

Keeping House.



For Mum

Thank you for making every house we lived
in across the globe feel like a home.

Love Em xx

Keeping House.

Creating Spaces for
Sanctuary and Celebration

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BOOKS

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Introduction

We form our thoughts and feelings about the word 'home' from our childhoods and carry those emotions with us into the first home we set up ourselves in early adulthood. Creating a home gives us a sense of belonging, connection and inclusion. It's natural to want to have a place in the world and a physical and psychological connection to a space.

Whether you're setting up your first house from scratch or moving into a home with others, there are often so many questions to consider. What's my style? I don't have a lot of money – what should I spend it on? How many cushions is too many? What do I need in my kitchen? How can I be prepared for when family pop over unannounced, or when I have friends over for a dinner party?

This book answers those questions – it's your guidebook to creating the life you want in the space that you have, no matter where or what that may be. Perhaps you are navigating the world of home decorating for the first time and you're not sure where to start. You may be moving out of your parents' home and into your first place, or perhaps after years of renting you've bought your first house with a significant other and together you're traversing the tricky terrain of combining your possessions. Maybe you are living alone or moving in with a few friends, or perhaps you're renting out the spare room on Airbnb to help cover the mortgage. Whatever the situation, there's no reason why we can't all create a comfortable and inviting space to feel at home in.

What are you waiting for?

Our homes are more than just a roof over our heads and a place to store our stuff – we all deserve to find the pleasure and enjoyment that comes with decorating our sacred spaces and then sharing them with others. Yet so many of us seem to put it off.

Do you hear yourself coming up with any of these excuses?

- + But I'm just renting.
- + But I'm living in my parents' house.
- + But this old hand-me-down furniture isn't that bad, is it?
- + But I'm so busy at the moment – I'll get around to decorating next week, or next month, or maybe next year ...
- + But I'm waiting until I meet the right person – then we'll create a home together.
- + But I don't intend on being here for long.

- + But it will probably cost too much to decorate or entertain the way I want to.
- + But I can't have people over for dinner – I don't have anywhere for them to sit ...
- + But I've got no taste.
- + But I don't really know where to start.

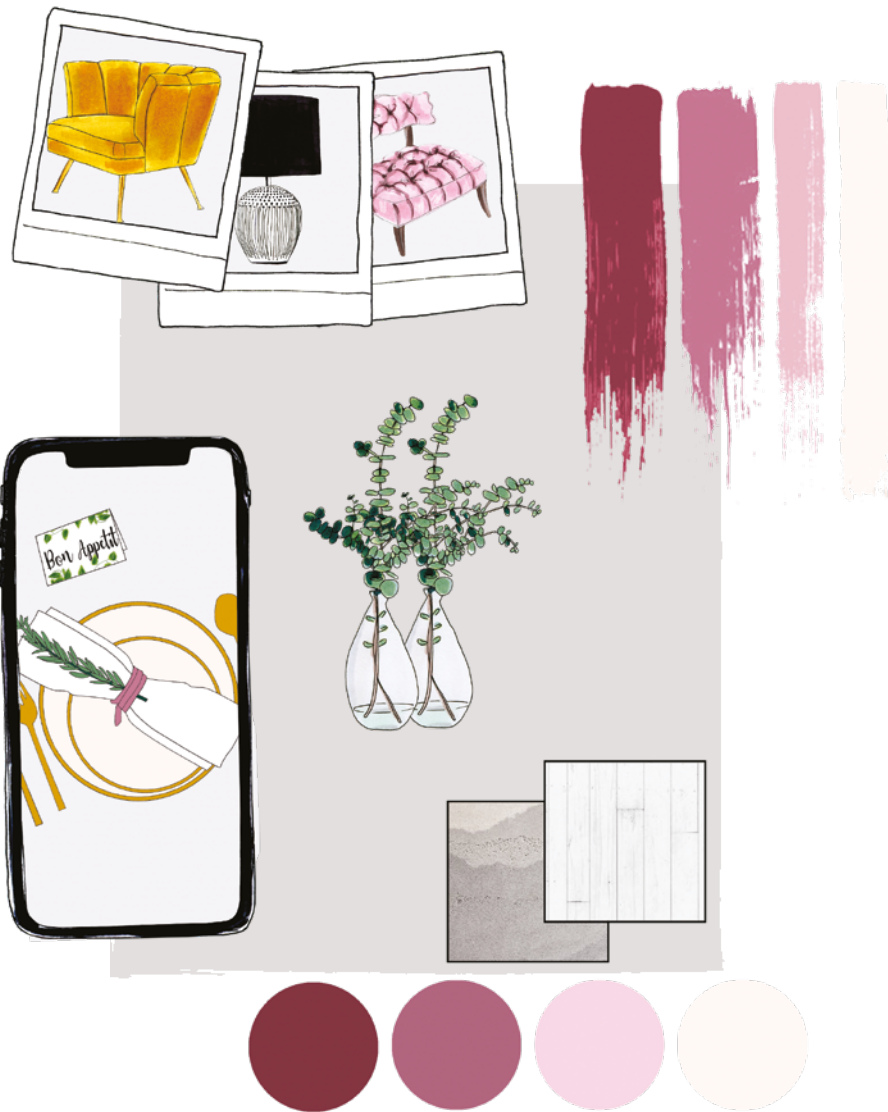
Yes, some of these are very valid reasons not to go out and spend a fortune on new furniture, especially if you intend on moving soon. But there is one very obvious theme here that needs to be challenged: 'I'm waiting for ...'

So, dear reader, what *are* you waiting for? Ditch the 'one day' mentality and start living in the present.

I challenge you to start thinking in a different way.

- + You can make simple changes to your existing space to make it feel more 'you', no matter what your home situation is.
- + It doesn't have to cost the earth.
- + Absolutely everyone can decorate a great room and throw a great party.

If you can alter your approach, you'll realise this is your shot to start creating and working towards your 'one day'. Life is constantly evolving and changing for everyone, but living in the moment allows you to be more engaged in your life. You'll be more invested in turning your house into a home and having your friends and family over to enjoy it with you, and you'll find you're happier in your home because of the effort you've put into it. You don't need to wait until you are in your forever home to create your own haven, and you don't need to wait until everything is perfectly in place before you invite people over. You *can* achieve a meaningful home regardless of the situation you find yourself in.



It's normal to feel overwhelmed.

More often than not, the reason we don't start a project is because we don't know where to start. It's a pretty intimidating task when you think about it: fitting out an entire space to be a true reflection of your style and taste, showing off your decorating skills, and selecting practical pieces that will serve you and the other occupants of the home well. We all want to create a welcoming space for guests yet at the same time we worry they'll pass judgement on our decorating choices, or the food and drinks we serve. In the search for perfection we end up in a complete state of overwhelm, analysing every single detail but not actually making any decisions. It's a vicious cycle!

It doesn't help that the perfectly styled images of Pinterest and Instagram can often lead to feelings of inadequacy. Comparing your reality with these images isn't beneficial. Yes, they are great for inspiration, but don't get caught up in trying to re-create the entire look or you'll lose sight of the goal: to create a home or host a gathering that is a reflection of *you*. Often these images are carefully crafted just for the camera; they don't actually make very practical places to live. This is partly why this book is illustrated – it takes the pressure off replicating exact looks and forces you to use your own creativity. We all have it; we just need to tap into it.

You may experience a range of emotions throughout the decorating or entertaining process, from pure frustration and despair through to utter joy and happiness when you get it right. Stick with the journey. This book will hopefully help keep you sane and get you to the final destination: ultimate home love!

'Don't lose sight of the goal: to create a home or host a gathering that is a reflection of *you*.'

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

I have divided this book into two parts. Part I, Sanctuary, covers all the essentials for setting up and decorating your home. We jump right into how your home is the truest reflection of you, your travels and what inspires you, and how to collate those ideas in your space. Part II, Celebration, explores the art of creating a space to share with the people we love.

Each part opens with some basics to help you get your head around the fundamentals of decorating and entertaining. Then, throughout the following chapters, I'll cover concepts like finishing touches, or when to save and when to splurge. And along the way you'll get my little tips on how to bring everything together.

These days, whenever we've got a question or query, we tend to turn to our trusty pal Google for the answer. I'd like to challenge this and kick it old-school. I am an avid reader and a visual learner so I tend to turn to books, rather than digital formats, for advice when it comes to decorating and entertaining. Let this be your well-worn, handy how-to manual to guide you through all manner of domestic chaos and decorating dilemmas, from how many knives you need to set the table for a formal occasion, what thread count your sheets need to be, and how to personalise your new rental and still get your bond back, to things you can do to boost your confidence when entertaining, and how to throw an epic grown-up dinner party (without upsetting the neighbours).

Tip

Your home is the greatest reflection of yourself – surround yourself with beauty.




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Sanctuary



Your home is
a bit like your
wardrobe in a way;
it's an expression
of your style.

As a child I was fortunate enough to live overseas for several years. Each time we moved to a new country I would watch Mum and Dad set up the entire house for us. Although my two younger brothers and I would moan about being dragged around furniture stores for hours on end, we had to admit that it was exciting to have a completely new bedroom every few years. Within the first weeks of arriving in a new country, Mum would start by buying all the basics and then, over time, she would add personality to the home with artwork and other beautiful cultural pieces that we collected on our weekend trips.

In my final year of schooling, my family moved to Hong Kong and I moved into the boarding house at my school back home in Sydney so that my studies wouldn't be too disrupted. I wasn't particularly happy about it, but Mum made every effort to make the transition as seamless as possible. We went shopping for things for my new shoebox-sized bedroom – a doona cover with matching pillows, a stereo system that matched the colour of the doona (cringe!) and a few posters to hang on the walls – and then I was left to set up the room and make it feel homely. Thankfully I'd had years of watching Mum do this, so I had a bit of an idea about where to start.

Shelter is one of our most basic needs in life and being accepted and understood in our environment goes hand in hand. Your home doesn't need to win you any awards or be photographed for a design magazine, but it does need to be a place where you can relax and be yourself, where you can entertain friends, and retreat to at the end of a busy day with a glass of wine and a good book. This section is all about crafting and creating your own sanctuary, from setting up the basics to the things you can do to make your house feel like a home.

DIFY – DO IT FOR YOURSELF

Keep in mind that you are decorating *your* home for *you*. If you can't be honest with yourself about your style, you'll always feel like a guest in your own home. Don't decorate for the sake of being on trend or because you want to impress your guests. It's fine to create a space for friends to enjoy too, but that shouldn't be your driving factor. Think about how you want to feel when you come home each day and how your home supports you. If you're feeling burnt out at work, coming home to a cosy space where you can relax and unwind is the perfect cure. You're decorating for your own happiness and your home is an extension of you – so what do you want it to say about you?

Five steps towards creating an authentic home

- + Own your style wholeheartedly! It's hard not to be swept up in buying items for your home because you think that's what you should have, or what everyone says you should have. It's important that you remain true to yourself. If you love it, then buy it. If you don't love it, toss it.
- + Don't take decorating too seriously; we can't live in a magazine photo shoot all the time.
- + Embrace the imperfections; it's what gives your home authenticity and character.
- + Don't underestimate the power and personality that a quirky piece of furniture or trinket bought while on holidays can bring to the room.
- + Accessorise with what you've got lying around. You don't need a big budget to create a home that is a true reflection of you.

Creating an authentic home is a journey of self-discovery too. You'll learn all sorts of things about yourself and the way you prefer to live while on the decorating journey. If you're on the journey with a significant other, you'll both be learning these lessons together – hopefully in harmony!



WHERE DO I START?

Before you can start to think about decorating your space, you need to assess how the space is working and what you'd like to change. Once you've got a clear idea in your head, you will find it easier to edit the things you have, make decisions about what you need and start to style your space.

Step 1 Assess

Walk through your home and view it as a visitor. Pretend you are inspecting it as a potential buyer. Look closely at the architecture – walls, doors, windows and ceiling height – and write a list of anything that bothers you. Do the doorways dictate a certain traffic flow through the room? Are the windows low to the ground so furniture will block the light when placed in front of them? Do you have low ceilings that make you feel boxed in? As you go through each room, take note of some of the less tangible things as well. Is there enough natural light in the room? Is the house always a few degrees too warm or cool? Is there a musty smell you notice in winter time? You may be able to find solutions to some of these problems during the decorating process, but some things will need to be dealt with down the track. Put the list on the fridge and tick the items off as you deal with them.

Assess the pieces you already own. Can you move any items from other rooms to jazz up the living room? Could you reframe artwork from another room and move it into the bedroom? Search through cupboards, drawers, forgotten boxes and storage areas such as the garage. 'Shopping' at home saves you having to spend more of your hard-earned cash – and you never know what forgotten treasures you may find stashed away. Make a list of your ideas or put the items together in a box or cupboard.

Step 2 Edit

Ask yourself if you truly need/want/love the items you own. If it's a no, chuck it. If it has no functional purpose and it doesn't bring you joy, toss it out. Be ruthless! There's no point hanging onto things with negative emotions attached to them, so remove anything that doesn't serve a purpose or bring you joy to look at.

Don't attempt this for the entire house in one hit. To stop you from becoming overwhelmed, break the task into rooms and then into categories (such as furniture, soft furnishings, art and decorative items). Anything that no longer serves you can be recycled or given away.

On the other hand, don't feel as though you have to get rid of everything. You'll always find treasures on your travels that you'll want to bring home and incorporate into your decor. Don't deny yourself these little trinkets, because these items personalise your space; they start to build a story about you.



Step 3 Style

Now you can start to style the space based on what you felt needed to change. If traffic flow is an issue, think about moving the furniture around. If your ceilings feel low, consider hanging your window treatments as high as possible to add a sense of height. If the room feels cold and lacking in personality, perhaps add a thick woollen statement rug. Play around with the placement of your existing pieces – items you’ve had sitting in the study could find a new lease of life in the living room, or vice versa. The following chapters will give you plenty to think about when it comes to style.



A word on mindset

Check in while you’re doing the ‘assess, edit, style’ task to see if you have a negative or positive mindset towards your home – you may be surprised to find you feel quite pessimistic about certain elements. Watch that this doesn’t continue throughout the decorating process. Try to reframe your thoughts into more positive ones about what your home means to you: comfort, safety, security, a loving space for you and your family and friends. Decorative elements can be added to reinforce positive feelings, so keep persisting with the book and you’ll be totally in love with your home by the end.