

THIS PAGE: Sibella Court. OPPOSITE PAGE: in the HALLWAY, on left wall, vintage Japanese pilgrim jacket from Edo Arts; vintage Chinese bench stool from Stone Pony; on right wall, flax rope light by Christien Meindertsma; dip-dyed fabric lantern from The Society Inc; rug by Soufiane Zarib; The Odd and the Memorable artwork by George Raftopoulos. Details, last pages.

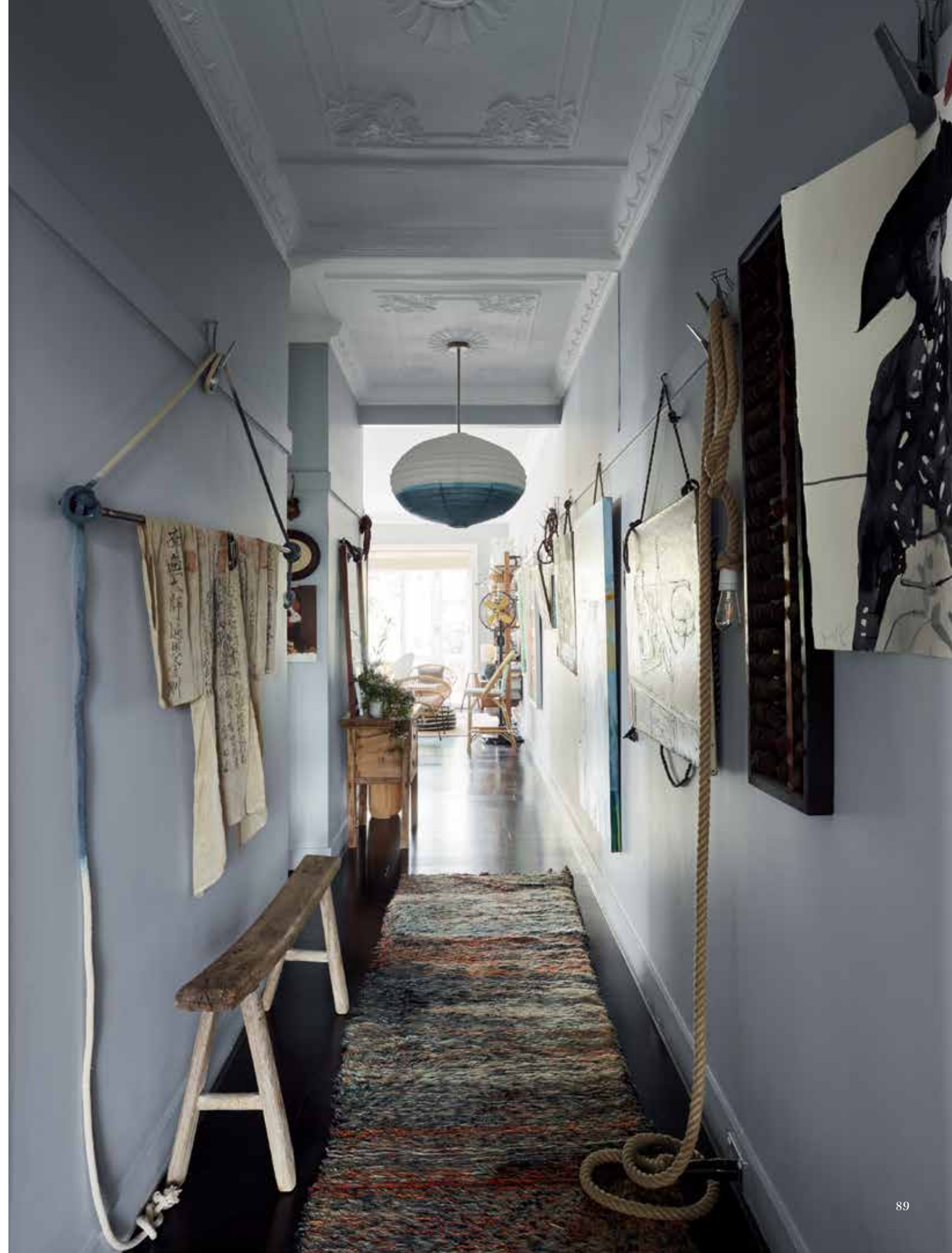


COURT ORDER

In her spacious apartment in Sydney's eastern suburbs, interior designer and author Sibella Court pays homage to her love of vintage, hardware and all things handmade.

BY VERITY MAGDALINO PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANSON SMART

PHOTOGRAPHER: DAVID HUTTON (PORTRAIT)





THIS PAGE: in the HALLWAY, Sibella's Owl artwork gifted by Joshua Yeldham. OPPOSITE PAGE: in the LIVING ROOM, prototype of a sofa designed by Sibella Court (not in production); VW Flag cushion by Vivienne Westwood for The Rug Company; Owl sculpture by Anna-Wili Highfield; Chinese Woman of the Labouring Class (1874) photograph by John Thomson.



In the KITCHEN, custom joinery by Winchester Interiors, painted with Murobond Boro 2 from The Society Inc paint range by Sibella Court; quartz benchtops from Granite & Marble Works; New Orleans bar stools from Lincoln Brooks; lantern from Circa Lighting; Dome table lamp on bench from Flea Market RX; Mini porcelain wall lights from Il Fanali; vintage Moroccan rug from Empire Homewares; Daisy rug (in foreground) from Armadillo & Co; Sungwe Malawian bamboo chair from Weylands.

Sibella Court is the self-described captain of Sydney homewares store The Society Inc. In addition to her interior design work for hotels (Hotel Palisade), restaurants, bars (including The Oaks, Mr Wong, Ms G's), and outback homesteads, Court produces a biannual newspaper and a hardware line inspired by her love of vintage. Here, she describes the inspirations behind her colourful apartment in Sydney's Bellevue Hill and her unusual passion for kitchen sinks.

We chose the location because of its proximity to all of our friends. The garden is irrigated because we travel all the time. That's the nice thing about living in an apartment — you can just walk out and not worry about security.

Most of the time I know exactly what I want a space to look like. I never stray from my first initial thought. I love throwing in all the vintage things. The best shop in Sydney for this — other than my own — is Seasonal Concepts in Redfern. I buy a lot from Ken [Wallis, the owner].

I have a thing for sinks. I always have 10 sinks ready to go and I usually start building a project around it — we had the outdoor kitchen here built first. It drives Ben [Harper, Court's husband] crazy. Even when it was his 40th birthday last year and he said, "Go and buy a party dress", I came back with a 19th-century French marble sink. I attract them.

I thought I should take my own advice and not have white anywhere. There is beauty in colour. It doesn't make a room darker or smaller. I wanted to experiment so you wouldn't walk in and think, "Wow, this is a very colourful house", but more that it's just a beautiful backdrop no matter what you put against it.

The renovation was pretty quick because we have amazing tradespeople. I've done a lot of projects with my builders, CWF Constructions, before. The previous owners had a lot of built-in storage and we ripped everything out. Originally there was a wall dividing the living area and a very little kitchen. It was dark and there was all of this wasted space, so we took the wall out. Winchester Interiors did the beautiful kitchen joinery, they did Fred's restaurant in Paddington and they're just legends.

I have a fascination with electrical components. This light switch in the pantry I had shipped from Sweden because I wanted this little toggle on it. When you get down to the details it's a little crazy, like the kitchen drawers, which are lined with Laminex that I had matched with the paint colour on the cabinetry. I love it because every time I open this drawer I just think, "Wow, this is an awesome drawer."

I'm trying to teach people that things like hardware don't all have to look the same. I have about 10 different hardware pieces in my kitchen but it doesn't feel like there's 10 different styles because they're all in the same tone. You can choose a story so it all goes together. I have a blacksmith, Saul Tomkins from Coloforge, who I work with on my hardware range. He's done all the kitchen shelving, which is handmade, and these beautiful legs on the kitchen island bench, which look like timber but he's hand-stamped them from steel. We work so well together. I think I met him in another lifetime.

I love all the old trades. They're coming back again and there's this resurgence of interest from younger people. Life is so fast. Technology doesn't give you a rest and I think there's a huge turn back to the craft movement where you can have a nice life that is satisfying and you're not dictated to. We know working with your hands reduces stress and we know that it's good for your mental health. The tactility of natural materials resonates with something deep inside us. It's about our connection with the earth, not your connection with your iPhone. It's not to say that I don't love technology. It links you with so many people that you have so much in common with, but there has to be a point where you disconnect. »



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« We're working on four big projects at the moment. One is a cattle station in the Northern Territory that has a homestead stay. The building is massive, about the size of three tennis courts, and there's a guest block that has 12 rooms, which we're doing up right now. It's just so beautiful and so uniquely Australian. You fly in and the airstrip is right in front of the homestead. It's 75 kilometres to the front gate and it's boab tree country so you have that silhouette in the landscape. It's tropical and dusty, and the birdlife is mind-blowing. I don't want a big team because that means you have to manage a lot of people, which means you can't get to do Suminagashi on a Tuesday. That's what we were doing last week out there on the terrace — playing with ink. I'm not a manager; I just want to make stuff and I want to be across all my projects, so we just take on as much as we can, which seems to be quite a bit.» VL
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THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: in the MAIN BEDROOM, band-loomed quilt from Marwa; Major Minor linen sheets from The Society Inc; rug from Cadrys; custom-made Fireball surfboard by McTavish; wall painted with custom Murobond Dampier from The Society Inc paint range by Sibella Court. In daughter Silver's BEDROOM, vintage Chinese console from Stone Pony; overdyed Moroccan wedding blanket on bed from The Society Inc; vintage lampshade from The Junk Company; collection of flea market finds on the wall; photograph (far left) by Chris Court. In the MAIN BEDROOM LOUNGE AREA, antique Japanese drawers from Edo Arts; wicker basket from The Society Inc; Threadbare wall colour from The Society Inc paint range by Murobond; artwork on console by Joseph Sebag. OPPOSITE PAGE: in the LOUNGE AREA, sofa upholstered with Kelly Wearstler Graffito fabric for Lee Jofa, enquiries to Elliott Clarke; vintage gym bench from Mossgreen Auctions; Tarbouche pendant lamp by Valérie Barkowski; artwork on console by Joseph Sebag. Details, last pages.

