

transform

BECAUSE EVERY HOUSE CAN BE A BEAUTIFUL HOME

triple treat

Slick and stylish – the latest project from Sydney makeover queens Three Birds Renovations proves they practise what they preach. This staircase and alcove alone is a feast of clever ideas and chic accessories – from the Scyon 'Stria' shiplap wall cladding that also forms a bench seat to the cushions and throw (all from Adairs), Oz Design Furniture stool and About Space wall sconce. >

{TRANSFORM}

RENOVATION EXPERTS:

Birds OF A FEATHER

THREE SYDNEY WOMEN POOL THEIR NOTABLE
SKILLS AND CARVE A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS OUT
OF SUPER-STYLISH PROPERTY RENOVATIONS

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Would-be renovators could take a lesson from Erin Cayless, Bonnie Hindmarsh and Lana Taylor – aka Three Birds Renovations. These Sydneysiders, with nary a building qualification or decorating degree between them, completed their latest whole home makeover in just six weeks – and that’s par for the course.

This light-filled, two-storey, four-bedroom brick-and-weatherboard home with a Hamptons vibe is their fourth project in the last two years. It is also completely unrecognisable from its dark and dingy former self.

True, for the women, the renovating process is now a tried-and-tested one, and they have gathered around them a trusted team of builders and tradies. But for their first project, they found the right people the way anyone would – through word-of-mouth, local advertising, Yellow Pages – and if there’s a ‘formula’, it has been learned along the way.

Of the three, only Bonnie had renovating experience, and that was largely by osmosis. “Her parents were always renovating,” says Lana. “She never lived in a home with a beautiful kitchen. Once the kitchen was beautiful, they’d sell it and move on!”

Bonnie and Erin have been friends since they were teenagers and Lana met them in 2002 through their now-husbands. Fast-forward 14 years, three weddings and nine children. “Bonnie rang me one day and said, ‘Do you want to style houses with Erin and I?’” recalls Lana. The trio got together and, after much discussion, decided to try and buy a home, completely do it up and sell it on.

They have had strict demarcation lines from the get-go, with each of the women playing to their strengths. “Erin runs the reno and gets the tradies here on time – she’s the one who gets it done in six weeks,” explains Lana. “I’m the business, marketing, sponsorship and media side. Bonnie is our creative director, and we’ve fallen in love with the style she has brought to the company – that fresh, modern, coastal look.”

Since their first renovation, picking up a paintbrush themselves – or drafting in their husbands to help – is not their preferred option. That was a business decision. “We realised it’s sometimes more effective to get in a professional,” says Lana. “It might cost a bit more, but it’s done in a day and that’s more important for us than dragging it on for months.”

The trio’s approach is slick, professional and successful, yet their focus isn’t just the bottom line. They appreciate what they do, what they achieve, and are happy to share it. “When we did our first house, we had no idea how beautiful it would turn out,” says Lana. “We decided then that we weren’t prepared to sacrifice beauty for profit, so our focus is making savvy design choices that can deliver beauty on a budget. And like all dedicated renovators, there is always another project looming. “I can’t wait to do the next one!” says Bonnie. “You do one, then you get over it and are like, ‘When can I move onto the next one?’” Visit threebirdsrenovations.com.



“THE KEY IS IN THE *planning*. WE USE EVERY DAY OF OUR SETTLEMENT PHASE BY *enlisting tradies*, DOING PLANS AND ORGANISING” ~ ERIN

GOOD ADVICE Erin, Bonnie and Lana (above left, from left) made relatively straightforward building changes to give this house in Sydney’s north-west a new lease of life, all within the original footprint, in just six weeks. “It was mostly about bringing the house back to life and creating some really nice open spaces,” says Bonnie.

FRONT VERANDAH A mess of overgrown shrubs was cleared away to make room for a not-quite-picket fence that makes a super-neat entry via French doors to this revitalised two-storey home (above right). Reefstone 800mm x 400mm concrete stepping stones from Amber Tiles were laid into the lawn and, along with simple plantings and tidily mulched beds, give the entry definition. The freestanding hanging chair (for similar, try Domayne’s ‘Rope’ egg chair) and Hamptons At Home bench seat add coastal flair.

SITTING ROOM This neat living space (opposite) overlooks the front verandah and hosts an Ikea sofa (for similar, try their ‘Karlstad’ sofa), rugs from Hamptons At Home, and armchairs and side tables from Oz Design Furniture – their ‘Ivy’ chair is similar and their ‘Flamingo’ side table also has a marble top. The *White Spirit* print from Olive Et Oriel adds interest. >

erin's flip tip

"All the hard work should be done before the reno, so then you can supervise and watch people do their work," she says. "A strict budget is really important, you need to be realistic about what you can afford to spend. If you have grand plans and visions, and you've got \$50,000 to spend and all your quotes come in at \$100,000, you need to adjust your vision, prioritise the changes and reduce your scope of work."



LIVING ROOM Painted in Taubmans' Snow Drop, the living room (above left) is designed to be a grown-up space. There's a bar area at one end and double French doors can close off the room from the adjacent open-plan dining and sitting areas. "We made a conscious choice with this house to have two separate living areas," explains Bonnie. "You can close the French doors, but because of the glass you still feel very connected." Bonnie has decorated the room with a light touch to enhance the sense of space. Furniture sourced from Oz Design Furniture – a 'Felix' 3-seater sofa with timber legs, 'Bramble' chairs with open armrests and 'Bagru' perforated timber coffee and side tables – all contribute to the room's ethereal aesthetic. "We have a very fresh, airy feel in our homes, and that's just what I love in a house," Bonnie says. A rug from Lived In Coogee gives shape to the seating area, while a selection of cushions and a Cactus View print, all from Oz Design Furniture, add subtle colour.

"I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE AS *obsessed* WITH WHITE AS BONNIE, BUT SHE WAS *excited* TO BRING A FEW SHADES OF GREY INTO THIS HOUSE!" ~ LANA

DINING ROOM "It was your traditional 'tiny kitchen, separate dining and lounge' layout," recalls Erin, "and it was carpet in the lounge and lino in the other spaces." What a difference a trip to Bunnings has made. Throughout the airy ground floor, which includes the dining area (right), pale flooring in the shape of Formica 12mm laminate in Whitewash Oak unifies the space and amps up the light factor. The pair of stylish French doors – also sourced from Bunnings – that open out onto the newly extended deck, do the same. "We use these a lot," says Erin. "They're the cheapest way to open up a house and still look beautiful." A timber-topped table and bench, found at Hamptons At Home, is centred beneath Home Design 'Marmo' marble pendants from Bunnings and add warmth and depth.





KITCHEN The Three Birds Renovations team stole space from the former laundry to transform a minute and dark kitchen into this vision of Hamptons-esque loveliness. The existing window gave a view onto the neighbouring house - it was covered over to help deliver a wall of panelled cabinetry by Collective Joinery painted in Taubmans' Script Writer (opposite, top right). The Talostone composite stone surface in Carrara Gioia tops an L-shaped run of base cabinets and wraps around the breakfast bar, with timber-topped 'Tractor' bar stools from Oz Design Furniture providing a textural note. Mercator 'Romy' pendants from Bunnings, 150mm x 150mm splashback tiles from Amber Tiles and matt black tapware from Meir Australia complete the look. "The tiles have a very light grey grout, which gives just enough definition," says Bonnie. >

ENSUITE

The toilet here is screened behind the wall to the left and an open shower is fitted opposite. "An open ensuite is not everyone's cup of tea, but it opened up the space a lot," says Bonnie. "If you're really averse to having an open ensuite, you can obviously put doors in here to cover it up."



erin's flip tip

"Renovating is an exciting challenge but don't go into it thinking it will be easy," she says. "If you are the homeowner and plan to live in the house during a renovation, be prepared for some extra stress. Lana will be renovating soon, and she's moving out!"

MAIN BATHROOM A small upstairs ensuite was ripped out and the room extended by pinching space from an adjacent bedroom, creating a spacious main bathroom (right). The monochrome scheme is repeated, with 'Terra Nero' 250mm x 216mm hexagonal floor tiles and 'Statuario Venato' 300mm x 75mm feature wall tiles, both from Amber Tiles, complementing the same square tiles used in the kitchen splashback. They are a restrained backdrop to the wall-hung 'Monaco' vanity from Renovation D and large freestanding Kado 'Lure' bath and black tapware, both from Reece.



MAIN BEDROOM & ENSUITE The space where the master suite is now (above) was a featureless void until Bonnie got her hands on it. She put up a dwarf wall to both frame the bed and screen the walk-in wardrobe behind. "We clad the wall with Scyon 'Stria' to add a bit of texture to it," she says. Painted in Taubmans' Snow Drop, with a pair of copper sconces from About Space doing duty as bedside lights, the wall – which also showcases Danielle Cross's print *We Are Sole* – is as much of a feature as the open ensuite (opposite). In the spotlight is another 'Monaco' vanity from Renovation D – it is teamed with a matt black mixer from Reece and a metal-framed West Elm circular mirror, and set against a feature panel of Spanish handmade 'Menta' 150mm x 75mm tiles from Amber Tiles. These tiles ensure a rare hit of colour in the palette, which comprises Durastone 50mm x 25mm herringbone floor tiles and 'Statuario' 600mm x 600mm wall tiles, both from Amber Tiles.

"IT'S A MIXTURE OF *spending* MONEY WHEN WE NEED TO, AND SAVING WHERE WE DON'T. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE *balance*" ~ BONNIE

NURSERY Sweet sentiments in an *Adventure* print from Blacklist Studio and a Julie Nicholson wall hanging from Table Tonic, together with a faux fur rug (try Adairs), ensure the nursery (right) has a distinct character. The 'Sniglar' cot is from Ikea. For a similar Moroccan pouffe, try Cush & Co. >





DECK Extending the existing platform on either side and creating a servery has made the outdoor area (above) an entertainer's dream. "We love a servery and the gas-strut windows are a bit of a trademark of ours," says Lana. "They provide that beautiful summery feel - almost like a canteen!" Bonnie adds, "They're great for families as well. I've got four kids and I'd just put them out here and let them eat here. There's no mess! Really easy." Stools from Domayne and Clickon Furniture, together with an outdoor setting also found at Domayne (for similar, try their 'Bali II' setting), add to the relaxed vibe. A white-painted pergola defines the

new outdoor room on the left side. The new deck area has been created with fibre-cement HardieDeck from James Hardie and painted in Taubmans' Wolf Cry to match the original porch. "Because we're coming off a cement porch, we wanted something more solid than timber underfoot," explains Lana. "The HardieDeck is very different to timber. It doesn't crack, warp or splinter, and you can paint it any colour you like." The Scyon 'Stria' wall cladding, painted in half-strength Taubmans' Mink Scorpio, is repeated indoors. "Bonnie dreams about cladding - it's her favourite texture!" says Lana. **Stockists, page 252**

DETAILS



lana's flip tip

"Be savvy with where you spend and where you save," she says. "Spending on the right type of benchtop can be a great investment, even with a flat pack kitchen. In another house we did a big dressing room. We had our carpenter build the frame and hang Ikea cabinet doors that were \$50 each.

But then we put in a beautiful chandelier and an ottoman, and we got feedback from people asking, 'Who did your cabinetry?' Don't do everything cheap, and don't do everything luxury and expensive." (hb)

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