



# BUSH BABY

*With architectural bones moulded by an Australian great, a Sydney home is given new life*



Words Annabelle Cloros  
Photography Marian Riabic

**T**hey say it takes one to know one. And Kristin Utz and Duncan Sanby of Utz-Sanby Architects knew this '60s home on Sydney's North Shore was just the thing they were looking for. The house was designed by legendary educator and architect Peter Johnson, and its soaring ceilings, abundant natural light and bushland surrounds provided the ideal backdrop for the creation of a family residence.

After a two-year search for a place to call home, architects Kristin and Duncan hit the jackpot. "We realised it was an architect-designed house as soon as we entered it because of the way the spaces connected to the bush, the detailing and materials used, the soaring ceilings and the abundant natural light," says Kristin. As well as the house needing a complete update, Kristin and Duncan also required an additional bedroom and bathroom, a larger kitchen and a covered outdoor area. Although the home was already equipped with four bedrooms, they were a little too small, so the duo knocked down the walls to form a second living area, otherwise known as the teenage retreat for their kids.

In terms of renovations, Kristin and Duncan made only minimal changes to the structure of the house, adding an extra bedroom, robe and ensuite to the front of the property and leaving the original structure largely intact. "We extended the kitchen and opened it out to the adjoining terrace at the back and put a new steel frame with roof over the existing verandah," says Kristin. "We also added a studio and workshop under the house." Due to its bushy location, there were strict requirements when it came to material selection and fire shutters. "We tried hard to make these a part of the architecture and designed special sliding screens and shutters that are unobtrusive and seamless," adds Kristin.

The duo were inspired by the original ethos of the home and aimed to modernise it with complete respect to its charm and character. "The architectural bones of the house were all there, and we have added and complemented the existing home in a contemporary way," says Kristin. "The entire house was redecorated with new flooring finishes, paint, joinery and bathroom fitouts."

In terms of sustainability, the home is naturally ventilated and features LED lighting throughout and central gas heating for the cooler months.

**we love**  
THE SEAMLESS  
TRANSITION  
BETWEEN INDOORS  
AND OUT THANKS  
TO SLIDING DOORS  
AND GENEROUS  
WINDOWS

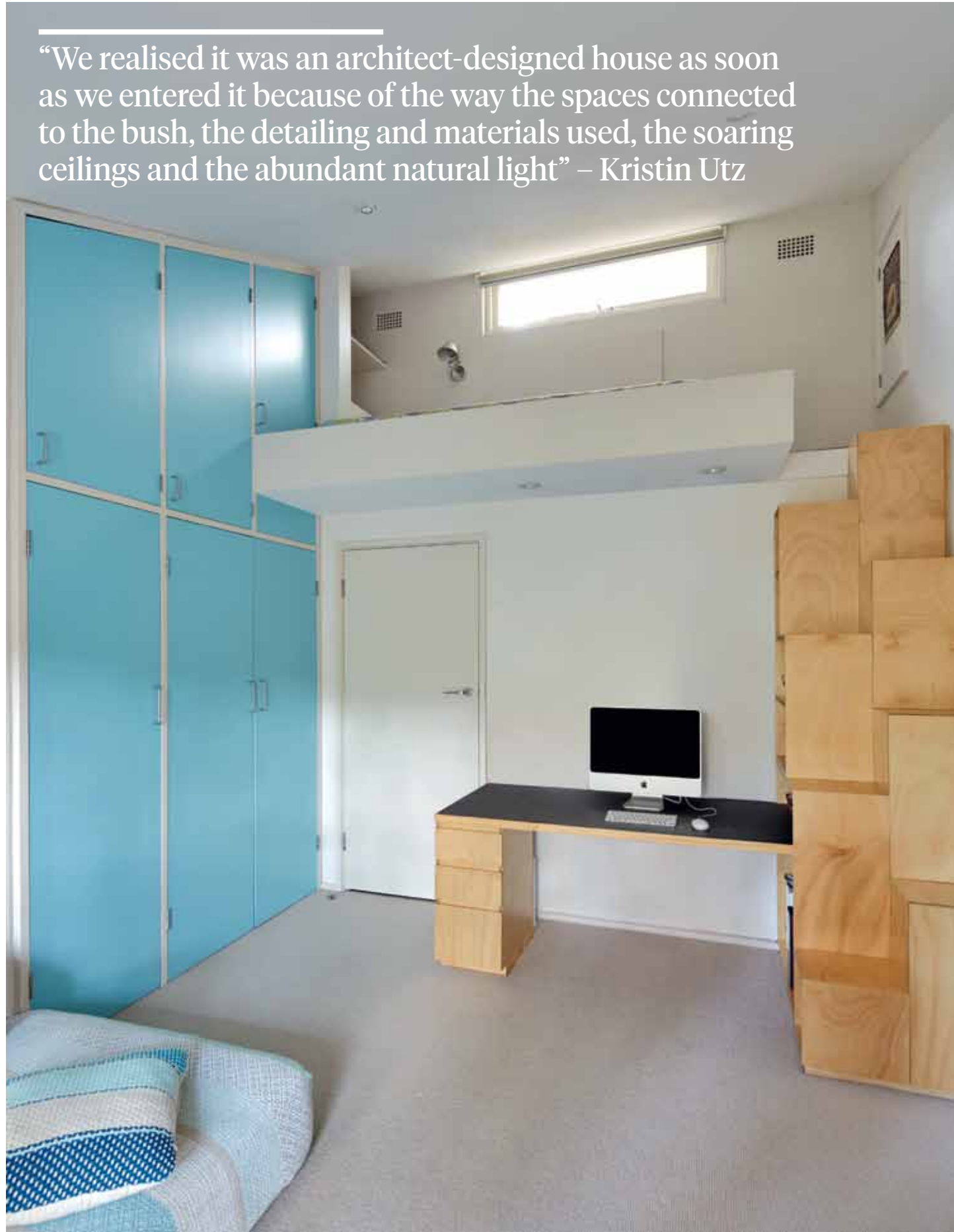
**ABOVE** Timber panelling on the wall confirms the nature-inspired theme  
**OPPOSITE** There's no shortage of natural light in this abode



“We pinch ourselves every day living somewhere so peaceful, quiet and beautiful” – Kristin Utz



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PH5 pendants are a classic addition to the living space



Sleek storage options are a must



**ed's fave**

A WINDOW SEAT IN THE BEDROOM IS AN ESSENTIAL WHEN YOU HAVE ACCESS TO SUCH BEAUTIFUL SURROUNDINGS

“There’s a 3000-litre water tank for the garden and we used eco-core plywood for the joinery in the kitchen, bedrooms and rumpus rooms,” says Kristin. Recycled bricks for the studio and workshop were sourced from another Utz-Sanby building site, with both additions built by Duncan himself.

The interior palette is very neutral, with timber playing a starring role throughout. Colour is introduced subtly through furnishings and material selections, including the yellow splashback in the kitchen — a standout space for Kristin. “The large frameless window in the kitchen really brings the outside in and is like a painting that changes throughout the day,” she says. Another highlight is the built-in window seat in the master bedroom, which offers the perfect spot to relax and enjoy the natural surrounds of the home.

When two architects get to work on their family home, you know it’s going to be special. The end result here is a residence that pays tribute to its creator while confirming its contemporary nature. “This house is special because it’s ours,” says Kristin. “I love the fact the existing house was designed and is next door to the home of Peter Johnson. We pinch ourselves every day living somewhere so peaceful, quiet and beautiful.” **HD**  
utzsanby.com



Simple is best in this neutral bathroom

**in short**

✦ The house was designed by academic and architect Peter Johnson ✦ Kristin studied at the University of Sydney while Peter was the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture ✦ Duncan and Kristin focused on updating the interior of the home, bringing it up to modern standards ✦ The children have their own separate wing of the house