

DESIGN TRENDS

JENNY BROWN



'They asked me to make it fun'

So Brett Mickan used a flamingo lamp and chenille upholstery in his transformation of a Manly flat.

This home design business can be so counter-intuitive sometimes: You employ a top interior designer and he takes it as his task "never to make a scheme look expected or planned. I don't want it to look as if it's been store bought, as a set".

So says Brett Mickan of Brett Mickan Interior Design, and so clearly does his philosophy show in a new and formerly white-walled, white-tiled, "nondescript" Manly apartment that he made over as a holiday place for a family with five children under seven.

"They asked me to make it fun."

Having worked for the clients previously, Mickan knew they liked his style that mingles vintage with lavish pattern, colour, distinctive splashes of wit and practical scaling.

In the Manly Beach pad, for which

he is a nominee in the Dulux Colour Awards, Mickan certainly did colour, based "on blue ocean shades", fat-striped hallway walls, a vinyl upholstered banquette and table arrangement that can seat 10, graphic cushions, a plaid rug, mid-century pieces and a couple of visual jokes in the form of a vintage flamingo lamp, and a cane seat and stool upholstered in new age chenille.

His guiding idea in this project, reflecting his background in theatrical design, was "to give the place a story".

Mickan wanted layers of effects, some of which "could look as if they came from grandpa's house" (the plaid rug, the Bentwood chairs), because in vintage family beach houses, generations of furniture cast-offs can congregate.



Lavish: The bold colour scheme was influenced by Mickan's decade in Florida. Photo: Thomas Dalhoff

The colours, founded on a "quite dark blue named Sea Legs", have been combined with blushes of pink, tangerine and tan. At sharp edges where some blue walls and white ceilings meet, the contrast occurs along knife-edge transitions.

He terms the chosen palette "beach deco", which reflects the influence of having worked in Miami for 10 years.

"Those two backgrounds, theatre and Florida, taught me the power of story and the power of colour and lighting to really transform a space. And this transformation needed to be bold."

For that, he gets a special tick for the striped hallway that is doing something beyond being entertaining.

"[This was a long corridor] that

leads into the living space and the question was, 'How do you visually take people through the hall and connect them straight away to the sense of the place?'

"It was also a shallow, 2.5-metre-high hallway, and the big stripes add height because they take your eye up and up and up. The stripes again say 'deco'. But it's a real bit of staging, too."