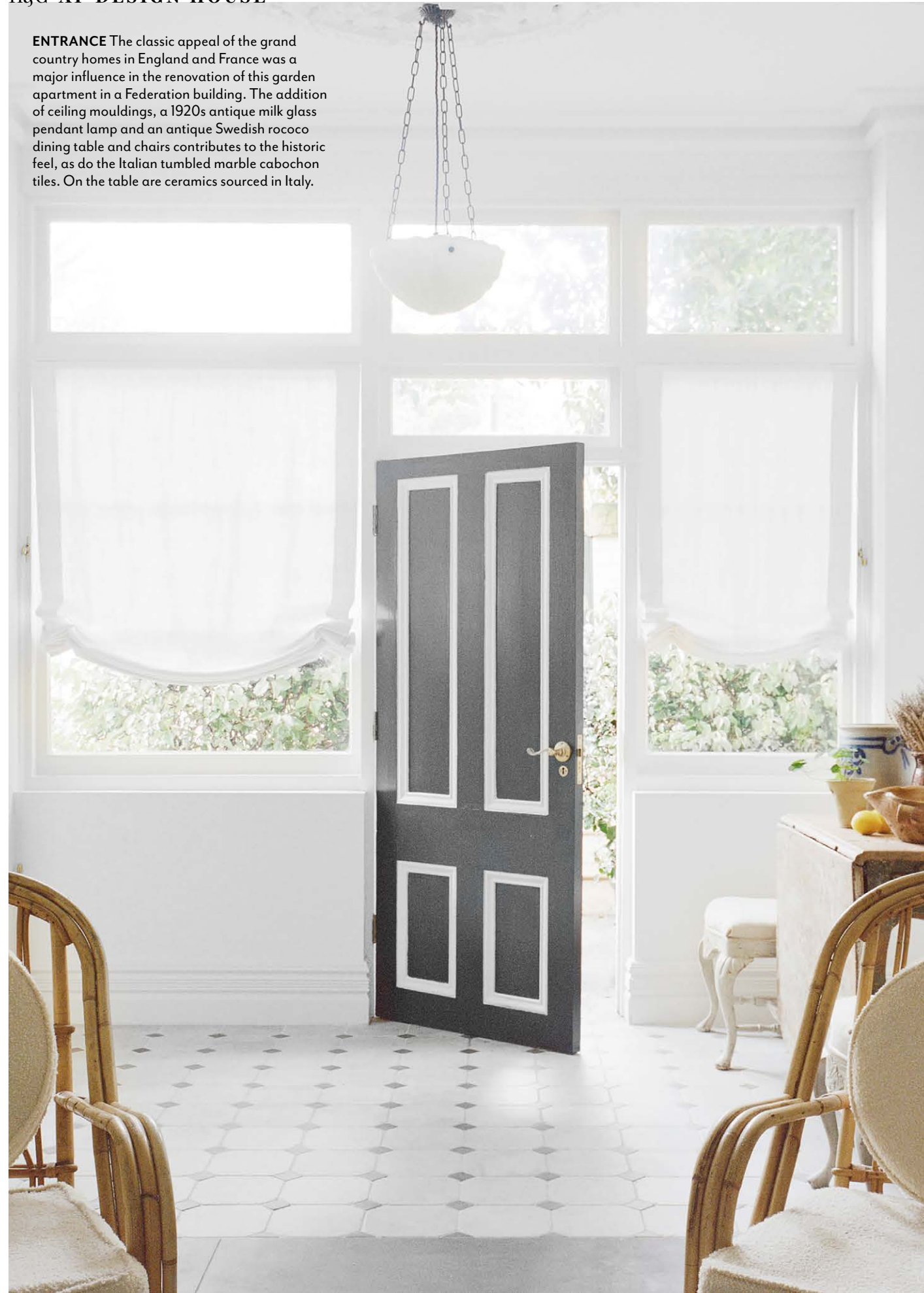


**ENTRANCE** The classic appeal of the grand country homes in England and France was a major influence in the renovation of this garden apartment in a Federation building. The addition of ceiling mouldings, a 1920s antique milk glass pendant lamp and an antique Swedish rococo dining table and chairs contributes to the historic feel, as do the Italian tumbled marble cabochon tiles. On the table are ceramics sourced in Italy.



## ALMOST FRENCH

*Light-enhancing* approaches and *CAREFULLY* sourced European furnishings have created a *classically BEAUTIFUL* space that's *PERFECT* for social gatherings.

STORY *Sue Ramsey* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Rory Gardiner*



**KITCHEN *design notes***

**JOINERY** Custom hand-painted timber joinery with panel and beading detail, Space Joinery.

**BENCHTOPS & SPLASHBACK** Honed Carrara marble, Made in Stone. Cooker splashback in Italian tumbled Carrara marble square tiles, sourced in Italy.

**FLOORING** Italian tumbled marble cabochon tiles. For similar tiles, visit Aeria Country Floors.

**TAPWARE** Perrin & Rowe crosshead mixer in Aged Brass, The English Tapware Company.

**SINK** Blanco undermount stainless steel sink, Winning Appliances.

**APPLIANCES** Lacanche 'Cormatin' stainless steel cooker with brass hardware, Manorhouse. Integrated Westinghouse rangehood.

**PAINT** Dulux Vivid White.

**"I ADORE HAVING A BEAUTIFULLY NATURAL SPACE - IT REALLY GROUNDS ME."** *Zoë, owner*



**KITCHEN** Custom French doors open to the garden and are swathed in balloon roman blinds, which add a romantic touch. "The kitchen feels really grand - large and open plan but in keeping with the building," says interior designer Alexandra Ponting. French copper and brass cookware. Ceramics from Puglia. Antique mirror, owner's existing.





**“MY BRIEF TO AP DESIGN HOUSE WAS TO MAKE THE SPACE CHARMING, ELEGANT, ORIGINAL AND TIMELESS.” Zoë, owner**



*Beautiful as they* are, Federation homes can tend to be on the dark side, so introducing more light into a property can be transformative. This was a priority for Sydney lawyer Zoë when it came to renovating her Federation home on the city’s Lower North Shore. “The apartment needed to be light and elegant to match the charm of the building,” she says of the garden flat she shares with her two poodles, Twiggy and Beanie. An essence of the nearby harbour was also a must and the materials used needed to be natural and authentic.

To realise her vision, Zoë engaged designer Alexandra Ponting from AP Design House, whose work she had been following for several years. “Zoë wanted to increase the overall footprint to allow for more interior space, multiple entertaining areas, a greater influx of natural light and a better flow between spaces, with a strong connection from indoors to outdoors,” explains Alexandra.

It was also important to Zoë that the original character of the home was retained. “My brief to AP Design House was to make the space charming,

elegant, original and timeless, as well as being congruous with the foundations and original design of the building,” she says.

Being a keen entertainer, the kitchen and dining areas were a particular focus. “A kitchen was added to the building and it had to look like it had always been there, with French doors out to a courtyard for alfresco dining,” Zoë adds.

A development application enabled the existing kitchen to be turned into a second bedroom and a new, more accessible kitchen added that would sympathetically merge with the original architecture. “The DA took a while with council approval, but the design process and build timeline were swift,” says Zoë, who estimates the job took around nine months from planning to completion. “While there were some challenges, working with Alexandra and her team really helped,” she adds. “Their experience, creativity and willingness to mull over ideas and problems was a godsend!”

The addition of ceiling mouldings, as well as European-influenced decor and furnishings, were ►

**LOUNGE** Antique and new furniture combine to create a classic look. Custom sofa by AP Design House upholstered in Belgian linen. Hand-woven raffia cushions. Audoux Minet rattan chair with original upholstery, sourced in Paris. Glass coffee table and vintage side table, Tamsin Johnson. Vintage wool and linen rug, glass pendant and Murano glass wall sconce, sourced overseas. Daphne Terra floor lamp, Lumina. *The table set* artwork by Guy Brunet, The Vault Sydney. **ENTRY** Balloon roman blinds were custom made in Ivory Belgian linen. **KITCHEN** An elliptical arch and corbels were new additions. Copper pots and pans add a French farmhouse feel. **THOROUGHFARE** Australian antique Bentwood wall mount hat rack. Owner’s existing artwork by unknown artist.



all part of the grand plan. “Zoë has an affinity for the classic appeal of grand country English and French homes, and we sought to create a sense of that here,” says Alexandra. “She’s a very elegant woman who grew up in an historic homestead and who appreciates that aesthetic.”

Many of the materials and furnishings, including the antique Swedish rococo dining table and chairs and the Italian tiles and ceramics, were sourced on one of Alexandra’s buying trips. “I try to go to Europe twice a year and we bring back containers of items with jobs in mind,” she says. “We have a lot of dealers over there for tiles, fireplaces and old reclaimed salvage items, and our clients will see what we’re looking at while we’re over there.”

And it’s those efforts that have culminated in the atmospheric looks that Zoë was seeking. “I love that wherever you cast your gaze in the apartment, you see details that could constitute a beautiful photograph or painting, given the varied combinations of the beautiful and unique antique and custom-made furniture, joinery, lighting, plasterwork and palette,” she says. “I adore having a beautifully natural space – it really grounds me. It is also now an entertainer’s delight, which I am very proud of.” H&G

*Design and building team* Interior designer AP Design House; apdesignhouse.com.au. *Builder* Interlock Construction, interlockconstruction.co.



**LOUNGE** An arrangement of hats is a nod to Zoë’s childhood, growing up in an old homestead in the NSW Northern Tablelands. “They add charm and warmth to the otherwise very elegant foundations of the home,” says Alexandra. John Firth-Smith original painting sourced at auction. Antique timber side table, owner’s existing. French glass ashtray and abstract sculpture on coffee table, Tamsin Johnson.