

The Daily Telegraph

# home

August 24, 2013

## Creature comforts

An apartment goes from bland to bold 10

**Shop** Jamie Durie's outdoor range 12 **Display** Entertainer 36 by Ichijo Homes 14





**Simply stylish**  
A deep, neutral tone was chosen for the walls to better display the collection of art and objects collected by the owners.





## Decorate

### The brief

To make an inner-city apartment a fun and relaxing home



THE DESIGNER  
**Brett Mikan Interior Design,**  
bmid.com.au

THE OWNERS  
Brett Mikan and Nick English (above)

THE SOURCE  
**Paint for living and dining spaces**  
**Dulux Stone,**  
dulux.com.au  
**Striped hall runner from Cadrys,**  
cadrys.com.au  
**Metal outdoor chairs Luxembourg**  
**Armchair from Cotswold Furniture,**  
cotswoldfurniture.com.au  
**Polypropylene outdoor Launch**  
**Stool from Stylecraft,**  
stylecraft.com.au  
**Taxidermy antique goat's head**  
**from Antiques on Consignment,**  
antiquesonconsignment.com.au  
**Dining table from Design**  
**Warehouse,**  
designwarehouse.com.au  
**Large horse statue from Jonathan**  
**Adler,**  
jonathanadler.com



Are you renovating? Tell us  
about it at [facebook.com/DTHome](https://www.facebook.com/DTHome)



# The bold and the beautiful

Life is anything but dull in this colourful apartment, writes **Robyn Willis**

It would be hard to feel depressed walking into the apartment of Brett Mikan and Nick English.

From the moment you open the front door on to the lime green felt-lined foyer, the use of colour and sense of fun all around is an automatic mood lifter.

Brett and Nick moved into their Surry Hills home almost by accident on their return to Australia after living in the US city of Miami.

"We wanted to be somewhere within walking distance of the city because there is a lot of traffic in Sydney and we didn't want to be in the car all weekend," says Brett. "But we were looking at about 12 different suburbs."

Attracted by the high number of cafes, the pair settled on their top floor inner-city home complete with living and dining spaces that open on to the centrally-positioned deck.

Although it was considerably smaller than their US abode, the addition of open space in such a built-up area won them over, while the simple floorplan provided the perfect canvas for Brett's colourful palette.

### Green, green grass

Their first task was to paint the deck green as a reminder of their former garden.

"We used to have such a big garden in Miami," says Brett. "That is why the deck is green — it's our lawn."

He wanted to tone the interior down a little after starting with such a dominant colour. But having amassed a large and eclectic art collection ranging from vintage prints to contemporary paintings, he knew white gallery-like walls would not work either.

"We have such a big collection of art and accessories and the way to make it sit quietly is to put a deep colour behind it," he says. "A white wall would only create more chaos because there is too much contrast between the light and the dark."

He decided on Dulux Stone for the living

areas, a deep neutral tone made up of a number of different colours. Using a complex colour makes for a more versatile backdrop, says Brett.

"If you choose a colour with a lot of colours mixed into it, it will change with the light," he says. "Whatever colours you pick up on, they will show through."

He has been careful to avoid having an obvious colour scheme in the apartment, opting instead for a rainbow-like palette. Despite this apparent kaleidoscope of colour, it all works.

"I am totally against colour matching but if you stick with an area of hues, everything looks like it belongs," he says. "It's about balance but at the same time it's very important the colours don't completely match. That's not to say that anything here is accidental."

Loosely grouping artworks and decorative items in similar colours still works, even though they might have been made in very different eras.

### Telling stories

Every item in their home has meaning for Brett and Nick, essential for anyone looking to create a place they can call their own.

"Things here are important to us, with works by artists we have found or from friends who have given us an artwork. I have a story about every piece of artwork and where it came from. You can't come into a space like this and say that no one lives here."

He says he takes the same approach when working with clients, preferring to look at what has meaning for them rather than pushing them towards the latest fad.

"If you want to be cutting edge, it's almost impossible because everyone has already seen everything on Instagram and it's over in five minutes," he says. "You should have things in your home that have meaning for you so your place has a story or a history."

"You can still go with a current trend like a chevron stripe but there needs to be more to it."

### Social connections

Although it can have its drawbacks, Brett says Instagram has proven to be a great way to source emerging artists for his clients and his home. Most recently, he purchased a canvas in black and white from a tattoo artist who was using it to try out different designs. Brett was captured by its graphic appeal and it now hangs in the main bedroom, offsetting the high gloss chrome four poster bed frame.

It's this sense of fun that runs right through this much-loved home, from the colour scheme to the crocodile head bobbing in the water feature on the deck or the pink plastic flamingo in the hedge outside the bedroom window.

[robyn.willis@news.com.au](mailto:robyn.willis@news.com.au)

Pictures Thomas Dalhoff, Karen Heath, John Fotiadis

