



SIMONE BARTER AND HER DOG MR LEO



# Style & substance

AFTER TWENTY YEARS WORKING IN FASHION AND STYLING, SIMONE BARTER SWAPPED RETAIL FOR DIGITAL. NOW HER BLOG STYLE LIFE HOME HAS BECOME AN ONLINE ORACLE OF INTERIOR DESIGN. TONIA ZEMEK MEETS THE CONTENT CREATOR HELPING TO TRANSFORM HOMES INTO HAVENS.

WORDS TONIA ZEMEK PHOTOS CHESTERTON SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

Although we'd never met, it was easy to identify Simone Barter in a crowded Peregian café. The woman seated in the corner was immaculate, her crisp white collared top blending beautifully with well-cut trousers that sat obediently just above a pair of ballet flats. Upstairs, a crop of blonde hair contrasted cleverly with sharp dark-rimmed glasses. A soft caramel tote flopped effortlessly ringside.

Yes this stylish Sunshine Coaster was indeed Simone Barter, stylist-turned-blogger from [stylelifehome.com.au](http://stylelifehome.com.au). Prior to our meeting, I'd admired the blog – a collection of images and ideas to inspire readers to spruce up their interiors. That's it in a nutshell. But spend a little time on Simone's blog and you'll discover so much more. There's real heart in what she curates online.

"Last year I posted a series of ten tips for a lovely life. A local lady in Noosa told me reading that blog made her really stop and think about her life," Simone says.

"She had a young family and realised she wanted to create a future as her own person as well as a mother. So it was nice to know that something so small made a difference to someone's life."

That reader is not alone. Style Life Home regularly captures an audience greater than 1,000 readers a day. Add to that plenty of Pinterest and Instagram fans as well as around 5,000 Facebook followers, and you know you're onto something that actually kinda matters. When she started blogging in 2011, Simone could never have predicted she'd become such a hit on social media.

"I just wanted to put everything I loved on a blog. It was my own personal diary online. I never thought people would actually look at it," she laughs.

Simone is certainly accomplished when it comes to accessorising. She's seamlessly matched her sense of style with genuine humility.

The culmination of her creative experience actually spans two decades. She started out in women's fashion, working as a visual merchandiser. Later she became a buyer with her own high-end fashion and furnishings store in northern New South Wales; a venture she shared with husband Shannon.

Today the family's grown to include twin daughters, eight-year-old girls Lakota and Indigo.

"When we found out we were pregnant we thought there was just one baby. Then when we had our first ultrasound, we discovered they were twins and Shannon fainted," she laughs.

As a stylist, you'd be forgiven for thinking Simone may have been tempted to dress her twins in cute matching outfits.

"I've always wanted them to be individuals and to have their own style and thoughts. I just think of them as two individual people who happened to be born at the same time."

It sounds like the foundations of a respectful mother-daughter relationship, something very important to Simone. Growing up, Simone was lucky to enjoy a similar bond with her own mother. Today, she proudly describes her mum as her best friend.

"My father passed away when I was quite young and I think that is why my mother and I are very close."

During Simone's childhood, her mother worked as a seamstress on collections that formed part of Maggie Tabberer's Maggie T label.

"Mum was very stylish and conservative. She taught me the rules of keeping it simple and having a classic wardrobe that never dates. That approach also went into our homewares environment as well. We could just change a couple of things and it would feel brand new."

Those were her first lessons in styling and perhaps the building blocks that were destined to develop into a successful career.

Today, Simone is a sought-after stylist. Her schedule is filled with



**“ You don’t have to have extravagant things to create a beautiful home ”**

everything from styling homes and offices, through to events and photo shoots for magazines. She also relishes roles that involve decluttering.

“It’s about taking things away that don’t need to be displayed. Sometimes we have things that are totally amazing but everything else is distracting from them. Once you start decluttering, then your life becomes lighter.”

Simone also likes to leave a little room for life’s luxuries. In her own home, Simone’s most luxurious item is a cherished chocolate brown Chesterfield chair from an auction her husband gifted her.

From time to time, you’ll see some fairly grand designs posted on Style Life Home.

“We all like to dream and envisage ourselves spending thousands and thousands of dollars on show-stopping pieces,” she laughs.

“Style is so personal, but I really think we can all have style in our homes even without buying new pieces. You don’t have to have extravagant things to create a beautiful home. Furniture can be recycled and re-loved and that’s a luxury too, especially when it’s a piece that has sentimental value.”

Essentially, Style Life Home helps readers to see the possibilities that lie within their existing four walls (and wallets).

“You can create something from what you’ve already got, you just have to visualise it.”

As women, Simone believes we need to prioritise some personal parts of our domains.

“I want to give women the confidence to create their own room, or even just a corner that they love. Being a mother myself, I enjoy having my own space and I like to encourage my readers to have their own space too and to make that area beautiful, even if they’ve got a whole house full of children!” ○

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