

*A fashionable*  
**LIFE**

*Edited by*  
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*Photographed by*  
ANSON SMART

*Miranda Darling and*  
*Nick Tobias outside*  
*their Bondi home.*

THE HOUSE THAT *MIRANDA & NICK* BUILT

STYLED BY MELISSA BOYLE. MIRANDA WEARS GUCCI TOP, \$2030, AND SKIRT, \$1785; ACNE SHOES, \$580; HER OWN JEWELLERY (WORN THROUGHOUT). NICK WEARS TRENER SHIRT, \$145; M.J. BALE PANTS, \$150; ERMENEGLIO ZEGNA SHOES, \$1295

# A fashionable LIFE

The concept behind this urban beachside family home was a collab between author and artist

MIRANDA DARLING and her husband, architect NICK TOBIAS.

Let's call it Miranda x Nick.

By ELIZA O'HARE



In the living area, featuring a photograph by Shaun Gladwell, with Dado the dog. Miranda wears Vilshenko blouse, \$995; Céline skirt, \$1495, both from Parlour X; her own Chanel shoes. Nick wears A.P.C. jumper, \$235, from Incu; M.J. Bale pants, \$130; his own shoes.

Styled by MELISSA BOYLE

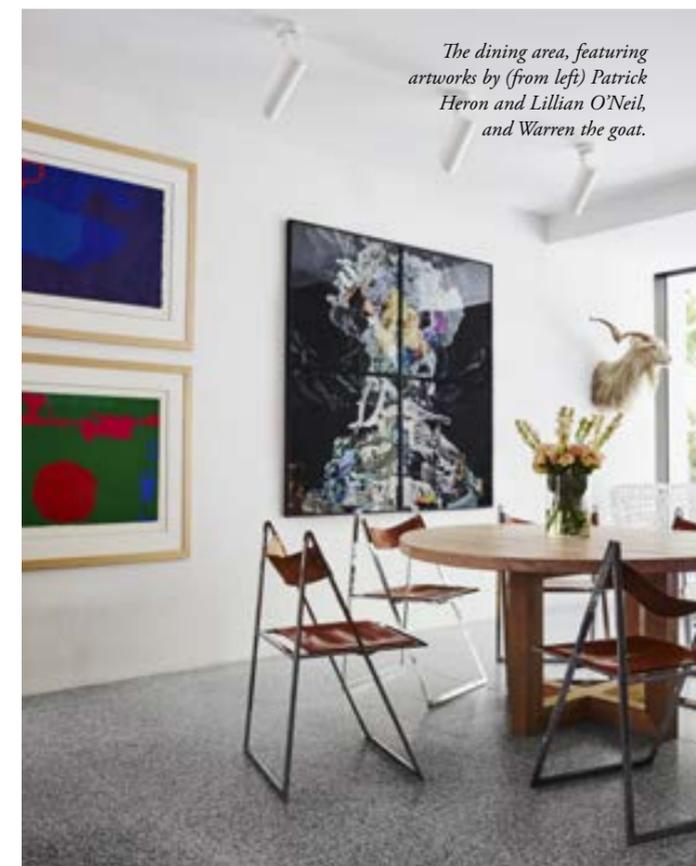


The kitchen overlooks the sunny courtyard. Miranda wears Gucci top, \$2030, and skirt, \$1785; Acne shoes, \$580. Nick wears Trenery shirt, \$145; M.J. Bale pants, \$130.

THE TOBIAS FAMILY has just returned from subzero temperatures skiing in Telluride and Jackson Hole, USA, to a sweltering 40-degree Sydney day. Bags overflowing with ski gear and little boys' shoes sit in the hallway as author and artist Miranda Darling gets her head around regrouping, repacking and diving straight back out again. She has a deadline with her publisher in three days and is flying to Paris to do more research for her new book.

Before she leaves, she shows *BAZAAR* around her and her husband, architect Nick Tobias's, newest project: a complete renovation and rebirth of a severe but solid, vaguely modernist '80s structure overlooking Bondi Beach. The Tobias house is a beach house that is not a beach-y house. It's maybe even a little anti-beach: a respite from the sun, glare, wind and wild weather of oceanside living, with a deliberately calm interior of lovely soft plush piles and cool, clean terrazzo floors, serene pink hues, and various nooks and snugs in which to read and meditate. The original shell was ugly but well constructed, which meant they were able to retain it, gutting everything inside to start afresh. The renovation was a (relatively) fast process; it took just one year from exchanging contracts to moving in, and decisions were fast and intuitive.

"Doing this house was such a deeply collaborative process. There was constant discussion and questions and ideas over dinner, lying in bed, waking up in the middle of the night with a thought," Nick says. "This home is a curated manifestation of my and Miranda's lives, including all sorts of influences. It's a life created together that goes back as far as our parents and grandparents and what they collected and where they lived. For instance, the terrazzo floors often seen in northern Italian and Swiss buildings influenced us from Miranda's heritage [her mother is Swiss], but also turned out to be a perfect finish for an urban beach house," he continues. "It's a work in progress that has been evolving since we got married — and this house is just a snapshot of that timeline. We had ▶



The dining area, featuring artworks by (from left) Patrick Heron and Lillian O'Neil, and Warren the goat.



The terrace overlooking Bondi Beach. Above: the reading room, which doubles as a guest room.



an apartment, then a house, we did a small reno, a large reno, we built a house in the country, and through all experiences you are developing that brief continuously.”

The interior of this home may be new, but the furniture was transferred from their last house, which was almost completely opposite in style: a sprawling Spanish mission-style bungalow with a tropical-colonial feel. Amazingly, it works. A taxidermied Scottish cashmere goat known as Warren was moved from his previous home, a nook surrounded by dark wood panelling, to his new home, suspended on a light-splashed white wall with views of the pool, and works perfectly. Who knew he was so versatile? “It’s like transferring our DNA over, instead of starting from scratch. All of our things are infused with history of their own,” Nick says.

Miranda’s study sits off her and Nick’s bedroom at the front of the house, with a spectacular view right down the barrel of Bondi Beach. There are books everywhere — she is at work right now on her latest, under the aegis of her production company, Vanishing Pictures, and a New York publisher. “It’s a collaboration with my friend and colleague [the art consultant] Viola Raikhel-Bolot — an art book about the extraordinary collection of western modern and contemporary art acquired by the former Empress of Iran, Farah Diba Pahlavi,” she says. “It is the best collection of such art outside Europe and America, and it has been largely lost from view since the revolution in 1979. It currently lives locked up in the basement of the museum she purpose built for the art, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.”

The study is a sanctuary, with a wall full of research and features clippings, and bespoke shelving to hold her library of reference material on Iran in the ’70s. The workspace was created with her process in mind. “I wanted to be able to look out onto some action,” she says. “I often work at home alone and want to feel connected to the world. I needed a nice long space to lay out all my papers, bookshelves and a cork board to pin up my storylines. There’s a lot of black and brass to give a bit of weight to the space. I wanted it to be a little more traditional and focused.”

When she’s not writing, Miranda adopts a low-key Bondi-mum uniform for her day-to-day with sons Samson, nine, and Griffin, seven, which consists of a pair of Rolla’s cut-off denim shorts, a favourite Xirena oversized black cotton shirt (“I want one in every colour!”), a pair of Spanish soft leather slingback flats and a big old vintage hat. “I like to dress like a 1930s Egyptologist on a dig,” Miranda says. “If I walk anywhere, I like to wear desert boots — I probably look like a male character in an Agatha Christie novel.” When it comes to gallery openings and other events, the vibe flips and Miranda morphs into a self-described rock’n’roll granny. “I like silk, tweed, wool, velvet — traditional fabrics — and then I add metallic shoes and *waaaay* too many pearls.”

Miranda’s grandmother left her a bunch of Chanel jackets (that fit!), which form the foundation of her wardrobe. “I’m not a big shopper, but I do keep things forever,” she says. One perennial is a pair of Russian naval trousers, fabulous high-waisted flares discovered in an army surplus store on New York’s Canal Street in 1999. “I am secretly obsessed with uniforms. And these pants just last forever. I may have rehemmed them once in all that time. They are amazing winter trousers with a sturdy boot, skinny turtleneck and pearls.”

It’s really pearls that are Miranda’s thing, signature accessories that never come off — except to be restrung once a year or so. “My grandmother was a great pearl aficionado and gave me my first string when I was a child — I just started there,” Miranda says. “They are beautiful toys you can wear casually very easily. And I love that they are formed in the sea from irritation and grow into the greatest treasure.” Miranda’s pearl collection is, literally, a gift. “I’ve never actually bought any pearls — I’ve inherited them from my grandmother and great-grandmother, and Nick gave me the most gorgeous Tiffany & Co. strand for our 10-year anniversary.” A single pearl on a gold chain by local ▶

Miranda, in front of a Hiromi Tango photograph in the living area, wears Karen Walker jumper, \$325; Romance Was Born skirt, price on application; Chanel shoes, \$1060.



“What astounds me is FOR THE RIGHT PIECE WE ALWAYS SAY YES! AT THE SAME TIME. We come from very different places, but when it’s yes, it’s yes.”



Nick and Dado outside the family home.

designer Lucy Folk has joined the daily rotation, along with an 'M' pendant from her brother, a Christmas present. "I'm working on being able to create a pearl bib. I can already pull out a lot of pearlage if necessary," Miranda says.

In the second-floor lounge room, where a strategically placed fireplace makes it possible to collapse in front of the fire while you check out the surf, a three-metre-wide Fiona Lowry work, *Anything You See in Me is in You*, dominates one wall. "It's one of the first big artworks we ever bought," Nick says of the painting by the 2014 Archibald winner, "and [art has] become a great shared passion. The artworks are a story about our life together. Sometimes Miranda brings things to the table, sometimes I bring things. What astounds me is for the right piece we always say 'yes!' at the same time. We come from very different places, but when it's yes, it's yes."

Miranda and Nick's collection spans contemporary photography, large-scale paintings, video installation works and everything in between. "The collection has been an organic, intuitive process and hasn't been strategic, but there are particular themes," Nick explains. "Nearly all the work is figurative, it's diverse and eclectic, and there is a darkness and grittiness in each piece." Indigenous artworks and tribal artefacts from Miranda's father's time in Papua New Guinea with the army contrast with modern pieces. Editions of *ArtReview* stacked on a marble side table and books on Tracey Moffatt, Constantin Brâncuși, Ryan McGinley, Louise Bourgeois and Wang Zhiyuan show a dedication to research.

While the house is just a block from the beach, surprisingly, there is a strong Swiss ski-chalet vibe going on, which speaks to Miranda's family roots. The street-level garage, bursting with mountain bikes, skateboards, scooters, surfboards and skis, feels like an alpine drying room. There's even a mini sauna. ("It's a *bijou* sauna!" Miranda exclaims, laughing.) Plus a wall of chic photographs of family members skiing Europe and America in incredible 1970s outfits. Nick is quick to nominate the space as a bit of a man cave for himself and the boys, but is quickly shot down by Miranda: "It is *not* a man cave, because I sauna there!"

The whole project is a triumph of style, but at its heart this is still a working family home, most evident in the big, wide, friendly kitchen that spills out onto a sun-dappled courtyard and mosaic-tiled plunge pool. My favourite inclusion is the open butler's pantry painted in a pale blue, which holds vintage china and cutlery, antique glassware and handwoven straw shopping bags. At one end of the kitchen island are shelves containing stacks of the boys' morning reading materials, so they can browse over breakfast, a habit Miranda is actively encouraging with a collection of *Garfield* books, detective stories and every tale of gruesome death she can get her hands on. There's a cork board in the dining room overlapping with the kids' drawings, family photos, international currency, business cards, photo-booth pictures and clippings of Lou Reed, Mick Jagger and Debbie Harry. It's a snapshot of the lovely, eclectic chaos of family life. And it's here that Miranda pins her cartoon-style watercolours, which chronicle her life and mind at any given moment: from a satirical portrait of bikini-clad Bondi yogis to Biggie Smalls, new food obsessions and fortune cookies. "It's just whatever is going on at the time," she says.

Kitchen utensils and pans share space with Miranda's ceramic art. She shows off the fruits of her local pottery class while handing over a bowl of crispy activated pepitas she has soaked and baked overnight. Her pinch-pot ceramic 'tooth pig' (a pig-shaped toothpick holder) sits next to the copper pans, and a handcrafted unicorn holds sage by the stovetop. "When you do so much with your mind, it's great to be able to do something with your hands," Miranda says.

After visiting the house and talking through the process, you know it's really more of a lifelong partnership than a collaboration. "I'm strong on space and detail, and Miranda is very good on vibe," Nick concludes. "She creates worlds in her mind constantly, and they manifest in all of her creative outputs, and this was no different — a different output delegated to me to execute." ■

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY ALLISON BOYLE AT THE ARTIST GROUP. PRICES APPROXIMATE. SEE BUYLINES FOR STOCKISTS



Clockwise from top left: the spacious wardrobe; beach views from the master bedroom; marble walls in the bathroom; an artwork by Daniel Boyd in the living area.



"When you do so much with  
YOUR MIND, it's great to be  
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Miranda, in the craft room, wears Stella McCartney dress, \$1695, from Harrolds; Christian Louboutin shoes, \$945.

