GOING FOR BAROQUE

Designer Greg Natale followed his clients' brief to the letter in his lavish and ornate makeover of this 1940s house in Sydney.

PHOTOGRAPHS **ANSON SMART** PRODUCTION + WORDS **MEGAN MORTON**

f you played a game of match the house to its owner, it's unlikely you'd put this deliberately playful abode against the 'builder' option. While at first glance it's an improbable match, Sydney designer Greg Natale admits his client, master builder Vince Ciolino "is one of the few builders who has the utmost respect for design". Plus Vince has the added bonus of bringing impeccable workmanship to the project.

Vince's company Ciolino Constructions had worked with Greg Natale Design on four large residential projects in the past. But it was the short but succinct brief Vince's wife Melissa gave Greg that sealed the deal. "Strong and pretty" was what she asked for, "and that really struck a chord with me". "I wanted a warm home, erring on feminine," Melissa says, "Nothing too cold or impersonal – it's a family home after all, where two kids run around!"

Melissa and Greg started collaborating soon after the ink had dried on the contract for the redbrick 1940s freestanding home in Sydney's southern suburbs, agreeing to phase the renovation over three easy stages. With Max, six, and Sal, three, to accommodate as well as a lot of furniture to incorporate from the couple's previous apartment, Greg had a challenge. His starting point was an unlikely source. "A Susan O'Doherty painting that had hung in the last apartment had to be included in the new scheme," Greg explains. "I had not really liked it in their previous place but once it was out of there, I had a new appreciation of it. I kept coming back to it and found it had a beauty I'd not noticed before. I decided to base my colour palette around it and as soon as I had done that, it was like the floodgates had opened!"