



[This page] "When they're in flower, I have them everywhere in the house," says designer Tamara Maynes of the hydrangeas in the yard of her home near Bowral NSW. [Opposite page] Her mood-board, inside an embroidery hoop, shows a "Limited Edition" item from a Valiant ("This sign spoke to me, as we had the same car when I was a kid, and many of my pieces are limited editions") and a photo of her "trouser-wearing, motorcycle-riding great-grandmother". →

HOME OF THE HANDMADE

A MOVE FROM THE CITY TO THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS OF NSW HAS ALLOWED DESIGNER TAMARA MAYNES TO PURSUE AN INHERITED LOVE OF CRAFT THAT GOES BACK CENTURIES

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This gracious country cottage is more than just a place to live for Tamara Maynes; for this designer, the house has given her a new lease of life – artistically, physically and emotionally.

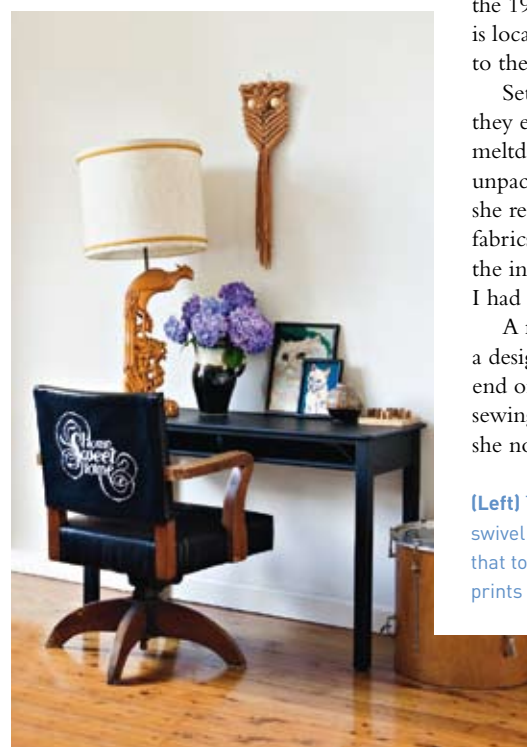
After 20 years in inner-city Sydney, she craved a slower pace. A former window-dresser and fashion designer, Tamara had been extremely busy at home and at work; while expanding her design business (her clients included Kookäi and Empire Homewares), she'd managed to move house 16 times. By the time she scored her most recent coup – working as a product designer for Orson & Blake – she was after a more simplified lifestyle.

Fate intervened. Around the same time that a colleague was looking for a long-term housesitter for her Southern Highlands property in NSW, Tamara's musician husband, Sascha, was diagnosed with a serious health issue – so, after months of soul-searching, the couple was ready to make a new beginning.

It's the pure seclusion of this country home, as well as its ramshackle garden, that convinced the couple they'd made the right decision. Built in the 1920s but renovated five years ago, the house is located on the side of Mount Gibraltar, close to the genteel town of Bowral.

Settling in, however, wasn't as easy as they expected; in fact, Tamara had an artistic meltdown within the first few weeks. After unpacking her modern baroque-inspired pieces, she realised all her theatrical chandeliers and fabrics full of rich reds and pinks detracted from the interior's light, airy ambience. "Everything I had was completely wrong," she recalls.

A makeover was essential, so Tamara compiled a designer mood-board in her workroom at one end of the house. Equipped with her trusty sewing machine and baskets full of craft supplies, she not only created her own house palette, →



(This page) A keen collector of salvaged furniture, Tamara bought the dining table – originally an old schoolmaster's desk – more than 20 years ago. A vintage chandelier with deep red crystals was one of her favourite pieces at her former inner-city residence, but to make it work here, she removed all the crystals and replaced them with yellow wooden beads. "It brought it down to earth and made it fit in with the surroundings," she explains. Vintage tin plates with bird and flower motifs **(opposite page, top right)** adorn the kitchen. "We have lots of yellow rosebushes, so I was really inspired by that."



(Left) Tamara personalised the back of the vintage swivel chair with a 'Home Sweet Home' tapestry that took over 60 hours' work. **(Top left)** The horse prints are by local photographer Julian Wolkenstein.



“AS I GREW UP, WE WERE SO INVOLVED WITH MAKING, MAKING, MAKING JUST FOR THE PURE PLEASURE. WE ALWAYS LIKED TO MAKE IT, THEN MOVE ON”



but she also ended up putting together her new business – The Six Week Boutique, an online shop of her homespun craft. Examples of her handiwork – cross-stitch displays, macramé owl hangings – can be seen on many of the walls.

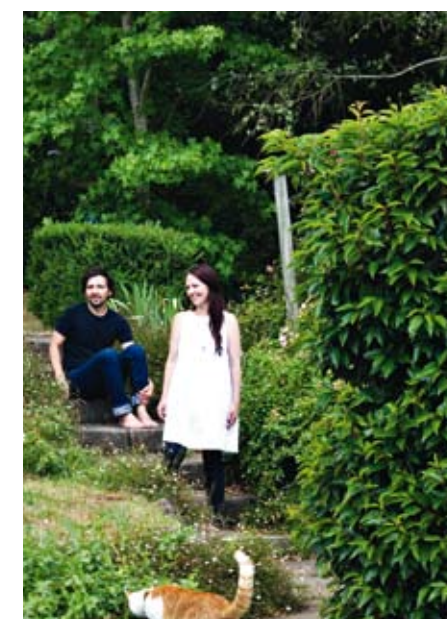
Tamara’s soft spot for the country life is much more than a fad. She grew up in the 1970s on a sheep and cattle farm in Cowra, where she’d huddle around the kitchen table, watching Dad make leather sandals while Mum baked enamelled jewellery in the oven.

Free to experiment, she always had access to hammers, saws and drills in her father’s workshop, but it was her mother’s sewing room that was the real treasure trove. It was “full of every single craft medium you could possibly want”, thanks to her mother running a craft-supplies store.

“I don’t remember either of them teaching me, but I think it just rubbed off,” says Tamara. “I’m such a perfectionist, and that’s my dad down to a tee. He’d always pull something apart and put it back together till it was perfect. Mum has this real sense of creative adventure; she’ll try any kind of craft, and I have that trait, as well.” Recently, Tamara learnt that her family’s love of craft actually goes back four centuries. After her maternal grandmother compiled the family’s genealogy chart, they discovered that an ancestor was responsible for the wardrobes of King James I of England in the early 1600s. “Not only that, my grandfather still builds the most amazing dolls’ houses, even though he’s 80,” says Tamara. “It must be in our genes.”

Today, family influences her craft in other, somewhat unexpected ways – a motorcycle cross-stitch pattern, for instance, is inspired by her great-grandmother’s bike-riding antics. And that creative gene keeps firing up. “Even now, I have a good time making things, but I’m always thinking, ‘What’s next?’” ❖

(Right) Tamara in the garden of her home with her husband, Sascha, and their cat, Eric. **(Far right)** Eclectic op-shop finds adorn the table: a German teapot, a yellow vase and grouped brass owls..



(This page) Tamara and Sascha had the black-and-white curtain printed with Southern Highlands destinations after they produced their Bus Roll Tea Towels of the same design. After receiving so many compliments on the curtain from visitors, they made them available as a bespoke service. One of Tamara’s pieces, seen in the main bedroom **(opposite page, top right)**, says ‘We are so good together’. She explains, ‘I personalised it by stitching the same words in German, as Sascha is from Berlin.’ **(Opposite page, top left)** Her sewing machine is “one of my favourite things in the world”.