

08 Modern Classical

Design Handbook 2025

With Justine Orton,
Orton Haus



Meet your guide

Justine Orton

With a meticulous eye for detail and an appreciation for classical architectural principles, Justine Orton of Orton Haus shows how Modern Classical homes exude sophistication while meeting the demands of modern living. Justine understands the realities of building your own home and she will share her insights on how to achieve the Modern Classical home to suit your lifestyle, budget and schedule.



From Justine:

‘Modern Classical is the best of both worlds. It’s mixing the timeless elegance of classical design with a sleek, simple kind of modern style.’

Cover

This Modern Classical duplex features a ground floor clad with Stria™ Cladding Fine Texture and the upper floor in Hardie™ Brushed Concrete Cladding, resulting in a truly elegant exterior that blends timeless sophistication with modern refinement.

In this handbook, Justine shares her expertise and experience to introduce our newest home style, Modern Classical. She brings the look to life through materials and textures, colours and some tips on duplex builds. It’s about a timeless mix of European-feeling architecture and modern warmth.



Contents

- Lifestyle themes
- Style overview
- Design features
- Cladding solutions
- Materials & textures
- Colour palette
- Floorplan
- Top tips

Lifestyle themes

The Modern Homes Forecast 2025 identifies four lifestyle themes changing the way we design and build our homes today. Global and local changes are reshaping how we live, and here we show how Modern Classical homes are evolving to reflect these shifts.

01 Building Efficiencies

To achieve cost-effectiveness, bulk purchasing and cost-effective alternatives including engineered timber flooring, melamine joinery and Hardie™ exterior cladding products can be used to maximise functionality, aesthetics and natural light while minimising expenses and energy consumption.



‘Modern Classical feels like living in a home that is both timeless and in the now. It’s a perfect mix of sophistication and comfort.’

—Justine Orton, Orton Haus

02 Wellbeing

Visible overhead gardens and courtyards create a tranquil connection to nature, enhancing indoor-outdoor flow.

‘You can bring the outside in by positioning courtyards and gardens within view from inside the home. Overhead gardens add beauty while keeping the home cool’ says Justine.

03 Flexibility

Designed for maximum flexibility, a duplex can cater to a wide range of people—whether you’re downsizing, starting a family, or seeking multiple living spaces. A thoughtful layout ensures privacy while maintaining a sense of community through a shared facade, making it ideal for multi-generational living, rental opportunities, or holiday stays.

04 Resilience

High-performance insulation, double-glazed windows and strategically placed window hoods reduce energy use and improve thermal comfort. Solar panels and water tanks are also installed to enhance sustainability.

- 1 Stria™ Cladding Fine Texture features from the ground to upper level on this Modern Classical home, contrasting with black timber and steel accents.
- 2 Stria™ Cladding Fine Texture can be stacked horizontally or vertically. Using both orientations in combination can help to accentuate architectural forms.
- 3 Hardie™ Brushed Concrete Cladding is used on this double storey home for a clean, minimal aesthetic.



Elegant, warm & whimsical

Modern Classical style reflects the ideals of leisure and wealth and is designed to make a statement while exuding warmth, relaxation and ease. Neo-classical forms are updated with curves, soft textures and greenery to create a resort-style slice of Europe that is suited to Australian lifestyles.



1

The elegance of a block neo-classical exterior is combined with the curvature and natural tones typical of Mediterranean style homes, creating a balance between classic and whimsical. Strong visual elements such as symmetrical or asymmetrical archways, carved doors, black steel and metalwork on windows, balconies, and door frames help create a blend of classic sophistication and modern charm. Light colours or muted two-tone colour palettes create a sense of warmth.

Awnings and balconies add both practicality with shade, and aesthetic appeal by enhancing outdoor living spaces, adding to the charm of this style.

Outdoor spaces feature expansive courtyards, terraces and patios, perfect for entertaining all year round. Interiors feature curvatures, natural light, neutral-coloured and textured materials and simple shapes.

Theme insight Wellbeing

Spacious, harmonious interiors, connection to nature, spa-like bathrooms, fitness and recreation rooms, privacy and quiet, as well as abundant entertaining areas are hallmarks of the Modern Classical design.

Theme insight Flexibility

Modern Classical style creates a versatile foundation ideal for multi-generational and duplex living. Flexible floor plans lend seamless adaptability, accommodating a range of interior styles while meeting the diverse needs of evolving family dynamics.

‘The layout is designed to maximise space with two living rooms, four bedrooms, and an open-plan kitchen. It works just as well for a young family as it does for someone looking to downsize’ says Justine.

Theme insight Resilience

Modern Classical design combines the elegance of classical architecture with contemporary techniques and materials like Hardie™ exterior cladding products, making it inherently adaptable to environmental challenges.

- 1 The contemporary grandeur of this Modern Classical facade shines through with its striking arched windows. Featuring Hardie™ Brushed Concrete Cladding on the upper level, and Stria™ Cladding Fine Texture Cladding on the ground floor.
- 2 This timeless cladding combination continues at the rear of this duplex, with a seamless flow from indoor to outdoor living.

2



Design features

‘I love how the details and grandeur of classical design can work so well with contemporary aesthetics and functionality. It’s all about finding the balance.’

—Justine Orton, Orton Haus

1 Juxtaposition between straight edges & curves

Combining a straight-edged, boxed facade and flat roof with the soft curvature of arched windows blends classic elegance with modern charm.

2 Ornate curves and archways

Curved doorways and arched windows in black steel add visual interest to natural-look or textured exterior walls. These curves are inspired by nature, echoing the gentle flow of waves and hills to create a calming, organic feel within the home.

3 Light colour palette

Simple, light colours or muted two-tone colour palettes create a sense of warmth.

4 Biophilic elements

An abundance of potted plants, hedging and green walls on balconies, terraces and patios connect the architecture with the surrounding landscape

5 Interiors

Interiors embrace curvatures and simple shapes, natural light, and textured materials in neutral tones. Paired with herringbone floors, custom balustrades, and a muted color palette, these elements create a relaxing yet sophisticated atmosphere.



Theme insight Wellbeing

The soft, flowing lines of curved elements, such as archways, rounded furniture and sculptural details, introduce a sense of fluidity and balance, reducing harsh edges and promoting relaxation.

- 1 Achieving a clean look and minimising vertical joints is possible with Stria™ Cladding Fine Texture boards, available in 3000mm and 4200mm lengths.
- 2 An example of using Stria™ Cladding Fine Texture in both horizontal and vertical orientations to differentiate a buildings forms.
- 3 Exterior curves and archways are reflected in interior details like, artwork, furniture, décor and mouldings.

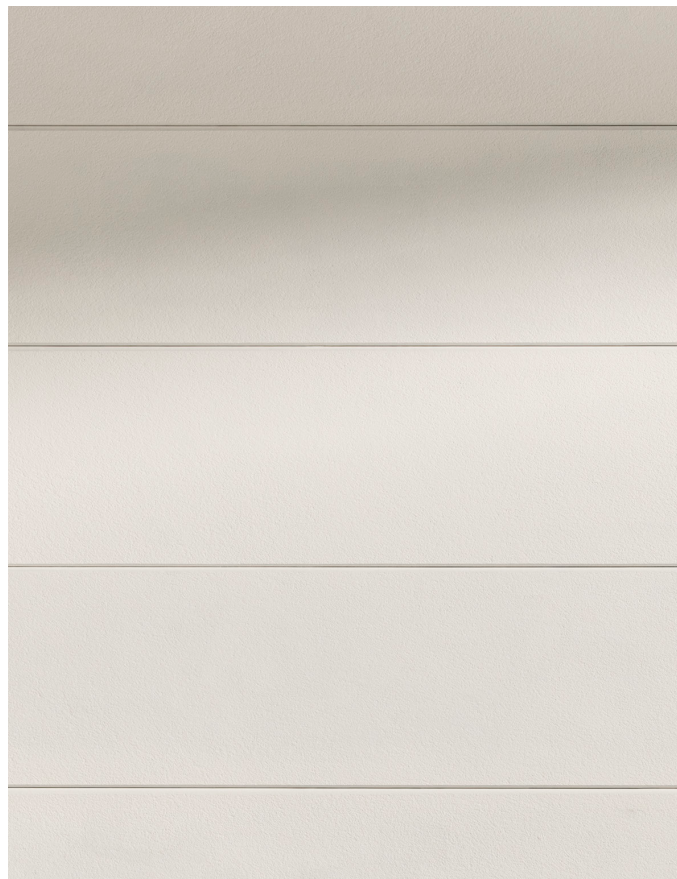


Cladding solutions

Seek out cladding options that maintain the understated elegance of Modern Classical architecture while offering practical benefits like durability, weather resistance and low maintenance.

Stria™ Cladding Fine Texture

Perfect for the ground floor due to its robust and versatile nature. Installed horizontally, it creates strong, clean lines that emphasize the architecture of the home while adding warmth through its subtle texture.



Hardie™ Brushed Concrete Cladding

This cladding offers a sleek look with its flowing lines, which adds visual interest to the upper levels of the home. The brushed concrete texture complements this style by providing a contemporary twist on traditional materials, enhancing the overall aesthetic with a touch of elegance.



Theme insight

Resilience

Modern Classical homes can maintain their timeless elegance while being equipped to endure the challenges of a changing climate by choosing cladding and roofing solutions designed to ensure extreme conditions.

‘Using pre-primed cladding speeds up construction—saving build time and cutting down interest costs’ says Justine.



‘By combining the new Stria™ Cladding and Hardie™ Brushed Concrete Cladding, you can create the ideal Modern Classical facade of grandeur and contemporary appeal.’

—Justine Orton, Orton Haus

Complementary Products



Axon™ Cladding

Materials & textures

Modern Classical materials and textures strike a balance between the warmth of traditional design and the freshness of modern living. Herringbone flooring, brass fixtures, and matte-finish cabinetry further enhance this harmony, offering a perfect mix of classical luxury and modern practicality.



Theme insight Flexibility

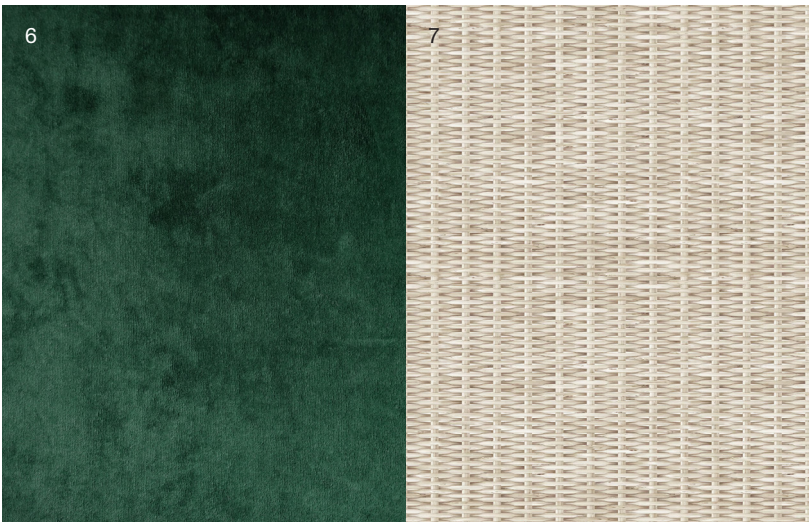
The careful curation of materials and textures for the Modern Classical home will ensure the space can evolve with changing tastes and adapt to new stages of home life.

‘Buying in bulk from a single supplier streamlines the process, saves money, and ensures a cohesive design’ says Justine.

‘Luxurious materials like marble, velvet, oak and walnut timbers can be paired with glass, metal and matte finishes with beautiful results.’

—Justine Orton, Orton Haus

- 1 Modern Classical materials and textures simultaneously express the warmth of classical design and freshness of modern living.
- 2 Herringbone parquet flooring in light oak or walnut.
- 3 Shaker-style cabinetry with matte finishes.
- 4 White or grey marble tiles epitomise classical luxury.
- 5 Use traditional style hardware in brass.
- 6 Plush velvet upholstery adds timeless opulence.
- 7 Textured wallpaper in subtle patterns add sophistication to interiors.



Colour palette

Modern Classical colour schemes balance timeless neutrals with subtle accent tones, creating a sophisticated and harmonious aesthetic.



Theme insight Wellbeing

Soft neutrals like whites, creams and greys enhance natural light and create a calming atmosphere, while warm undertones add comfort. Rich accent colours such as greens and blues, bring a sense of connection to nature.

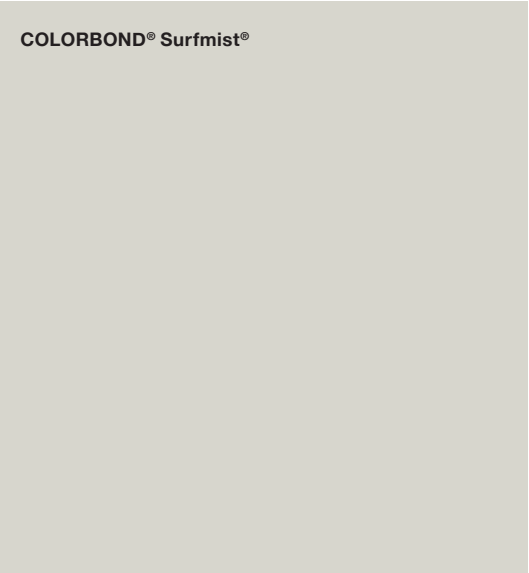
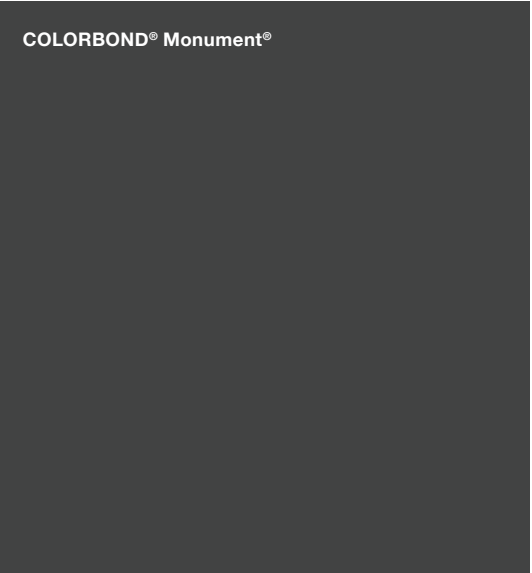
‘I like to work with neutral tones like whites, creams and greys, often adding accents of muted pastels or deep rich hues.’

— Justine Orton, Orton Haus

Scheme One

Scheme Two

Roof / fascia



Main Walls

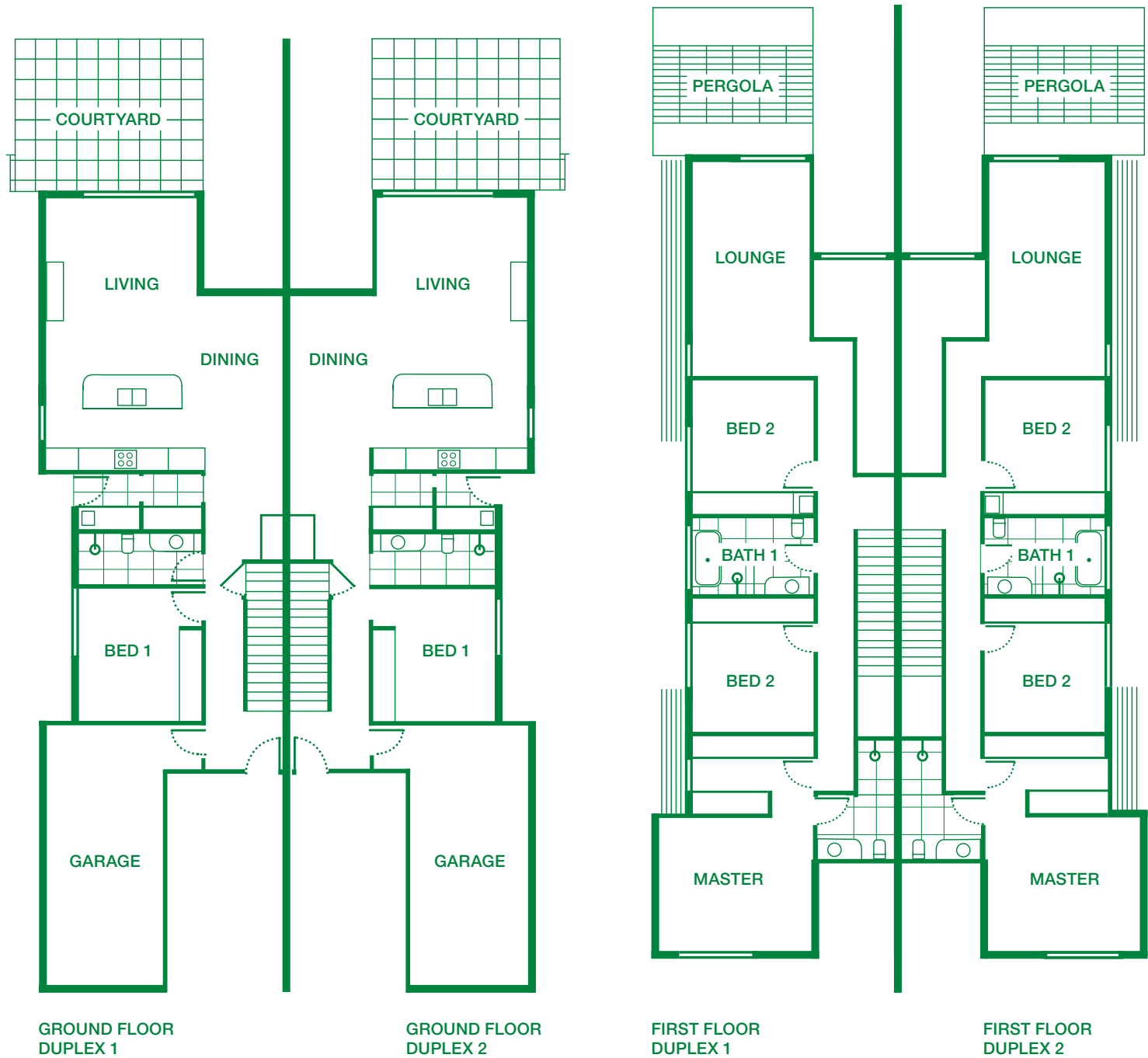


Details



Floorplan

When designing this duplex, our budget was for a \$1.5-\$1.8m new build delivering timeless architectural character with modern efficiency. Spanning 400sqm, the home balances classic charm with contemporary functionality.



Justine’s top tips

1 Use durable, low-maintenance materials

Select resilient building materials like Hardie™ cladding products, quality roofing, double-glazed windows, and efficient insulation. These products offer longevity with minimal maintenance, making homes more resilient against Australia’s diverse climate challenges including heat, cold, storms, and fires. Quality materials pay dividends in both performance and aesthetics over time.

2 Incorporate window hoods for efficiency

Add window hoods strategically to protect windows from direct sunlight while creating architectural interest. Instead of relying solely on expensive solutions like double-glazed windows, these hoods provide practical thermal protection that reduces heat transfer while becoming a design feature. Position them particularly on windows facing harsh sun exposure.

3 Create cost-effective arches with cladding

Achieve the classic arch aesthetic without expensive masonry construction by using easy-to-cut cladding products. This approach delivers the same sophisticated look at a fraction of the cost and complexity. Paired with window shrouds, these architectural elements become striking focal points that elevate your home’s appearance without breaking the budget.

4 Buy in bulk and use one-stop shops

Maximise your budget by purchasing materials and fixtures in bulk from single suppliers. This approach not only saves money but streamlines the process through consolidated warranties and simplified communication. Apply this strategy to appliances, tapware, tiles, and other materials to achieve high-end looks while maintaining cost efficiency.

5 Consider alternative construction methods for speed

Prioritise build speed by using pre-primed cladding and other ready-to-install materials that reduce construction time. With today’s high financing costs, reducing build duration by even a few months can save significant money in interest payments. Balance material choices with how they impact your overall timeline to optimise both aesthetics and finances.

An online tool for builders, architects and designers, who want to get the job done right.



- Support exterior facade design with a FREE visualiser
- Simplify estimating with a FREE and fast take off service
- Provide on the go technical support
- News and information about James Hardie products and modern design projects

jameshardie.com.au
Follow us at jameshardieau



Copyright © 2025 James Hardie Australia Pty Ltd. ABN 12 084 635 558.
TM and ® denote trademark or registered mark owned by James Hardie Technology Ltd. Dulux® is a trademark of DuluxGroup Limited. Wattyl is a registered trademark of Hempel (Wattyl) Australia Pty Ltd. Taubmans® is a registered trademark of PPG Industries Australia Pty Limited. Porter's Paints a division of DuluxGroup (Australia) Pty Limited. COLORBOND® steel and (R) colour names are registered trade marks of BlueScope Steel Limited. COLORBOND® steel colour names are provided for colour comparison only. BlueScope Steel Limited is not liable for colour matching accuracy and did not review or endorse the match against the COLORBOND® steel colour.

