

# birds of a feather



What does it take to totally transform a house in just 12 weeks? We get the inside scoop on the latest project by Three Birds Renovations

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**E**rin Cayless, Bonnie Hindmarsh and Lana Taylor (pictured opposite, from left) make renovating look fun. The Sydney-based friends, founders of Three Birds Renovations, are eternally upbeat, perfectly presented and are building a following based on their signature style. In case you've missed the memo, that would be white-on-white interiors with a hint of blush, a touch of boho texture and a layout planned around entertaining. But it takes substance as well as style to pull off this many projects; this is their ninth, with several more in the pipeline. They're too savvy to give away all their secrets - you'll need to sign up for their online Reno School for that - but having refined their process over the last four years, they've learnt a thing or two and have some key ideas to share.

It's only fair to report that the 'fun' of their renovations is underpinned with plenty of function: planning, organisation and budgeting. Much of this falls to Erin, the operations director, and her team of two. To avid viewers of their video series, it might look like decisions are made on the fly, but in fact everything is planned well in advance. "This project [in Sydney's north west] required a DA, and we used a draftsman to prepare the detailed drawings," explains Lana, whose background in

## #makeanentrance

The main living area was opened up, with double front doors from Bunnings. "They create a substantial entry and a real sense of space," says Bonnie. The neutral-toned furniture and rugs are from Freedom.





**#laundrylove**  
 A stacking Electrolux washer and dryer, separate sink and storage are hidden within a clever cupboard in the kitchen. "I lived with a laundry in my bathroom for six months while renovating my own home and I've never been so on top of the washing," says Bonnie. "It's convenient when it's right there in front of you."

marketing puts her in charge of the content the team creates for each project. "There is a lot of planning that goes into the early stages to make sure all the big decisions are thought through."

Budgets and timelines are important in any renovation, whether it's a 'flip' for resale, like their first five projects, or for a family's own home. "When I look back to the budget spreadsheet for our first renovation it was pretty basic, and the amount of our miscellaneous and contingency costs ended up almost as big as the rest of the budget," says Erin. "The key thing for your budget, no matter what format you use, is to avoid surprises by ensuring you have absolutely everything captured, right down to doorstops and cupboard handles."

It's inevitable that issues will arise in a renovation - it's how you deal with them that dictates your delays. "We had no rain delays on this project, but the usual small problems arose along the way," says Erin. "It's so important to stay on top of these. I'm in touch with the builder every day or every second day and on site anywhere between daily and weekly, depending on what stage it's at."

The design and decoration is mostly driven by Bonnie, whose creative ideas are tempered by Lana's practical bent and Erin's voice of reason, usually relating to storage. "I can 100 per cent take credit for the linen cupboard and the pantry in this reno!" says Erin.

While each of their projects is different, Bonnie does repeat tried and tested elements, for example the French doors from Bunnings that appear at both the front and back of this house. "We've been using them since the very first time we renovated," says Bonnie. "For a 'plain Jane' house, as this one definitely was, they instantly add character and a certain feel - either cottage or coastal, depending on what colour you paint them. They're also really cost effective."

Spray painting brick façades is another trick, used to create huge and transformational impact without the cost of rendering. "We tried to paint bricks ourselves in our first reno," says Lana, "but after spending half a day painting a square metre, we discovered it was best left to the experts and their spray guns. For us, DIY is not efficient, not enjoyable and it doesn't produce the best results. It can be a false economy."

KITCHEN: GODDESS HYBRID FLOORING, GODFREY HIRST, KITCHEN BUILDER, CARRERA BY DESIGN

**#kitchengoals**

"I think this might be my favourite kitchen of all our projects," says Bonnie. A mix of traditional cabinetry and modern black accents is brought to life with a hit of fresh colour, complemented by a 'White Attica' Caesarstone benchtop and splashback. "I'd been thinking of a dirty pink for the island, but once I got into the house I went with green," she says. A sleek fridge and induction cooktop from Electrolux with matching mint green appliances from DeLonghi complete the picture.





**#greathights**

"I wanted to create a bit of a 'moment' in this house, because it had no 'moments' at all," says Bonnie. "The idea of stepping from the front rooms into something airy and light was what inspired me." The angled roof, lined in Scyon cladding, is echoed by the lines of a huge fixed panel in Viridian 'Hush' glass with a deep window seat. The statement Palm Springs-inspired pendant is from Gypset Cargo.



**#wineanddine**

A corner bench seat (with good storage underneath, thanks to Erin) frames the oval table in the main dining area. The large window lets the outside in, while Luxaflex shutters open to the adjacent bar.



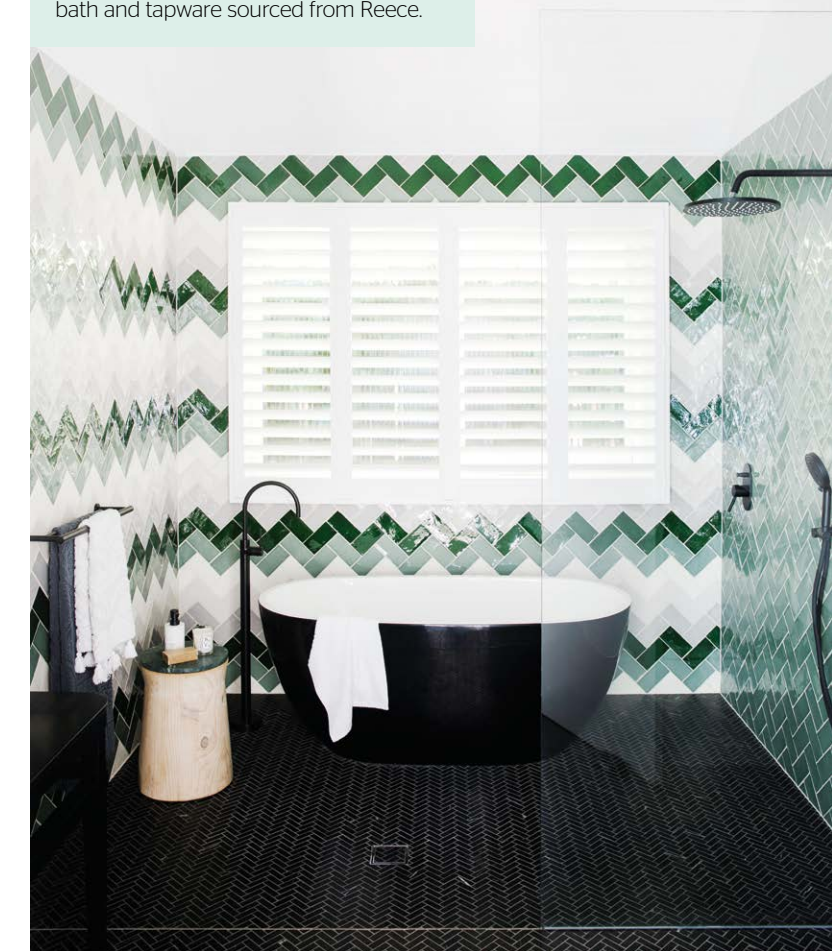
Bonnie's decorating approach is mostly intuitive. "I concentrate on the feeling I get when I walk into a house, and how I can improve it," she says. "That often relates to space or light. This home felt really boxed-in and enclosed, and just had no endearing features at all. My idea was to add an extension that would be the 'wow'." For Bonnie, the extension is "the absolute winner" for its light, airy feel and the feeling of moving from a smaller space to something generous. The extension includes the large kitchen and a second living or dining area, currently set up with rattan chairs from Alfresco Emporium. While the interior scheme is based around Bonnie's favourite shade (Dulux White on White), she pushed the boat out in the bathrooms. "I know it sounds a bit counterintuitive because tile decisions are pretty permanent, but I think bathrooms are an opportunity to go a little bit outside the box," says Bonnie. In this project, that played out with strong pattern and colour in the main bathroom and a softer blush-based scheme in the ensuite.

The Three Birds Renovations business has evolved over the years, starting with the trio and growing to now include a team of 10, plus a separate CEO. "Four years has gone by so quickly and I've had an absolute ball," says Bonnie. "You start your own business thinking you'll have more time with your kids and family. While we definitely have more flexibility and control over what we do - which is fabulous and wonderful - we work really hard and it's very time consuming. I love it. I've only just renovated my own home, which took over a year, and I'd do it all again tomorrow." [10](#)

For more on *Three Birds Renovations*, visit [threebirdsrenovations.com](http://threebirdsrenovations.com) and [therenoschool.com](http://therenoschool.com)

**#personalityplus**

The main bathroom features green, grey and white tiles from Tile Cloud in a zigzag pattern devised by Bonnie onsite. Black bath and tapware sourced from Reece.







*#curtaincall*

Custom-made curtains from Steal The Limelight were a budget-driven choice, but give the walk-through robe softness. "I knew they'd look amazing and add a whimsical, romantic feel," says Bonnie.

*#blushcrush*

The shade of pretty, but slightly gritty, pink that's one of Bonnie's go-to colours makes an appearance in the main bedroom. But was it too feminine for the male half of the couple who own the house? "Look, we balanced out the pink with black accents like the mirror, wall lights and curtains, and the room looks out onto a courtyard surrounded by black cladding. He was fine with it!" says Bonnie. Furniture and bedding is from Freedom. In the ensuite (below), a vanity and mirror from Reece are complemented by wall lights from Beacon Lighting and tiles from Tile Cloud.



**"Curtains are more affordable than doors. From a design perspective, they add a beautiful softness"**

BONNIE HINDMARSH, CREATIVE DIRECTOR

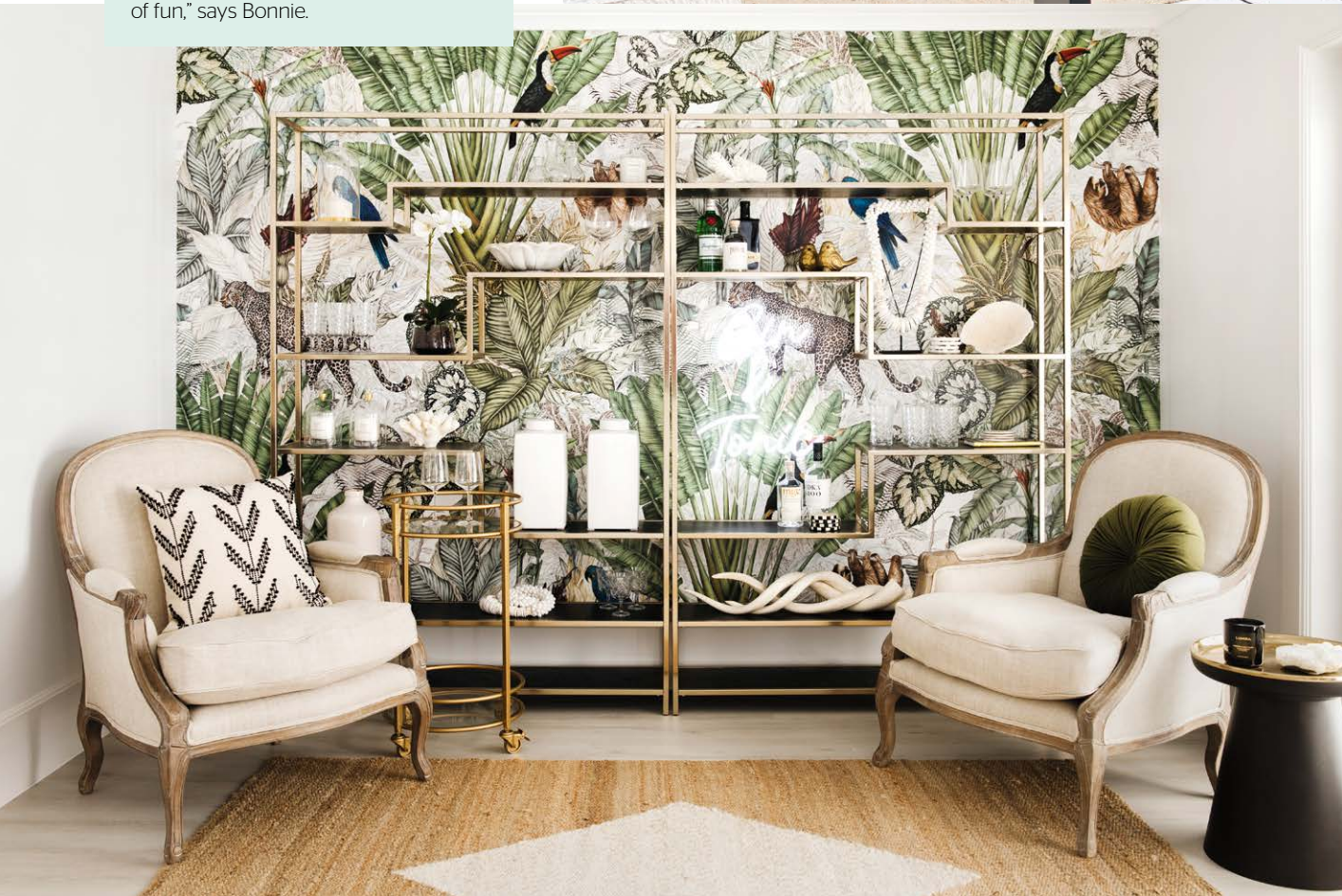






*#cheers*

A room at the rear of the house was set up as a bar with statement wallpaper from Jimmy Cricket. "It could easily be a bedroom or office, but since it opens to the deck, we thought we'd have a bit of fun," says Bonnie.



**"My favourite part of this reno was the transformation of the façade. I love seeing the bold changes Bonnie designed"**

ERIN CAYLESS, OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

*#deckedout*

"We always focus on outdoor entertaining; it's kind of who we are," says Bonnie. In this case, the land fell away sharply, so a U-shaped entertaining space featuring dark Scyon-clad walls and HardieDeck flooring creates a self-contained zone.