



Holiday at home

UK expats Marta and Sylwester were quick to embrace the local way of life, building their own little slice of paradise in the heart of Canberra

STORY & STYLING **MEREDITH McKENDRY** PHOTOGRAPHY **CATH MUSCAT**

EXTERIOR This outdoor vista is a highlight of Sylwester and Marta's Canberra home. "One of the most surprising features when you have the pool so close to the house is how the reflections of the water play on the walls and ceilings," says Marta. "I could never have predicted it and I absolutely love it." >



we love

Open-plan living with intimate zones

The breezy layout of the house allows everyone to have their own space, but still stay in touch with each other.

"If I am sitting in the living room reading, I can see through to the kitchen where Marta is," says Sylwester. "It's a big area but there are visual connections because of all the glass."

Family life centres around the open-plan kitchen, living and dining area. "Open-plan complements the way we live, and we prefer it this way," says Marta. "The kitchen is where all the action takes place," adds Sylwester.



KITCHEN A structural AEG rangehood stands out against the fire-engine red glass splashback. "I always wanted something red in the kitchen, it grabs you and captures your attention," says Marta, "and it coordinates very well with the grey." Subtle 2-pac finished cabinetry in Dulux Light Grey keeps the focus on the splashback while the front of the island bench features shimmery Laminex laminate.



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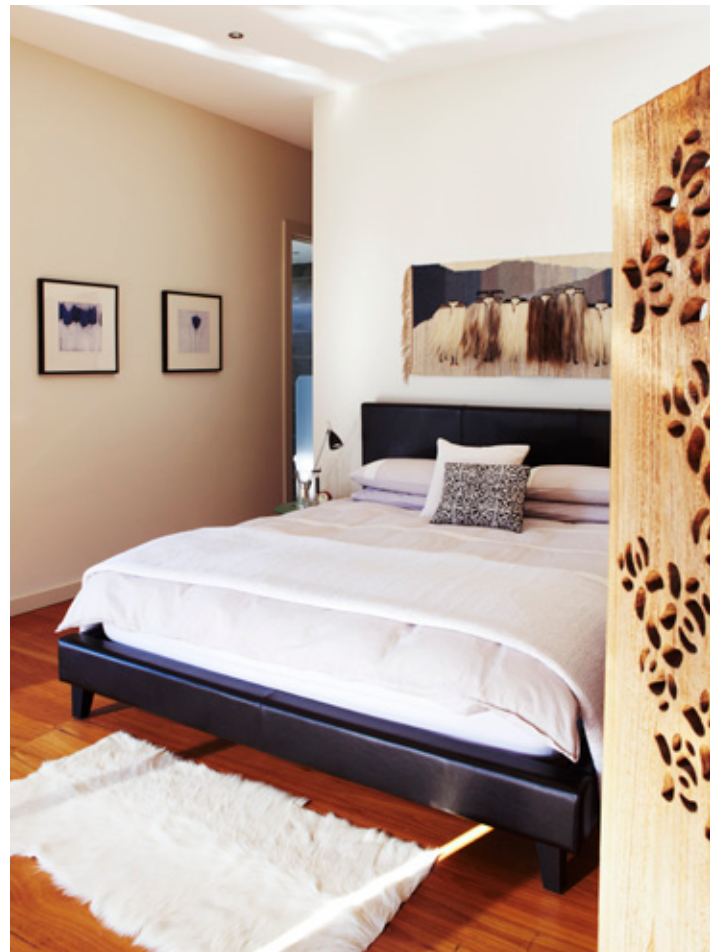
ADAPTING TO A NEW country is no small challenge, but partners Marta and Sylwester, along with their teenage son Adam, found the process a little easier once they realised they could build their own home – a process much easier in Australia than in Europe. Originally from Poland, the family moved from England to Canberra five years ago, but the couple had been collecting ideas for their dream home for 25 years. “When we discovered there are a lot of new houses being built on old blocks, we jumped at the chance,” says Marta. “Here, you can build something completely individual, crafted to your taste, which is unusual overseas.”

The large block in a leafy inner suburb that caught their eye originally held a tiny 1950s cottage with an overgrown garden. As there was nothing about the house that was salvageable, Marta and Sylwester briefed designer Adam Hobill to create a new, passive solar four-bedroom house. “We had very specific ideas,” says Sylwester. “We wanted something modern and spacious with an open-plan design. We also wanted our bedroom to be in the back of the house next to the garden, with a wrap-around pool and lots of decking.”

Raised off the ground to the same level as the house, the simply stunning pool can be seen from almost every room, allowing the indoor spaces to blend with the outdoors. >

LIVING AREA (above left) Relaxed yet sophisticated, the light-filled space features a mix of pieces picked up in Australia and overseas. Blackbutt floors and pale walls form a simple backdrop to the Scandinavian-inspired furniture, including a white leather sofa – for a similar sofa, try the ‘Duomo’ 2.5 seater and chaise sofa from Nick Scali (nickskali.com.au) – and a side table from Habitat in London.

KITCHEN (above right) With a Caesarstone benchtop in Oyster, the breakfast bench is used constantly, teamed with a trio of stools (for similar, try Lapalma ‘Lem’ stools from ECC Lighting + Furniture). “We spend a lot of time in the kitchen, not just cooking but reading newspapers and magazines, or working on the laptop,” says Marta. Designed by Marta, a window splashback gives a visual link to the outdoors. Frosted glass cupboards cleverly hide kitchen clutter and can be lit up at night for a gentle glow.



“I wanted the ensuite open, because it has the **best view** of all the rooms. It’s hidden away so you are not overlooked by anyone”

< With soaring three metre ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows and minimal doors, the sun-drenched house flows effortlessly from one room to another. The master bedroom and ensuite are connected to the open-plan kitchen, living and dining area by a timber sliding door, adding to the sense of spaciousness. Adam has his own space, with a bedroom, bathroom, study and TV room. “Being a teenager, he prefers to be away from us most of the time!” says Marta with a laugh.

Decorated in a seamless mix of old and new, the house incorporates Marta’s love of Japan, evidenced by the Japanese-style bathroom with its garden outlook, with the simplicity and pale timbers of Scandinavian design. Much-loved furniture, such as the simple table and bench found at London homewares emporium Habitat, blend with pieces bought specifically to suit the space. “We had to buy new things because we had never lived in a house this big before,” says Marta. “We bought a few things in anticipation of living here, and some things were bought because of their appeal.”

Both dedicated gardeners, Marta and Sylwester landscaped the garden themselves, incorporating the beautiful existing Chinese Elm into the decking as a feature. It was only after chopping back the overgrown plants they realised that the house had spectacular views over Canberra. “We can see hot air balloons in the sky from our bedroom,” says Sylwester, “or have a spa in the evening with champagne and watch the fireworks on New Year’s Eve or Canberra Day – we don’t have to go anywhere!”

FOYER (above left) In the foyer, an expansive six-metre void combines with dark charcoal tiles for a great first impression. A red coat rack is the first of bold splashes of red in the home – Metro Style has a similar coat rack; visit metro-style.com.au. Blackbutt steps lead up to teenager Adam’s bedroom.

MASTER BEDROOM (above right) The couple spend a lot of time in the bedroom, reading, listening to music or going out to the spa. “The room is so open to the garden that the lines are blurred,” says Sylwester. To keep the look simple, the colour scheme is black and white, with a black leather upholstered bed (try Nick Scali for a similar bed) and a woven artwork in muted tones above, from Poland. A wall behind the bed leads through to the ensuite and dressing area. A cut-out screen from London’s Habitat completes the sophisticated look.



Inside story

Who lives here? Marta, a biologist and jeweller (jouxlerie.com); Sylwester, a scientist; their son Adam, 16; and labradoodle Sharkie. The couple's older son Szczepan lives in England.

Any advice for building a new house?

Marta: "Take as long as you can planning how you will use the space. The more thought that goes into it, the more you enjoy it in the end."

Favourite room in the house? Sylwester: "I love the bedroom because it's not just a room where you sleep; it's a room where you read a book, or go to the pool or spa."

Best eco-friendly tip?

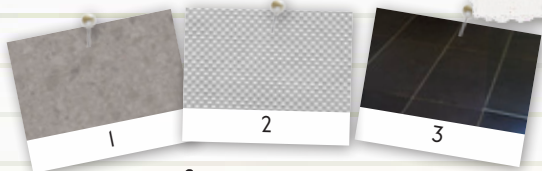
"Use double-glazing, a water tank and solar panels. They cost extra money but pay themselves off in the long run."

Any changes?

"Sometimes we pinch ourselves. Through good planning and luck, there is nothing we would change."

ENSUITE Taking centrestage in the ensuite is a beautiful oval-shaped bath – try the Decina 'Munich' freestanding bath from Harvey Norman Bathrooms & Tiles for similar. "It's the most comfortable bath I've ever been in because it just envelops you," says Marta. The ensuite's tranquil feel is achieved with honed basalt tiles from Homestone and underfloor heating, creating a snug cocoon-like space for winding down. "I wanted the ensuite open, because it has the best view of all the rooms," says Marta. "It's hidden away so you are not overlooked by anyone." Missoni 'Giacomo' towels from Home By Creations add a punch of colour and pattern. >

style notes



the details

1 Kitchen benchtops 'Classico' engineered stone in Oyster, \$500/sqm (including installation), Caesarstone.

2 Island bench front Try 'Fusion Design Source' laminate in Pinpoints 4, from \$175/sqm, Laminex.

3 Ensuite tiles 600mm x 300mm honed basalt tiles, \$55/sqm, Homestone.

CONTACT Building designer Adam Hobill Design, (02) 6260 8868, adamhobilldesign.com.au.

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POOL Raising the pool above the ground creates a seamless look from the indoors, showcasing the beautiful scenic outlook.

LIVING AREA

Splashes of red, from the artwork *Successful State of Mind* by Stephanie McLoughlin and a bold armchair, enliven this cosy corner.



"Here, you can build something **completely individual**, crafted to your taste, which is unusual overseas"



DINING AREA One of the family's prized possessions is the dining table and bench from Habitat in London.

