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A long and beautiful story

Interior designer Brett Mickan believes every home should be a story – one that talks about the history of a building and all the lives that have been lived in it. He talks to JANE O'SULLIVAN.

PHOTOGRAPHS THOMAS DALHOFF & SCOTT MCGALE

a Rex Dupain beach scene is the scorching centrepiece of the dining room in this Haberfield home in Sydney's inner west. You can almost feel the sun beating down on your shoulders as you look at it.

"This room was all about being enveloped in colour," says interior designer **Brett Mickan**. "It is luxurious without being precious." The deep tones of the Porters Dandelion wallpaper and ripple-fold wool curtains create a harmonious and cosy space, perfect for long dinners with friends. But the space is not sombre because of the light and modern aesthetic of the Dupain print.

Holding it all together, Mickan chose an Egyptian Genie Ball pendant light from Mondo Luce. It picks up the shape of the dandelion pattern in the wallpaper and acts like the sun over Dupain's stretch of Bondi.

It also has the materials of a traditional crystal chandelier, and it's this that most eloquently explains how Mickan has tried to blend periods and reference different eras. "This was a renovation, not a restoration," he says. "It was important to mix periods in the details and the furnishings."

The brick Federation home is owned by a couple with four young children. They loved its charm and character but wanted the space to accommodate their modern lifestyle. The brief was to incorporate a modern, light interior while respecting the period of the architecture.

Mickan stripped back the interior to its basic architectural features. The 1970s addition was removed and rebuilt in a contemporary style, keeping Federation references in its scale and some of the details. >



** Give statement pieces like this abstract painting room to breath by surrounding them with simple furnishings and clean lines.*





Bargain buy. The oil painting in the bedroom was a vintage store find



IN THE HOME

Federation mood. The stained glass windows inspired the colour palette throughout the house

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The original areas of the home were painted in a neutral colour, and the contemporary addition a rich green. This darker tone, while also acting as another tie to the home's Federation history, "helps the walls to recede, allowing one to focus on the few period details and the connection to the exterior," says Mickan.

There is an emphasis on handmade construction with the choice of furnishings. Mickan has chosen materials like wood, sisal and leather to channel the nature of the Federation and arts and crafts movement.

"The colour inspiration throughout the house came from the stained glass windows, the greens of the Federation era and adjoining garden [and] the warm reds, caramels and oranges of the wood floors, all tempered with linen white trim and accents to keep the scheme fresh."

The renovation began in 2011 and finished in late 2013. "The most fun part was that the clients were not scared of colour or making bold interior statements. They were also brave enough to allow me to create an interior that expressed their lives and trusted me to make selections that would do so."

The owners entered the project with almost no art but agreed that "an injection of art was vital".

"I never select art to match the colours of a space. I design rooms with many layered tones so that many varied pieces could feel at home."

Mickan also believes that art should tell a story – about the home's history and the people who have lived in it.

In the bedroom, there is an oil painting of a street scene in Sydney's inner west, signed **R Macek** and purchased from a vintage store in

Darlinghurst. The narrow streets and brick homes in the picture could be a snapshot from Haberfield's past.

In the kitchen and living area the walls are painted a deep green in a nod to the home's Federation architecture, with modern Scandinavian furniture (a particular passion of the husband's) placed alongside a fantastic burnt orange abstract painting, a reference to the 1960s period of decorative arts. It is from the Los Angeles based Vanguard Studio and attributed to **Lee Reynolds**. The painting is an attention-grabbing piece that could easily dominate the mood of the room but "the clean contemporary lines of the furnishings and deep wall colour allow this piece to sit harmoniously in the space," says Mickan.

The Dupain in the dining room tells a story too; the couple met and lived in Bondi for a time. Now they

have a holiday home in Berry, south of Sydney, so Mickan selected a large oil painting of the Southern Highlands by **Sokquon Tran** for the adjoining formal living room.

"The living room became the negative of the powerful hues of the adjoining dining room. It is a quiet place to sit through the day or a comfortable room for cocktails and starters before you're enveloped in the colour of the dining room for the main event.

"The landscape in this room is vital to the success of these rooms as the size and depth of subject allows it to balance the space." ●

Bedroom refuge. Warm and inviting reds complement the muted palette.

Calm and cosy. A large landscape by Sokquon Tran sits in the living room.

