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Living HISTORY

Every object has a story to tell in this tailor-made family home in Victoria's picturesque Mount Macedon.

STORY *Elizabeth Wilson* | STYLING *Tess Newman-Morris* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Lisa Cohen*

AT HOME WITH **H&G**

OUTDOOR DINING Encircled by giant century-old trees, this sunny outdoor dining area is a perfect sheltered spot for Charlotte Coote and daughters (from left) Francesca, three, Daphne, two, and Sybil, five, to gather. Located on the south side of their home, this is the setting for breakfasts, morning teas and lunches. "We also eat here on summer evenings," says Charlotte. "The trees are uplit and look so pretty at night." **GARDEN SWING** Gumboot-wearing garden fairies Sybil (on swing) and Francesca (with stick) love playing in the woodland setting.



Here's a joyous coexistence of antiques and gleaming new furnishings in interior designer Charlotte Coote's freshly renovated home. In every room, heirlooms inherited from her late father, international designer John Coote, sit side-by-side with pretty, bespoke homewares designed by Charlotte herself. Every detail is curated and personalised, producing interiors filled with memories and autobiographical references. "This home is our story," says Charlotte, who lives here with husband Geordie Taylor and their daughters, Sybil, five, Francesca, three, and Daphne, two.

Charlotte and Geordie bought this property, Marnanie, at Mount Macedon, 64km north-west of Melbourne, in 2017, after a tip-off about its sale from family friend, John Graham, who had himself lived at the property from the 1970s until 2001. "We inspected the property on a freezing cold August day," says Charlotte. "It was raining and the kids were screaming." But both Charlotte and Geordie felt a calm conviction that the two-storey, five-bedroom weatherboard home surrounded by towering old trees was the place to make their family home. "We both grew up in the country and it's something we really wanted for our daughters."

Marnanie was built in 1890 as the home of the first Australian-born Governor General, Sir Isaac Isaacs, who lived here with Lady Isaacs and their daughters Margaret and Nancy, ▶



SITTING ROOM Every object in this room has impressive provenance, from the John Olsen paintings on the left wall to the ornate console table co-designed by Charlotte and her father. Sofas and floor lamps, Coote & Co. White lamp base, Bragg & Co. Artwork on right, Camilla d'Antoine. Beech foliage from the garden. **FIREPLACE** Italian crystal mirror, Coote & Co. Armchairs upholstered in Kathryn M Ireland 'Ikat Check' in Sage, Colefax and Fowler. Branches of horse chestnut from the garden. **ENTRY** Charlotte designed the console table, adapted from an Irish Georgian design. Antique Chinese chair bought at auction. Antique Louis Vuitton case formerly owned by Charlotte's father. The artworks, also inherited from John Coote, are 18th-century prints. "They depict men riding horses and they're a bit wacky but I love their classical looks," says Charlotte. The rug is her own design, based on a 19th-century wallpaper, Coote & Co. Vase, Astier de Villatte (collaboration with John Derian). Tortoiseshell lamps, Bragg & Co. Walls painted Resene Double Parchment and Resene Half Bianca. Rhododendrons from the garden.





FAMILY ROOM Also known as 'The Blue Room' (painted Resene Nauti with trims in Resene Bianca), this is where the children spend a lot of their time. "It doesn't usually look this neat!" says Charlotte. "They set up camp on the ottoman, they jump on it, there are toys everywhere... it gets pretty crazy." Ottoman designed by Charlotte with a shell motif, lion legs with Fishnet fabric upholstery in Marine), Schumacher. The rug is her design too, Coote & Co. Lamp bases, Graham Geddes Antiques. Curtains in Irish linen-cotton. Artwork 'The Promise of Life' (mixed media) by Camilla d'Antoine. **WINDOW DRESSING** The girls climb on the sofa for a better view to the garden. Sofa upholstered in Georgia MacMillan Inky Stripe fabric. Cushions, Coote & Co. **DINING** Charlotte inherited the table from her father, who used to have it in his kitchen at Bellamont Forest, his 18th-century estate in Ireland where Charlotte spent her childhood. The chairs were bought at auction and reupholstered in aged Scottish leather with metal stud detailing. The oak butcher's block and antique French copper pots were also from Bellamont Forest. White ceramic plates, Astier de Villatte.

after whom the property is named. The home sits on 6.8 naturally blessed hectares featuring a spring-fed creek and beautiful old-growth mountain ash and blackwood trees plus exotic species - oaks, lindens, redwoods and maples - planted during Sir Isaac's time. It's a magical setting for older siblings Sybil and Francesca to explore, and forms a leafy outlook that can be enjoyed from every room of the home.

While the house was structurally sound when Charlotte and Geordie bought it, the interiors were tired. Charlotte has given them a total revamp from floor to ceiling, creating paint and textile schemes that complement the colours outside, installing bespoke furniture and curating art and objects, many of which she inherited from her father's ancestral home, Bellamont Forest, an 18th-century estate in Ireland.

Charlotte describes her style as "new Classicist" - traditional but with a twist of the contemporary and the unexpected. These twists can be seen in the eye-popping wall of blue in the main bedroom, the glossy pink dining room and quirky art. Despite its impeccable style and sophistication Charlotte insists the home is not too precious. She and Geordie want their daughters to feel right at home here, heirlooms and all.

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H&G AT HOME WITH

DAPHNE'S BEDROOM "I love this room and secretly wish it was my own!" says Charlotte. Four-poster beds and bedheads, Coote & Co. Fabric for curtains, canopies, bedheads and cushions, Kathryn M Ireland 'Storybook' toile in Pink. Antique prints of Venetian cats, a gift to Daphne from Charlotte's mother. Double Gourd lamp in Marshmallow Pink, Bragg & Co. Wall painted Resene Cosmos. Sisal flooring, International Floorcoverings. **MAIN BEDROOM** Charlotte and Sybil share a mother-daughter moment in Charlotte's bedroom which features a vibrant blue wall in Resene Malibu. "It's really bold," says Charlotte. "To make it work, I've used lots of layers of green against the blue." Day bed bought at auction. Fabric on daybed and cushions, Kendal Leaf in Green, Colefax and Fowler. Artworks are 18th-century botanical prints by John Derian. Pineapple lamp in custom colour, Coote & Co. **STAIRWAY** Charlotte has left the walls clean here, allowing the greenery to shine through the double-height arched window. Stool, Graham Geddes Antiques. **BATHROOM** The Arabescato marble-clad bathroom dates back to the 1990s. Charlotte updated the room by replacing cupboard fronts with white doors and painting walls white. Branches of dogwood cut fresh from the garden. ▶



ROOFTOP This view from the garden takes in Charlotte and Geordie's upstairs bedroom. To the left is the rooftop of the double garage with cupola feature and copper weathervane. Beyond this is the sculptural form of a monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*). **GARDEN** Daphne, Francesca and Sybil pick blooms from an orange-flowering *Mollis azalea* against a backdrop of towering mountain ash trees believed to be more than 300 years old. "The girls wander and play outside all the time, and they've created a fairy garden," says Charlotte, who credits the structure and flow of the garden to family friends John Graham and the late Kevin O'Neill, passionate gardeners who owned the property from the 1970s to 2001. ►





LIFE & STYLE

Charlotte shares some firsts and favourite things.

MY FIRST (ADULT) HOME Geordie and I first moved into an Art Deco apartment together in St Kilda, a dump with great bones. When you opened the front door it hit the side of our sofa, so we had to literally climb our way into the apartment. We didn't care because we were very much in love!

FIRST CAR A 1980 brown Peugeot 505, for which I paid \$1000 to my sister Amelia. It had brown tweed seats and took five goes to start in the morning. My siblings and I called it Marty Monster.

DREAM CAR A pale blue 1960 Mercedes-Benz convertible 300SL Roadster (bottom right).

GREAT READ *The Bolter* by Frances Osborne, which is about Lady Idina Sackville.

DECORATOR'S MANUAL Colefax and Fowler's *Inspirational Interiors* by Roger Banks-Pye. Though it was written in the 1990s (an era of a lot of questionable design), I believe it has timeless tips that are still relevant.

NUMBER-ONE SCENT Lily of the valley, freshly picked from my garden at Marnanie in November.

NEXT PURCHASE FOR YOUR HOME Oversized Magic Lantern slides from Camilla Dantoine's *The Winsome Collection* (bottom left).

FAVOURITE COLOUR COMBINATION Blue and green – they should always be seen.

FAVOURITE PET Cecil, our peacock. He has actually run away but we're sure he'll be back!

NEXT HOLIDAY India in March with my mother and sister, and Sri Lanka in July with Geordie.

PLEASURABLE PASTIMES Spending time in our vegetable garden with our daughters.

NEXT HOME PROJECT Geordie and I recently bought land on the beautiful east coast of Tasmania and are going to have fun designing a beach house.

CURRENT DESIGNER CRUSH [British architect] Ben Pentreath (room at right, second from bottom). **H&G**



Photography by Lisa Cohen, Camilla Dantoine/winsome-online (Magic Lantern slide), Jason Ingram (Ben Pentreath room) & Getty Images.

'MY GOAL THIS YEAR IS TO ONLY DO THINGS THAT SPARK JOY IN MY LIFE. MARIE KONDO IS ONTO SOMETHING!'