

The Daily Telegraph SATURDAY

home

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Act your age

A design blast from the past offers a new lease on life **12**

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Interiors

The brief

To make sense of an awkward layout in a 1960s home and transform it into a stylish residence on a budget.



DESIGNER

Brett Mickan Brett Mickan Interior Design, bmid.com.au

THE SOURCE

Custom made hall rug Armadillo & Co, armadillo-co.com

Dining room walls in Gypsy Canvas Dulux, dulux.com.au

Frida Kahlo style photo by Terri Potoczna, potoczna.com

Living room curtains in High Voltage fabric Schumacher made by Coco's Soft Furnishings, cocos.net.au

Kitchen Erik Buch bar stools Great Dane Furniture, greatdaneurniture.com

Rhino painting by Daimon Downey Bay & Fyfe, bayandfyfe.com



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That old-fashioned magic

An old house embraces its age to be a model for modern living, writes **Robyn Willis**

Renovations can be enormously beneficial for everyone when they work well. The owners end up with spaces that flow beautifully while the architect, designer and builder have the satisfaction of a job well done.

The owners of this house, however, had mixed results from renovating their 1960s Cape Cod-style home.

Low and behold

While the upper floor of this St Ives home featured dormer windows and a terracotta roof characteristic of the style, downstairs, timber panelling and low ceilings dominated.

Previous owners had made an attempt to create a sense of openness by removing walls to make the spaces larger but interior designer Brett Mickan says it only added to the oppressive feel of the house.

"They opened the wall between the kitchen and the dining room and converted the room over the garage to the living room but none of it worked – it was awkward," Brett says.

"Because the ceilings were fairly low, that big space made them feel even lower."

The owners had more recently replaced the kitchen, installing high gloss white cupboards with a marble splashback.

While the contemporary finish was beautiful, it struggled to fit in with the rest of the house which retained its 1960s feel.

Instead of fiddling with the floorplan any further, the owners called on Brett to design a cohesive and stylish home.

Peace maker

His first decision was to stop fighting the existing architecture and work with the house.

Well known for his love of colour, Brett used white to help unwanted details recede and added colour where he wanted to draw



Timber barstools and a tailored blind help the new kitchen to blend with the living areas.

attention. With a number of walls removed between rooms, colour was also used to define spaces and link them to other areas as necessary.

The white kitchen walls were repainted in soft grey and the black metal barstools were replaced with timber versions with coral-coloured upholstered seats.

Brett played up the existing chinoiserie-style wallpaper in the dining room, painting the remaining walls in Dulux Gypsy Canvas and using Chinese-style dining chairs with a vintage Parker Furniture dining table.

In the living area and separate library

space, Brett created some subtle definition on the walls with timber moulding and then painted both rooms white.

Rugs in light, neutral colours break up the dominance of the high gloss ebony-coloured timber floors while the eye is drawn to colourful cushions and vibrant artworks.

"You can hide a lot of things with colour," says Brett.

"People think no colour is easier (to work with) but here I have focused your attention with colour."

"The rooms are not massive so you have to make it feel like its own space."



Attention seeker

Colour has been used judiciously to either divert or draw your eye. This artwork is 'framed' by moulding on the all-white wall to subtly define the space without competing for attention.



Ready for retro

Rather than make an old house look new, Brett took some cues from the 1960s features, such as the timber panelling on the stairwell in the hallway and the vintage furniture such as a timber cocktail cabinet in the living room and brass light fittings.

"Using vintage pieces makes a house look appropriate to its age," he says. "It's taking what has been seen as a disadvantage and making it an asset."

Brett says a careful balance between the old and the new avoids the feeling that you are living in a time warp.

"Your home should be full of beautiful things, but you don't want it to be a period home so it needs modern elements to mix it up," he says. "Often, that's about new art."

Indeed, each room has a distinctive piece of art, whether it is art or photography.

Colour wheel

Although it isn't obvious, there's a loose palette at play with reds, coral pinks and yellows offset by acid blues and greens.

It's the perfect balance against the 1960s timber finishes and touches of brass.

While each room has its own personality and purpose, Brett says there is scope to move pieces from room to room as desired.

The owners' design preferences – he likes Asian and African pieces and she loves retro – were also taken into account.

Brett says there is always a settling period with new clients.

"I had the luxury of trusting clients," he says. "You have to prove that you know what you are doing and that you have their best interests at heart."

Given he sources vintage pieces from auctions, Brett says it can be hard for clients to see the bigger picture.

"Clients tend to focus on every piece you show them but it's about the overall look," he says. "It can take time to convince them."

You also end up with a home that finally looks comfortable in its own skin.

Words Robyn Willis

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Pictures Thomas Dalhoff



The guest bedroom is a tranquil retreat with a soft green and blue palette and warm textiles.