



first class

In store

SHOP GIRL

A gracious new Sydney store confirms its proprietor as a true domestic goddess.

Words: Leigh-Ann Pow

Donna Hay is moving polka dot cupcake patties from one shelf to another when I enter her new General Store, and I must admit I am momentarily taken aback. What with her award-winning self-titled magazine,

her numerous cookbooks, her kitchen range available exclusively through David Jones, an upcoming collaboration with Royal Doulton and regular international television appearances, I hadn't expected to find her so engaged in this latest venture; frankly I didn't think she'd have the time.

Like Jamie, Gordon, Martha *et al*, Hay has become an international brand, her name adorning everything from bowls to cookie mixes. And while the last thing you would expect to see in a Gordon Ramsay restaurant is the man himself these days, Hay is refreshingly hands on.

As she shows me around the light-filled corner terrace in the Sydney suburb of Woollahra that she has lovingly nudged from dilapidated to delightful, she tells stories of local council battles and the formerly water-logged basement. The result of all that hard work is a welcoming space of creamy white-washed panelling, dark wood floors and a feature wall of honey-hued sandstone.

The stock that lines the walls is just as personal, all sourced during long-haul sojourns and nocturnal internet sessions

A few of her favourite things: a hand-poured soy candle; environmentally conscious cleaning products and old-style twine.

– “I’m a big late-night Googler,” she says. A sleek brand of skincare by American Kathleen Lewis was found via a design blog; milky white handmade ceramics are by an English artisan who never answers her emails; cute pastel sugars are sourced from an eccentric French woman who lives in a château. There are wonderfully overstuffed floor cushions, a children’s corner upstairs and plenty of eponymous products, from soy candles to eco-conscious washing-up liquid. Thursday to Saturday will be baking days, with the staff producing fresh muffins and flourless chocolate cake in the little kitchen tucked into the back of the store.

“I basically stock the things that I want to buy,” Hay says with a laugh. ■



Clockwise from above: pastel-hued sugars from France; Kathleen Lewis Rose Dream Cream; the light-filled store.



Hay outside her store at 40 Holdsworth Street, Woollahra, NSW. Tel (02) 9328 6555.

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