

# LOOK LIVELY

A colourful interior refresh revived the heart and soul of this lovingly restored Federation cottage in Sydney.

STORY *Chris Pearson* | STYLING *Jono Fleming*  
PHOTOGRAPHY *Chris Warnes*

**LIVING** Sophisticated grasscloth wallpaper from Domestic Textile Corporation complements both the original fireplace and contemporary soft furnishings. Vintage armchair, Rudi Rocket, covered in Etro velvet from Seneca Textiles. Artwork by Dorothy Napangardi. Custom rug, Tappeti Fine Handcrafted Rugs+Carpets. **FRONT GARDEN** Poppy the labrador always gives visitors a warm greeting. ▶





Longtime fans of the Federation bungalow, Peter and Lissa Twomey were captivated by this property in Sydney’s inner west from the moment they saw it in 2015. The detailed cornices, archways, tessellated floor tiles and stained-glass windows all cast their spell on the couple. But while the previous owner had restored the four-bedroom house faithfully to its period, it didn’t function well for a modern family. Seems you *can* have too much of a good thing... Despite a sympathetic 1990s extension to add a family room at the rear, the layout was disjointed and, most pointedly, had a separate kitchen. The interiors were dark, too, mainly due to the heavy cherrywood used throughout. “The house felt like a film set,” says interior designer Brett Mickan. “It was oppressive, not at all suited to a young family.” Peter and Lissa briefed Brett to enliven the interiors and deliver a contemporary, liveable home for them and their two children, Jonathan, now 19, and Annabel, 13. But it also had to honour its origins. “We wanted the kitchen to be central to the living space and to retain the style and features of a Federation home without feeling like we were living in a museum.” ▶



**LIVING** *above left* Brett used invigorating upholstery fabric to bring cohesion to Peter and Lissa’s eclectic furniture collection. Catapult Design sofa upholstered in Elliott Clarke ‘Alhambra’. Artwork by Michael Riley. Curtains in Zoffany ‘Haddon Stone’. Window treatments by Coco’s Soft Furnishings (throughout). **Local hero:** Studio Pip ‘Lyla’ coffee table, \$1945, HG Furniture Solutions. **MUSIC ROOM** *above right and opposite* Bold pattern is used judiciously. Vintage pendant light, Lunatiques. Rug, Koskela. Vintage chairs. Artworks by Cherine Fahd (above mantel) and Michel Tuffery (in hall). Curtains in Sanderson ‘Tuscany Sunflower Yellow’.



**THIS IS THE LIFE**  
The revamped family room is now the heart of this home. “We love the light and airiness of the space and its lovely connection to the deck and garden,” says Lissa. While this is the communal space for family gatherings, the music room offers the option of me-time when needed. “It’s our getaway space – a quiet, restful spot, with wonderful light. And the original windows are just stunning.”



## H&G HOUSES

**KITCHEN** A clean-lined wall of cabinetry, painted the same colour as the surrounding walls, contributes to the feeling of space. About A Stool stools, Cult. Roman blinds in Lee Jofa 'Groundworks Coquette' fabric, Elliott Clarke. Calacatta Viola marble benchtop (island) and Atlantic bluestone splashback and benchtop, Granite & Marble Works. Kitchen by Kenwood Kitchens. Canister, candleholder and bud vase, In Bed. Artworks in hall by Peter Peryer (left) and Connie Rovina. **Local hero:** Leather pendant lights, \$1495 each, The Mod Collective.

**'WE LOVE THE LIGHT AND AIRINESS OF THE KITCHEN/FAMILY ROOM AND ITS CONNECTION TO THE GARDEN.'** *Lissa Twomey, owner*

### DECORATOR NOTES

By taking the home's heritage elements and "punching them up", Brett has created harmony between the old and the new. Sharper, clearer hues – lime green, aqua and fuchsia – are a contemporary twist on traditional green, blue and red; playful geometrics, such as the rugs in the living areas, reference the brickwork, stained glass and tessellated tiles. Together, the colour and pattern deliver the desired energy throughout. ►





*the palette*

Blackbutt  
(kitchen island  
fascia)

Dulux Pale  
Tendril (kitchen  
cabinetry/walls,  
family room)

Dulux Green Sea  
(main bedroom)

Connecting the kitchen with the rest of the house was top of the to-do list. Keeping within the original footprint, architect Colin Filmer gutted the existing rooms at the rear, removing a wall between the kitchen and family area and raising the ceiling height. “It’s greatly improved the workability of the space and opened up the entire back room,” says Peter.

Old meets new tantalisingly throughout. Cornices, skirting and picture rails in the new section echo the detailing at the front of the home; timber floors throughout ensure visual continuity. In the kitchen, the asymmetry of the island bench – accommodating cookbook storage and a wine fridge as well as the sink – is ultra modern, while its chunky Calacatta marble top alludes to the past. So, too, does the bathroom vanity, its V-joint timber finish contrasting with its modern profile.

Continuing this theme, Brett’s deft decorating touches made the home more family friendly. “I wanted the period details to shine ►

**DINING/FAMILY** Lissa and Annabel make the most of the abundant natural light in this north-west facing space. The couple’s existing dining table was resized to fit its new nook. Custom banquette by Bespoke Creations in Elliott Clarke ‘Chinese Fret’ fabric. Nuptial pendant light by Trent Jansen, DesignByThem. Fred coffee table, Jordan. Existing armchair reupholstered in GP & J Baker ‘Nympheus’ fabric from Elliott Clarke. Custom rug, Tappeti Fine Handcrafted Rugs+Carpets. **Designer buy:** Billiani ‘Doll’ dining chairs, from \$442.20 each, Design Nation.

‘THE HOME WAS IN SUCH GOOD CONDITION THAT WE WERE ABLE TO MAKE IT WHAT WE WANTED WITHOUT A MAJOR REBUILD.’ *Peter Twomey*







without that oppressive feeling,” he says. “Taking inspiration from the brickwork and the original tiling, I chose a deep terracotta for the walls in the entrance and a statement lime-green sofa for the living room.”

Taking their colour and pattern cues from the tiles and stained-glass windows, custom rugs enliven the living spaces. “The fabrics and rugs had to be strong enough to stand up to the period features, yet they also reference them,” says Brett. Texture in the rugs and fabrics, even the wallcoverings, adds another layer of warmth and interest. Grasscloth wallpaper provides ‘movement’ in the formal living room, says Brett, as does the velvet sofa. Meanwhile, swag curtains have been replaced with simpler ones that cascade sumptuously to the floor from brass curtain rails, as in former days. “They deliver the grandeur and presence needed for a house like this, but without the fussy flourishes,” he adds. “The house is now a simpler, more elegant version of its former self.”

Peter concurs. “The rooms flow from one to the other so well now, and we love how the new features are in harmony with the old,” he says. “Introducing colour – from the walls to the soft furnishings to the rugs – has made the world of difference.”

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**‘THE HOUSE IS NOW A SIMPLER, MORE ELEGANT VERSION OF ITS FORMER SELF.’** *Brett Mickan, interior designer*

**MAIN BEDROOM** Heritage details take centrestage, complemented by Chinoiserie lamps from Orient House and antique side tables. Geometric fabrics – GP & J Baker ‘Zanzibar’ on the headboard and Decortex ‘Flamingo’ curtains – deliver a decidedly contemporary twist. Artwork by Michel Tuffery. **MAIN ENSUITE** The vanity, custom made by Bespoke Creations, deftly blends heritage and modern elements. Kado ‘Arc’ bath and Axa ‘Hox’ basin, Reece. **Smart buy:** Ram Tapware ‘Yeva’ mixer tap, \$480, Reece. **BACK GARDEN** The renovation also included the installation of a cabana and a 7m x 4m pool. Hayman outdoor chairs, Freedom. *For Where to Buy, see page 198.*

THE LAYOUT



FEATURE PLANTS

- Variegated pittosporum (*P. eugenioides* ‘Variegatum’)
- Portwine magnolia (*Michelia figo*)
- Cascade lillypilly
- Plumbago (*P. auriculata*)

