

la vie en ROSE

DESIGNER **ALANNAH HILL**,
WHO HAS AN EYE FOR ALL
THINGS GIRLIE, OPENS UP
HER ENCHANTING HOME.

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Alannah Hill in her living room. Antique French doors from Capocchi in Armadale, Melbourne adorn one wall.



The antique-mirrored table is a feature of the light-filled dining area. "It's broken of course," says Hill. "When Edward was small, he basically smashed everything!"

You can tell everything about someone by the way their house is, by how they decorate," says Alannah Hill. It's no surprise then that the Melbourne-based fashion designer's home in leafy South Yarra tells a colourful and grand story about its owner.

Built in the late 1800s, the Boom-style terrace was once a humble doctor's surgery. But since buying the two-storey, three-bedroom abode almost three years ago, Hill has given the home a stunning overhaul, imbuing it with her trademark femininity and glamour. Now, it's a living doll's house—romantic and exquisite.

The building's majestic renovation, in some ways, echoes Hill's own rags-to-riches life. Born to an impoverished Tasmanian family, as one of five children, Hill left home at 15 and by 17 had moved to Melbourne. "I didn't fit in in Tasmania. I found a little scene here and [life] went from there," she says. "It's funny, isn't it, how destiny has a path for you?"

Her fate was to create a fashion brand and, in 1997, she opened her first store on Chapel Street. This year, her eponymous label celebrates its sweet 16th and now boasts 14 boutiques (including one in New Zealand), a further 24 David Jones concessions and a flourishing online store that ships internationally. Such convincing fortune wasn't something Hill expected, though. "It was a wild, wild fantasy that I would somehow be successful and have a lovely house."

Happily, the designer achieved both. And her "lovely house" is befitting a woman who has fashioned a career out of girlie frocks (or "creating enchantment", as she calls it). The walls are painted a crisp white, providing a clean backdrop for the mirrored, antique and pink-hued furnishings positioned throughout. Vibrant Laura Ashley curtains hang in the bedroom; floral Kenzo prints cover armchairs in the living room; Voluspa candles flicker gently in every room. "[Candle] lighting is very calming," she says. "I love the smell, I love the flickering. I think they are very romantic." Scent is clearly important: delicate bottles of Chloé eau de parfum and Coco Noir by Chanel litter tabletops and windowsills. "It's very sensual," says Hill of her love of all things olfactory. "Perfume makes me feel everything is right with the world."

These days, little is amiss in Hill's life. Along with her sartorial success, the 51-year-old shares the residence with her 11-year-old son, Edward. The two have a close and tender relationship. With her painted face and skyscraper heels, Hill doesn't look like any of the other mums at the school gate but she dotes on Ed and he clearly adores her—hugging his mother on request and without hesitation. "He's taught me to be kinder and not so judgmental," says Hill. A budding musician, Ed's passion is further fuelled by time spent with Hill's rock-star fiancé, Hugo Race (Hill prefers to call him her "betrothed"), who was once a member of Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds.

Up until 2010, Hill and her son had been living in "a beautiful apartment" in St Kilda in the former French Embassy but Hill craved space and was won over by this place's soaring ceilings. "I love big,



Laura Ashley drapes frame the bedroom windows. Vintage dress. Valentino heels. BELOW: Hill had the armchairs covered in striking Kenzo fabric.





The master bedroom is accented in clashing pink and red florals. OPPOSITE: The front room. "My favourite piece in the house is that mirror—and I love the red Venetian lamp."





CLOCKWISE (from left): Mirrors feature throughout the house. “They give a sense of space and light,” says Hill. The powder room downstairs is pretty in pink. Much of the designer’s time is spent in the front garden, “watering, madly watering!” OPPOSITE: Hill and her son, Edward—“I love his irony, his humour and his intelligence, just him. He has a beautiful heart.” Hair and make-up: Bradwyn Jones.



grand rooms.” That’s not to say she was completely convinced: “I must say, when I got the keys I came in on my own and I thought, ‘What have I done? This is a big family home. It’s just Edward and I.’” But Hill has transformed it into a cosy retreat. Perched on a cerise velvet sofa in the front room, she says, “I love doing interiors.” She drew inspiration from antique stores and interiors magazines, which she leafs through on a Sunday afternoon when she has a few fleeting moments to herself. And smartly, she employed the advice and help of some similarly minded friends: interior designer Travis Walton, landscape gardener Pauline Amon and antique curator Jean-Pierre Heurteau.

Walton was responsible for installing the polished dark-wood floors, the mosaic tiles in the powder room and the pale-pink onyx bench tops in the kitchen. Amon transformed the front garden into an oasis of calm, where Hill enjoys “pulling weeds, planting annuals but mostly just standing, waving the hose around”. And Heurteau has sourced much of Hill’s ornate furniture. “I’ve been buying furniture from him since I was a girl,” she says.

She describes the aesthetic as “modern vintage glamour. It’s Marie Antoinette, like a little Versailles.” Indeed, the home does have a palatial air: the red carpet up the stairs is aptly nicknamed “the red catwalk” and Hill designed and had custom-made the glittering chandeliers (the one for the living room even arrived with a crane for installation).

“I have such a strong idea of what I want,” says Hill. And though the interiors are supremely feminine, what really stands out is the clarity, confidence and strength of her vision. As she said, you can tell everything about a person by how they decorate their home. ■

