

# MODERN FEDERATION

Interior designer Brett Mickan updates a Sydney home blending classic with contemporary design. **Camilla Wagstaff** writes.






If the owners of this striking family home had to describe their style in one word, it would be “non-frilly,” they say. Naturally, they bought the most ornate, “frilliest” house on this Sydney suburb street. So when it came to renovation time, the objective was rather simple: simplify. “It was our objective to tone down the ornamentation of the space,” says interior designer Brett Mickan of Brett Mickan Interior Design. “To make it a feature, rather than looking dated.” The resulting space is sleek and contemporary, but feels right at home in the Federation house; it’s a space where old and new blend seamlessly together.

“When blurring the lines between traditional architecture and modern additions, I don’t think about conforming one to the other,” says Mickan. “I find a relevance they both share to create an aesthetic equilibrium.” In this home, that relationship is



THIS PAGE: Mickan adds modern touches to this spacious lounge. Sitting above the fireplace is Dana Dion's artwork: *Under Carcoar Bridge* from Art2Muse gallery. On the adjacent wall above the joinery sits Tanya Harricks' artwork: *The Swimmer* from Art2Muse gallery.





"The choice of artwork and manner in which it rests upon the mantle exemplifies Brett's skill to create rooms that are full of colour and demonstrate at once both disciplined design and the unexpected."

**Brendan Wong**  
ART EDIT DESIGN COUNCIL





THIS PAGE, ABOVE, LEFT: **White hallways accentuated with bright light fixtures.** THIS PAGE, ABOVE, RIGHT: **Modern light-filled kitchen.**  
 OPPOSITE PAGE: **Mickan places Tanya Harricks' painting, *Beach path* from Art2Muse gallery above the fireplace**

partly built on scale. Keeping the original proportions consistent throughout the home, Mickan found new expressions in space, patterns and colours.

Mickan kept the original cornices, moulding and plasterwork consistent in the new areas of the home, creating a quiet, textural play throughout. Replacing the floors with wide plank Black Butt then worked to make the flow between old and new flawless. The home's stunning stained glass windows were also kept in tact, balanced with bright and contrasting colour placed around each room in key furnishings, finishes and artworks.

When it came to the selection of art, the colour and ornamentation of the stained glass gave Mickan endless possibilities. "I don't select the art to work with a particular colour scheme, however I like to create a blend with the architecture. So I'm influenced by colour and textural clues," says the designer.

The art is displayed to direct the eye to a vista or architectural element in the home and add focus to a room's setting.

This is clearly demonstrated the warm and relaxing parents retreat, where Tanya Harricks' *Beach Path* is propped on the fireplace, picking up the emerald green detailing from the architectural element below.

Another Harricks work is placed at the other end of the space, creating a second window to another world. "I love the use of landscapes to add a sense of depth and a view to rooms that may not have one," says the designer. The combination of artworks, furnishings and a brilliant fuchsia and cream statement rug work together in a play of colour and texture to create balance and harmony in the space.

"A home should reflect a client and this is especially significant in the selection of art," says Mickan. "As this is a contemporary family, the art needed to include contemporary works." Mickan used the main family area as somewhat of a gallery space for bold contemporary pieces, brought together through the way they echo the welcoming playfulness of the rest of the room.



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ABOVE LEFT: **Painting by Kudjitji Ngwarreye hangs beautifully in the dining room.**

ABOVE RIGHT: **Hints of gold in the bathroom add an old world charm.**

BELOW: **Godwin Laus painting *Field and Coppice* from Art2Muse gallery is placed perfectly above the bed.**

Dana Dion's vivid abstract landscape *Under Carcoar Bridge* hung over the fireplace sets the tone, bringing a little of the outside in. Harricks' *The Swimmer* rounds out the space above the joinery, its striped pattern and sunny hues reflected in couches, chairs, rug and finishes. Mickan chose interior elements from a combination of periods and styles, to make the whole space feel like a collection of beautiful pieces rather than just functional furnishings.

For Mickan, art should be just that: a collection of pieces you love. "Don't buy pieces just to fill a wall," he cautions. "Invest in art as your budget allows." Mickan also suggests considering the height of works when hanging them: "Think of how you will use the space. If you are predominately sitting, your eye height will be much lower. If art is hung in hallway where you will predominately be standing, it will be higher." Careful considerations like this will make the art feel visually connected to the other elements in a room, helping to create a fully realised equilibrium, inside to out.





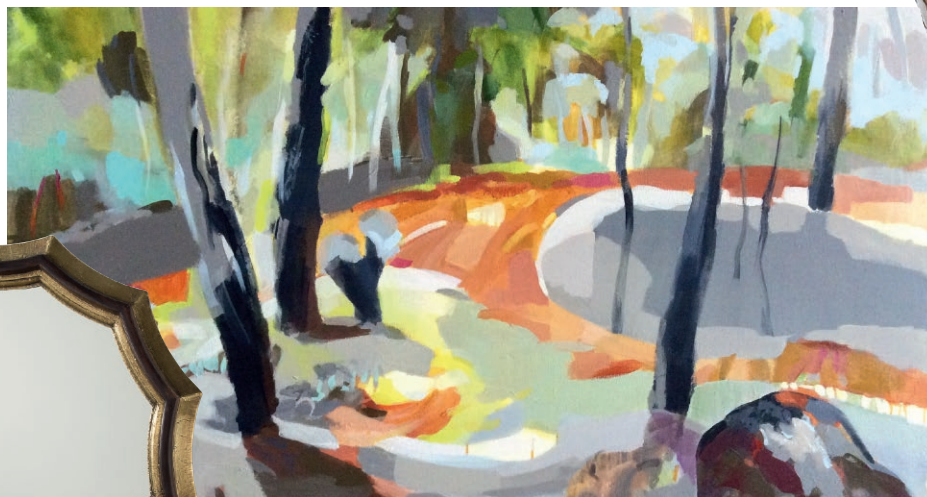
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# GET THE LOOK



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