



One to watch:

Anna McMillan

Making a life changing shift in careers is incredibly daunting, especially when you've already spent more than a decade and a half headed down a different path. But for people like Anna McMillan, where you've come from forms a vital foundation for building future success while pursuing your true passion.

After more than 15 years in corporate sales and marketing roles, Anna found herself craving something new. Her enthusiasm for interiors led her to enrol in the Interior Design programme at Sydney Design School. But rather than wait until she finished her schooling, Anna applied her business savvy to concurrently pursue her long-held desire to start her own business. With her decision to launch McMillan Design a year before graduation, she was already ahead of the game with a foot in the door – and a Resene Total Colour Award – by the time she had her diploma in hand.

We talk more with Anna about her bright new future, where she finds inspiration and the Resene colours she's currently crushing on.

What made you decide to pursue a career in interior design?

I've always been a passionate renovator, starting with my first property at 26 years old – a very dated, daggy one-bedroom redbrick apartment. Since then, I've completed nearly 10 renovation projects. I guess I've also always had an interest in design, especially the transformative effect it can have on the way we engage with a space and how it makes us feel. Fifteen years on, when I was exploring what life outside my corporate career might look like, I had an epiphany when I realised that I could potentially build a career and business doing exactly that:

transforming spaces and creating homes that could have a positive impact on those living in them.

How would you describe your design aesthetic?

I'd say my design aesthetic is 'relaxed coastal luxe'. Having grown up near the water (and my star sign being Cancer), I'm drawn to the coast and love the references it provides in design, from colour to texture to lifestyle.

When working with clients though, it's really important that my design responds to their needs and reflects their personality and lifestyle, so not every project is going to follow that specific design style. So, I'd say my overriding design ethos is 'relaxed and liveable'.

Where do you look when you need inspiration?

Nature is a constant source of inspiration for me – the textures, the colours, the mood – and I love looking to new bar and restaurant venues for ideas. I'm also inspired by other designers and one of my favourite firms is Hare + Klein. I love their layered, textural design style, which I find beautifully understated yet loaded with personality.

What have been some of the highlights of your design career so far?

I've been lucky to have worked on a wide range of projects since I started McMillan Design, from bathroom renovations and room makeovers to total home renovations. The highlight was a renovation I worked on last year. My clients had bought a very tired, dark 80s townhouse and wanted to create a contemporary, light filled family home before they moved in. It involved completely gutting the two-storey home, creating clever

- Resene Jungle Mist
- Resene Eighth Thorndon Cream
- Resene Rice Cake

above right: McMillan Design is a boutique interior design studio based on Sydney's lower North Shore. Through it, Anna specialises in transforming homes for busy families and professionals who are looking to create warm, inviting homes that reflect their personality, support their lifestyle and give them energy. Her focus is mainly on residential projects ranging from full-scale renovations, to individual room makeovers. The walls, ceiling and trims of this dining room, designed by Anna, are in Resene Eighth Thorndon Cream. Image by Fiona Galbraith, www.fionagalbraith.com

below right: For this renovation project, located in Barden Ridge, Anna chose Resene Rice Cake for the walls and trims as a tranquil backdrop for the home office and lounge space. Image by Fiona Galbraith.



 Resene Blue Bark	 Resene Ivanhoe	 Resene Juniper
 Resene Spitfire	 Resene Ravine	 Resene Half Linen

storage solutions and providing multi-functional living zones – all within a pretty tight floor plan! The clients were so great to work with and I loved the whole process of designing the spaces, selecting the finishes and then furnishing the spaces for this lovely family. Seeing their joy at the end result was incredibly fulfilling.

Is there anything you're looking to specialise in during your career?

I really enjoy working on residential projects as I love the impact you can have on the way people interact with their spaces and the energy that comes from creating a fresh, stylish and functional home that brings them joy.

What would be an absolute dream project for you to work on?

I think my dream project would be a total home renovation designed in collaboration with an architect and landscape designer. I really like the idea of partnering and collaborating from the outset of a project to ensure all elements – both external and internal – have been thoughtfully designed as a whole.

Tell us about your Sydney Design School project that won you the Resene Total Colour Rising Star Award.

The brief was to create an innovative restaurant and bar space in the heritage-listed foundations of the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge at Lavender Bay. With the location steeped in history, I took my inspiration from the site's former use as a mechanical garage and developed my design around the concept of FUEL. From that, I embraced the soft, flowing curves of petrol on water and built a colour scheme rich in petrol-infused tones – from deep teal blues to earthy berry tones to soft green accents and touches of brass. The rich colour palette strongly juxtaposes the raw concrete walls, creating a sense of intimacy, warmth and sophistication.



The soft, flowing shapes observed with fuel on water are also reflected in the architectural forms of the space, with the three levels of the building appearing to float and swirl against one another. The flowing curvaceous shapes are further enhanced with colour, such as the rich mulberry private dining area in Resene Spitfire, the dusty blue dining booths in Resene Ivanhoe, and the bar on the mezzanine in Resene Juniper that overlooks the dining area below. These gorgeous colours are taken through to the soft furnishings and finishes, such as the mulberry leather booth cushions, the deep teal velvet curtain and deep green marble in the bar area, adding to the warm, sumptuous feeling of these spaces.

What do you like about Resene?

I find Resene paints have a beautiful depth of colour to them. And, being a Kiwi, I was well aware of Resene when I started my design journey here in Australia, having used Resene when I was living in New Zealand.

What are your current favourite Resene colours?

My favourite Resene colours at the moment are gorgeous, soft, muted green and blue tones – in particular: Resene Ravine, Resene Coast, Resene Clouded Blue, Resene Half Linen and Resene Double Sea Fog. [aw](#)

See more of Anna's work at www.mcmillandesign.com.au.



-  Resene Double Sea Fog
-  Resene Coast
-  Resene Clouded Blue

above: Anna received the Resene Total Colour Rising Star Award for her restaurant concept, 'FUEL'. She chose Resene Blue Bark as her hero colour throughout the main walls of the lower level and staircase, dusty blue Resene Ivanhoe to colour the dining booths, Resene Juniper for the mezzanine bar and Resene Spitfire for the private dining area. Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen was specified for the majority of the interior paint surfaces for its durability, but Anna specified Resene Super Gloss for the curved dining booths and private dining walls to create interest and contrast through the addition of glossy surfaces.