail, the couple's complementary skill sets have created a dynamic, modern beach house with a multitude of uses.

While out walking the dog one morning, Ali Griffiths and Michael Beukers decided to pop into an auction in their local suburb of Avalon. Thinking they'd never be able to get the property, they were surprised when they walked back home with the dog in tow and a new house to their name. It was practically unlivable, but they set about a quick fix-up and moved in within a month.






## cheat sheet

**Who lives here:** Ali Griffiths, a stylist, art director and set designer; her partner Michael, a residential builder; and her daughters Lucy, 17; and Lola, 11. There's also extra room for Michael's grown-up children, Stephen and Georgia.

**Style of home:** A bright and airy beach house in Avalon on Sydney's Northern Beaches. The front of the home pays homage to its former days as a weatherboard fisherman's cottage.

 The couple did a quick refresh before moving in, then spent three years planning their renovation. They carried out the renovation in stages over two years, doing much of the work themselves, and moving out for a year.

A former fisherman's cottage built in 1929, the house was on a decent block of land, located minutes from the beach. Ali and Michael considered renovating the old weatherboard cottage, but the project was daunting. "When we assessed the amount of changes we were going to make, it was actually more cost-effective to start with a clean slate," says Ali. After three years of planning, they moved into a rental property to begin construction. The plan was to do it slowly over time as their budget allowed, saving on trades and doing most of the work themselves.

The couple wanted to create the illusion that the house had been there all along, and was simply renovated and extended internally, when in fact it was actually an entirely new build. "People often think it's an original home that's been renovated," says Ali. "We had no problems getting the design through council and I think part of the reason for that was that the local residents were pleased that the design was in keeping with the area."

Drawing on her design experience, Ali had a clear set of criteria in her mind for the uses and functional elements of the house, and a bank of design elements she wanted to incorporate. The home needed to be able to cater to multiple uses, and it needed to be flexible enough to house their respective kids at different times and have a lot of hidden storage, while also incorporating home-office spaces.



**KITCHEN (opposite left)** Ali and her girls enjoy a moment in the sun-filled kitchen. **ENTRY (opposite right)** Beach-ready hats and bags greet the family and guests at the door. The built-in bench is a handy spot for putting on shoes. **EXTERIOR** Ali and Michael wanted the home to look and feel like it had been there all along.



Working in styling and set design, Ali saw the value in having a house that is “photoshoot friendly”, enabling them to hire the property out for filming and shoots. The beautiful surrounds and close proximity to the beach and local village also made it a prime candidate for holiday letting, so she designed the house to run as a functional luxury holiday home, incorporating multiple wardrobes and lockable storage into the build.

Catering to the needs of a large family, the home has three separate living areas, one in the open-plan family zone, one for teenagers at the front of the house and a third in the parents’ retreat upstairs. All bedrooms have access to their own bathroom and are designed with a luxe holiday feeling in mind. It was important that the house managed all of these needs while also offering an effortless feeling of space and flow, which is where Ali’s minimalist approach to interiors comes into play, punctuated by warm and welcoming accents.

The hero of the home is the expansive kitchen where the family spends most of their time. Ali opted for an enormous custom timber dining table instead of the usual kitchen island. “I wanted it to become the hub of the house, like the farmhouse kitchen tables I grew up with in England,” says Ali. “A place where the family is together, be it doing homework, working on their laptop, reading the paper, having a cup of tea or eating.”

Large sliding doors were installed to celebrate the Sydney climate and completely open up the living spaces to the pool and backyard. “Light was a major factor in the design. The backyard faces north, so the main living area, which opens onto the garden, embraces this by allowing in the winter light and subtly tempering the mid-summer sun,” says Ali.

Having learnt many things from one another over the course of the building process, it’s clear that this collaboration was a successful one. “Michael has taught me many practical aspects and the language of building beyond the realms of set design. I’ve been able to develop a broader understanding of how things are built firsthand, which makes you a far better designer,” says Ali. In return, Michael admits he has been given a greater appreciation for design and its importance to the overall aesthetic and feel of a house.

“If I had to single out my favourite part of the house, and it’s totally unexpected, it would be the outside shower,” says Ali. “After having a swim, standing under the hot water looking over the pool and into the garden, it is one of my favourite vistas. It’s a good place for thinking and despite all the hard work we did, I feel very blessed that I can enjoy such a luxury.” **LO**

Rent this home at [aperfectstay.com.au/properties/coonanga-beachhouse](https://aperfectstay.com.au/properties/coonanga-beachhouse). Reach Ali at [aligriffiths.com](https://aligriffiths.com) and Michael at [beukersbuilding.com](https://beukersbuilding.com).



**DINING AREA** Glazed stacker doors open up this space to the garden and pool. White walls throughout in Dulux Lexicon Quarter create a clean, calming mood. Classic Eames 'DAW' dining chairs provide soft curves. **LIVING AREA (opposite)** The large Muuto 'Under The Bell' pendant light adds texture and softness above a cosy MCM House sofa. The sleek GlobeWest coffee table is complemented by a pair of Mark Tuckey timber side tables.



### star performer

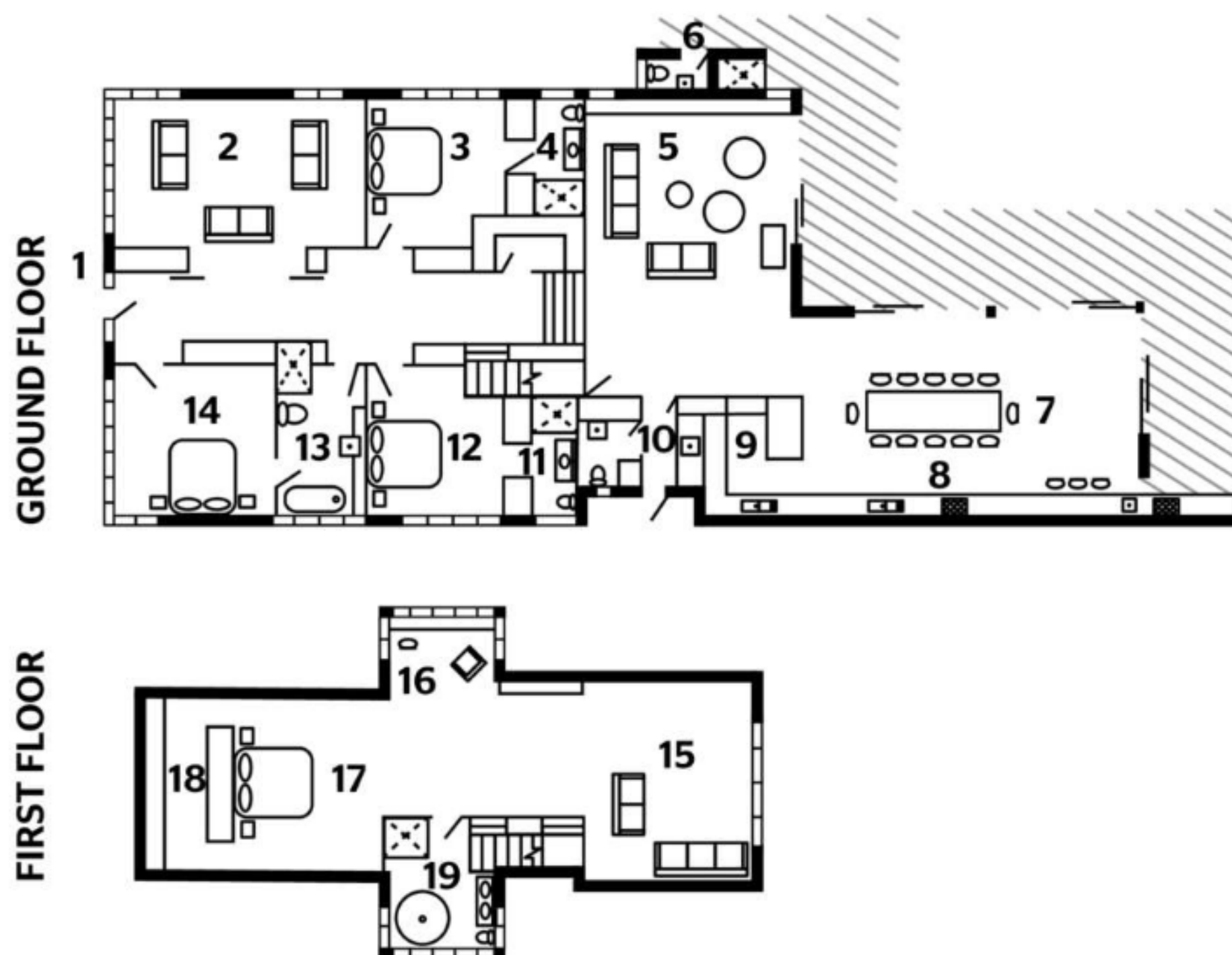
Selecting one or two oversized elements not only fills the space, but also provides a sense of luxury. The huge FontanaArte 'Amax' suspension lights from Gineico Interiors and large table mark this as the heart of the home.





**ENSUITE (left)** The circular Agape 'In-Out' bath from Artedomus gives this grown-up retreat a luxe edge.

**OUTDOOR LIVING AREA (below)** This slimline outdoor setting creates a breezy breakfast spot. **MASTER BEDROOM (opposite)** A four-poster bed from a previous Incy Interiors X Megan Morton collaboration commands the space. An IKEA 'Stockholm' coffee table is used as a bench, while the Beachwood mirror adds texture.



- 1. Entry
- 2. Sitting area
- 3. Bedroom
- 4. Ensuite
- 5. Living area
- 6. Bathroom
- 7. Dining area
- 8. Kitchen
- 9. Butler's pantry
- 10. Laundry/powder room
- 11. Ensuite
- 12. Bedroom
- 13. Bathroom
- 14. Bedroom
- 15. Parents' retreat
- 16. Study area
- 17. Master bedroom
- 18. Walk-in robe
- 19. Ensuite

TAPWARE, ASTRA WALKER, ASTRAWALKER.COM.AU. TILES, ARTEDOMUS, ARTEDOMUS.COM. TIMBER STOOL, MARK TUCKEY, MARKTUCKEY.COM.AU. 'MIAMI' OUTDOOR PENDANT LIGHT, GINEICO INTERIORS, GINEICOINTERIORS.COM. COFFEE TABLE, GLOBEWEST, GLOBEWEST.COM.AU. ENGINEERED TIMBER FLOORING IN LARCH BRUSHED WHITE OIL, MAFI, MAFICOM.AU