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## *The Pursuit of Perfection*

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# HIGH DRAMA

A hilltop home in Sydney combines Hollywood glamour with a salute to the French aesthetic.

Photographs **ANSON SMART** Words **CHRIS PEARSON**

Sydney HOME

This page in the formal lounge, 'Hudson' sofas, covered in Mokum 'Vintage' velvet in Linen from Greg Natale, 'Polaire' armchairs, 'Helios' mirror, and Greg Natale gold leaf and black marble coffee table and side tables, all from James Said. Greg Natale 'Pantheon' rug from Designer Rugs, 'Angles' and 'St Tropez' cushions from Greg Natale, 'Odeon' chandelier from Coco Republic, 'Midas' gold and white table lamps from Bloomingdales, Walls in Dulux 'Tranquil Retreat' and 'Lexicon Quarter'. Ceiling details by Allplasta. Opposite page in the hallway, Eichholtz chandelier, console and table, Murano chandelier from Coco Republic, Carrara marble tiles from RMS Marble, Greg Natale Marmo Collection tiles from Teranova, Ceiling details by Allplasta.







Walk through the double doors and into the vast marbled hallway of this home in Sydney's south and you could be in a Hollywood movie. You almost expect a 1940s starlet to glide down its sweeping staircase, negligee floating in her wake. "There's a lot of drama," confesses its designer, Greg Natale. "I love drama and infuse that into all my interiors." A spectacular staircase, too, always features in his script. "It's a no-brainer, a beautiful way to make a sexy statement."

When the owners of this house, a professional couple with four children, found this site on a hill overlooking a bush-clad valley in 2015, they realised only a scene-stopper such as this would do it justice. "It had beautiful views and air. We knew we could build our dream home on this land," says the owner. And they knew Greg, with his sense of theatre, complete with a flamboyant flourish or two, would be the person to provide it.

After seeing Greg's work in *Belle* (a winner in the 2013 *Belle* Coco Republic Interior Design Awards especially caught their eye), she knew he could fulfil their brief for a home with Oscar-winning credentials. As well as Beverly Hills mid-century glamour, one of Greg's trademarks, it would draw inspiration from elegant French chateaux.

"We wanted something grand, decorative and classic, but also fresh and contemporary, with a twist," says the owner. "We love the French aesthetic, because it has character and style, and it lasts." And Greg, while giving the home that timeless *je ne sais quoi* they sought, could also give it that modern touch. "I love Greg's layering and attention to detail and how he uses grey and black and white, and all that panelling. But he's also brave with colours, especially with gold."

The biggest challenge was the wedge-shaped site that widens towards the rear, but therein lay an opportunity. Greg has designed an imposing entrance with pillared portico that lures you in, and from there the home reveals itself, fanning out towards the living areas and generous backyard.

Adding to the wow factor, within the hallway are two voids to the upstairs, one near the front door, which creates an instant sensation of loftiness, the other accommodating the sweeping contemporary staircase that leads to five bedrooms.

The staircase is "a dramatic ribbon" in off-form concrete with a wax finish. Greg's own range of black-and-white chequerboard tiles complete the sense of arrival, the interplay of right angles and sweeping curves in this space adding to its impact.

"IT HAD BEAUTIFUL VIEWS AND AIR. WE KNEW WE COULD BUILD OUR DREAM HOME ON THIS LAND."

This page, from top left Eichholtz table and Worlds Away 'Jax' ornament from James Said. Greg Natale custom-sized 'Manhattan' rug from Designer Rugs. 'Ella' chairs from Casa Mia. 'Hudson' table from Greg Natale. Eichholtz 'Boivin' pendant from James Said. Tiles from Alexandria Tiles. Opposite page 'Rowan' gold-leaf chandelier from James Said. 'Axil' vase and tray from The Vignette Room. 'Collette B' stools from Casa Mia. Splashback tiles from Alexandria Tiles.





This page In the informal living room, 'Giardino' Cameron chairs, Eichholtz sofas, 'Holmes' lamps, 'Padova' coffee table and 'Domingo' side table, all from James Said. Greg Natale rug from Designer Rugs. Cushions from Greg Natale. Afternoon Sky and Summer Shower artworks by Designer Boys. Walls in Dulux 'Tranquil Retreat' and 'Lexicon Quarter'. Ceiling details by Allplasta. **Opposite page, from left** In the powder room, Greg Natale tiles, custom-made by Trend. 'Greco' wall sconce and Worlds Away 'Waverly' mirror from James Said. Custom-made vanity. In the main bedroom, Jonathan Adler 'Woodhouse' bed from Coco Republic. 'Hudson' bedside table and cushions from Greg Natale. Worlds Away 'Harper' lamp from James Said.



With references throughout to grand chateaux, Greg has included wall panelling, dado rails, classic cornices and coffered ceilings, golden detailing and, of course, chandeliers.

Symmetry is a key part of the formula – in the hallway it's broken only by the asymmetrical curve of the staircase, while both the formal and informal living areas celebrate symmetry in their layout and furniture selection. "Symmetry is a big thing in French interiors and it works well in this house because of the sheer scale," he says.

Another nod to the scale is the palette. "This house was too big for white on white; it needed a colour," he says, so he utilised one of his favourite decorating hues, grey power at its most potent. Dove-like French grey with white contrasts lends a timeless elegance to the living areas, while Greg has opted for a darker shade in the study, to create a cocooning effect. The warmth of the brass and gold-leaf furnishings and accessories peppered through the house makes the grey pop. "Grey is a great neutral, but this is the first time I have used this shade of grey," he says.

Greg gives it further depth with unexpected colour, such as teal and turquoise in the family room. "I love teal. It goes so well with grey. It adds such a refreshing element," he says.

Brushed velvet fabrics, Carrara marble and the muted sheen of gold leaf provide luxe textures, while Greg's own collections of furniture, accessories and tiles form the perfect complement to the glamorous and generous spaces he has created.

The result resonates with the owner, who can't fault her dream home. While she loves every room, she, like visitors walking through those doors, finds it hard to go past the hallway. "The freestanding staircase is something I always wanted," she says. "It's a beautiful feature and makes the house special. There is so much happening in the hall. It has a real wow factor. With that sense of entry, it's grand and mysterious. People want to look in and see what's inside." 15

For more go to [gregnatale.com](http://gregnatale.com).

## SPEED READ

» In 2015, the owners found this prime site in Sydney's south, on a hillside overlooking a bush-clad valley. » They wanted a house to do it justice – grand and elegant, with French influences and a nod to Hollywood glamour and, after seeing his work in *Belle*, they knew interior designer Greg Natale was the person to deliver it. » He has infused the two-storey, five-bedroom house with overtones of both Beverly Hills and French chateau glamour, evident the moment you walk in the double doors leading to a marbled hall with a sweeping freestanding staircase. » Wall panelling, dado rails and classic cornices evoke the elegance of bygone eras, but the palette of dove grey and white, with splashes of gold, teal and turquoise lend a freshness. » Symmetry, too, a frequent feature of French homes, is used to dramatic effect.

