

LESS IS SO

much more

Noela Coffey of Department of Interiors, trading as Mageia Design, has created a classic and opulent interior design that combines the tradition of the past with modern-day elegance.

Story by Susannah Hardy
Photography by Tony Potter
Styling by Kirstin Randl-Katalinic





Noela added custom-made cushions, rug and coffee table to the owners' sofa to create a cosy yet stylish casual living area.



A picture in a magazine of one of Noela Coffey's many beautiful interior designs convinced the owners of this fabulous home that she was the designer for the job. Looking to build in Drummoyne in Sydney's inner west, the couple wanted a classic interior with plenty of older-style charm and glamour. Their previous Baroque-style home was highly ornate and traditional and while they were starting over, they still wanted to retain this flavour. So Noela, who was involved in the project from the ground up, took this onboard, incorporating the sumptuousness and tradition of the past, while pulling back for a more minimal and elegant finish. As a result, the interior design is magnificent right through with unique features and custom-made furniture, creating an impressive home that is truly one of a kind.

STARTING POINT

While ornate and traditional in style, the layout of this four-bedroom home built over three levels has a sense of modern day openness. The top floor is the entrance level with formal lounge and dining, family living and open-plan kitchen. And while there is some separation with intricate paneling, wide detailed skirtings and elaborate columns –

TOP: The formal dining area features an elegant combination of custom-made table, chairs and artwork – together with two commodes from the owners' previous home.

LEFT: The entrance to the home sets a tone of elegance with a console custom designed and made by Noela through the Coffey Collection and a chandelier sourced from Spain. The large mirror, also designed by Noela, is actually made of plaster, stuck to the wall and then painted over – a handy tip to help solve the problem of hanging heavy mirrors.



With classic-style wall paneling, full-length drapes, custom-made furniture pieces and spectacular light fittings, the formal lounge has an air of refined elegance.



all designed by Noela – the space flows easily right through. The casual living area opens up onto a balcony tiled with travertine that captures the view over Canada Bay. To create a neutral backdrop, Noela chose Dulux Shoji White for the walls throughout, a colour she had custom mixed. “It’s not one of their standards; Shoji White is one of their exteriors and I had it mixed for the interior,” says Noela. “Most whites which are shades all throw a certain pigment of colour – some throw yellow which makes them more cream, some with a pink tinge and some with a grey. I wanted a warm white but without the colour. I wanted a totally neutral canvas.” While varying gloss levels of the Dulux Shoji White highlight the trim, cornices and ceiling roses, beautiful wallpaper offers another slight variation. “In the formal areas, in the panels in the walls, I have wallpaper from Verve Wallpapers, which is quite soft and white and brings in the Shoji,” says Noela. For another unique touch of classic detail, hand-painted medallions have been added to the corners of the paneling by one of Noela’s own artists. Floors feature a highly polished marble-look tile, dressed with stunning rugs custom designed through Mageia Design and made by Designer Rugs. Overall, the backdrop is soft and classic and while detail is highly ornate and intricate, there is a subtlety that sets a tone of contemporary elegance.

CUSTOM BUILT

Noela has all her furnishings custom made so every piece is specifically created for the owner. “I don’t actually shop retail,” she says. “I always find it too difficult to find the right size or the right fabric; I just have them all custom.” This includes most pieces such as the console in the foyer, the coffee tables and the formal dining table, which are all custom made and available through the Coffey Collection. Noela also designed the many rugs, inspired by the beautiful selection of Verve upholstery fabrics thus creating a sense of connection and flow. All artwork has been commissioned and painted by Noela’s artists so, again, custom created for each spot. The kitchen, while open with a modern day breakfast bar, features an extraordinary mosaic-tiled

TOP LEFT: The owners’ grandfather clock blends beautifully with the coffee and side tables that are all custom made.

TOP RIGHT: The casual lounge area features classic upholstered armchairs custom made through the Coffey Collection.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Artwork in the family dining area was specifically created by one of Noela’s artists while a smart black and white upholstered chair was also custom made through Noela.





NOELA'S TOP DECORATING TIPS

- Like fashion, which follows the fads and trends, home decor rides the waves of upcoming styles. But unlike fashion, furniture and furnishings cannot be so easily disposed of any time a new shift in decor occurs.
- Once the line of design is established in a home, it's important that it reflects a balanced and anchored ground, which can be adaptable to emerging and transient moods.
- Working with a neutral palette allows this certain balance – volatile enough to play with the changes; just by adding new colours, interesting textiles, captivating pieces of artwork and unusual furnishings, the decor can merge in a total different direction.
- 'Less is more' is a method I like to apply when designing as you can always add but not take away. I like to work closely with my clients to develop a style, which will not fade through times.
- I always start from the floor up, like putting on a gorgeous pair of shoes to add to a classic outfit. Accessories come together to give a glamorous finish, and lightings complete the ensemble as a great hat completes an impeccable outfit. A perfect look should have an overall cohesiveness, which makes a final statement.

splashback with a bird pattern, inspired by the owner's love of birds. "It's got real gold in it," says Noela. "The silver is actually a white gold mosaic thrown in randomly for a bit of glitz." The owners also wanted as much light as possible in the kitchen so Noela designed a large skylight with patterned glass made in a faux leadlight. So while it's a more contemporary feature, it has been custom designed to blend with the overall classical style. Another unique item is the beautifully ornate commode with a curved front in the powder room, again made and designed by Noela. "I had the front of it hand-painted with silver leafing," she says. "I had to source a good cabinet-maker who could actually do curves."

FINDING THE BALANCE

For the owners, moving from their incredibly elaborate and sumptuous baroque-style home to one with a more minimal finish was quite a challenge. For this reason, Noela incorporated a number of their original pieces into the new interior design such as the grandfather clock in the formal lounge, two commodes in the formal dining and an elaborate baroque console and mirror in the master bedroom. "They are the owners' pieces from their home that I thought would work in nicely," she says. And while Noela was more minimal with furnishings, her attention to detail was far from it with beautifully designed ceilings, wall paneling, chair rails and over-sized skirtings. Equally glamorous are the magnificent columns between the formal

TOP: The open-plan provincial-style kitchen and casual dining area feature beautiful dining chairs and bar stools all custom made and available through the Coffey Collection.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A skylight designed by Noela Coffey and built by Stained Glass Overlay adds a touch of classic tradition while allowing in plenty of natural light.





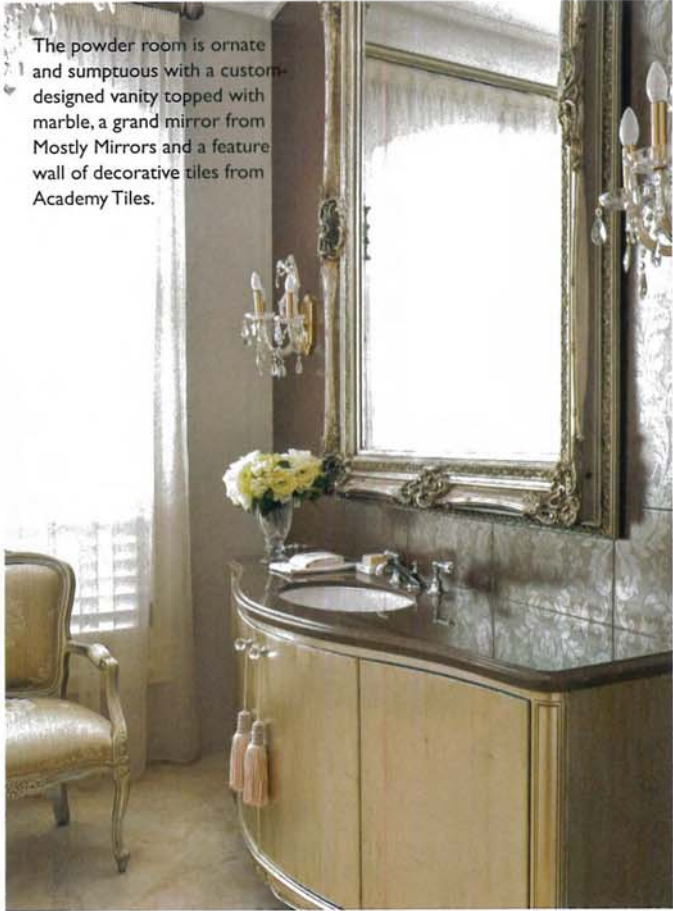
dining and the family lounge. "I had them silver-gilded top and bottom and then had them faux-marbled," says Noela. With such ornate and opulent surrounds, furniture pieces could be kept to a minimum with one or two carefully designed items to complete the picture. With a healthy compromise between heavily ornate and elegantly minimal, the result is a chic and truly satisfying one.

The home took three years to complete and the owners are thrilled with the result. Noela had previously designed their son's house, which was a completely different look so initially they did not consider her. "The owner then saw a job of mine in Burwood Heights in a magazine and really liked it," says Noela. "That's when she rang me and said that she didn't realise I did classical." Noela, who doesn't really have a set style, says that for her it's about doing what the owner wants. "Each one of my jobs is always totally different, I don't suppose I have a signature as such," she says. "I feel it's about making the client happy, bringing their vision to fruition." These owners are now very happy with their beautiful home that is like no other. "That's the difference for me between doing it yourself and having a designer tweaking it that little bit," says Noela. "You get something that no one else has." ■

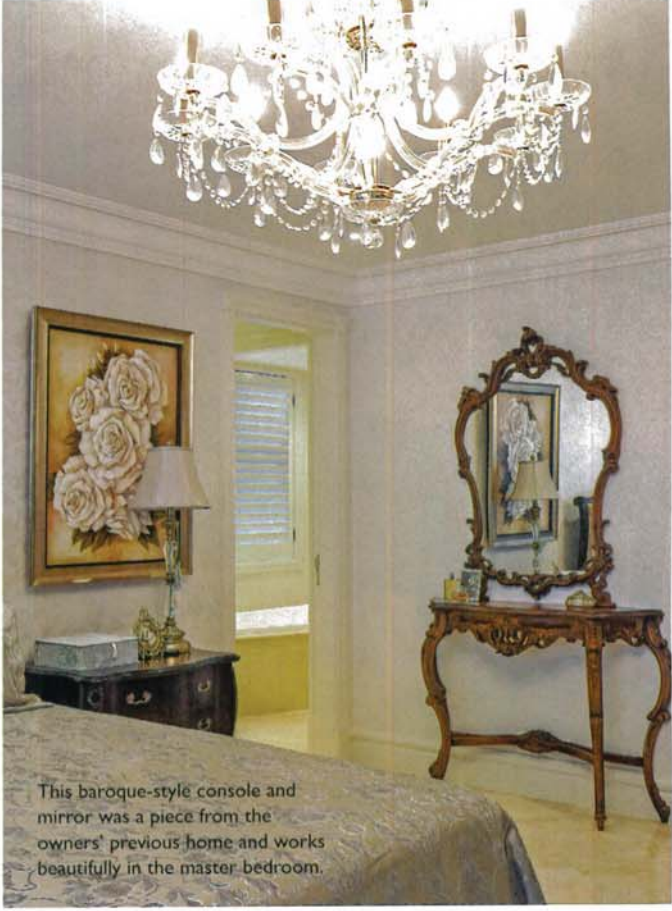
www.mageiadesign.com.au, www.coffeycollection.com.au

TOP: The master bedroom is exquisite with a bedhead, bedside tables and dressing table all custom made through the Coffey Collection, together with elegant bedding chosen by the owner.

LEFT: Noela had great trouble having a curved vanity custom made as these days everything has straight edges but luckily found an old Italian cabinetmaker who was up for the job.



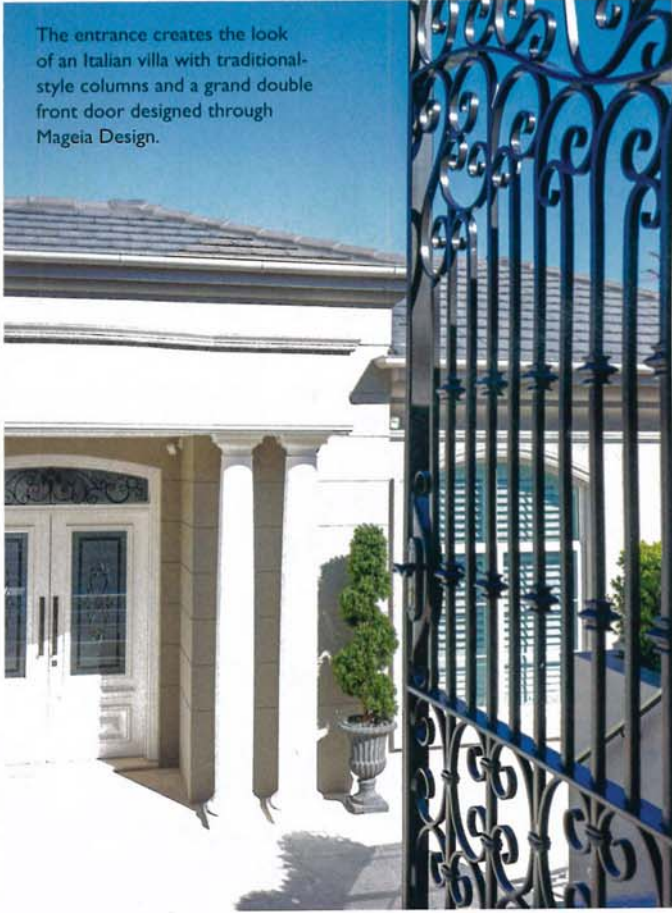
The powder room is ornate and sumptuous with a custom-designed vanity topped with marble, a grand mirror from Mostly Mirrors and a feature wall of decorative tiles from Academy Tiles.



This baroque-style console and mirror was a piece from the owners' previous home and works beautifully in the master bedroom.



The outdoor balcony overlooking Canada Bay features smart travertine tiles and a stylish selection of outdoor furniture chosen by the owner.



The entrance creates the look of an Italian villa with traditional-style columns and a grand double front door designed through Mageia Design.