

GRAND PLANS

This petite Sydney abode has become a contemporary haven full of bold art and high-impact hues

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During the transformation of her circa-1890s cottage, homeowner Cat let her creativity shine. The living room [\(opposite\)](#) displays her flair for fusing modern and vintage styles: the 'Enzo' sofa from Jordan, upholstered in velvet, provides a textural contrast to a copper and marble 'Scamp' coffee table from Blu Dot, while the Parker Knoll armchair is one of a pair that Cat inherited from her father. As part of the renovation, the back of the home [\(above\)](#) was opened up to receive delicious northerly light and to make space for a large veggie garden and shady dining area. The rear facade was finished in low-maintenance Shadowclad from Carter Holt Harvey and painted in Dulux Cave Man. >



The marriage of old and new is a romantic notion – timeworn timber juxtaposed against contemporary colour, sophisticated furniture sitting alongside treasures from yesteryear – but not always easy to put into practice. Homeowner Cat spent years dreaming of an old house into which she could breathe new life; a sanctuary to share with her seven-year-old son Leroy that would reflect her classic-meets-modern style. Blessed by Cat's touch, this late 19th-century cottage in an eastern Sydney suburb now illustrates how old and new elements can be successfully drawn together, even on a tight budget.

As soon as Cat saw the little stone house, she knew it had potential, despite describing it as “a total wreck”. Its corner position and north-facing backyard allowed her to open up the property's rear while keeping the solid sandstone front totally intact. “I had architect Trevor Hall design the renovation,” says Cat. “He had worked on a previous home for me and we had a great relationship. My main requests were a strong and boxy look for the rear extension and that the facade be retained.” It may sound like a relatively simple brief, but Trevor had to fit three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a laundry and an open-plan kitchen, dining and living area onto a small, narrow block, all while avoiding an ugly collision of old and new.

Internally, the house quickly unfolds from the picture-perfect front door into a large open space, the focus of which is a kitchen island bench in an arresting shade of aqua and its contrasting apple-green splashback. As a graduate of Sydney's National Art School, Cat has a heightened interest in colour and a deep love of painting. The house is full of original artworks, many by art school friends, and she continues to add to her growing collection – despite rapidly dwindling wall space. Mid-century pieces and colourful op-shop glass vases vie for position with contemporary furniture. Precious family

“The rear extension soaks up the sun but when you need it, an ocean breeze flows through and cools the house beautifully” - Cat



items are also in the mix, including a pair of Parker Knoll armchairs previously belonging to Cat's dad, which she reupholstered in a fine houndstooth from Designers Guild. “I always knew I wanted to reupholster the chairs in houndstooth – just like they originally had been – but I had to wait until I found the right fabric,” remarks Cat.

An open staircase in steel and blackbutt lends a more obvious architectural look and was one of the biggest changes to the original home, which previously had a precarious staircase. “It was more ladder than stairway and building the new one along the external wall made much more sense,” Cat says. It also allows the space to appear bigger than it actually is. Upstairs, the old attic is unrecognisable except in Leroy's charming bedroom, where the steeply pitched ceiling and blue gingham curtains complete the storybook setting.

The renovation not only delivered everything Cat wished for but also won a heritage and design award from the local council in 2012. And Cat's zest for colour, art and design endures: she has recently found a new home in the same area where she can both continue her decorating passion and maintain the relaxed lifestyle that she and Leroy created in this home. “On the weekends we jump on our bikes and ride to the beach, dropping into Iggy's Bread for the best bread in Sydney. What more could you want?”

STAIRCASE (left) The 1930s Kaare Klint 'Safari' chair was picked up for a steal at a second-hand shop. “I love op-shops and junk stores so a lot of my interiors were sourced this way,” explains Cat. “It doesn't take much to make these old items look good again.” The 1950s-style starburst clock was another savvy vintage find.

WE LOVE

Cool colour

Who says that blue and green should never be seen? Not Cat - who has mixed the hues masterfully in her breezy new kitchen. The island bench is topped with solid-surface Marblo in a custom colour created by Cat. "The shade reminds me of an early Australian enamelware shade called Jadeite, so it seemed appropriate," she says. Visit marblo.com.au for more information.

SPLASHBACK
Get the look with 'Highgrove' 6mm glass splashback in Pea Case, \$357/sqm, Bunnings.

KITCHEN (this page & opposite top)
Glossy finishes and look-at-me colour define the kitchen, which is the centre of the home for Cat and Leroy, pictured together at their practical breakfast bar. The glass splashback is a happy shade of apple green, while the cork-topped OX Design 'Smed' stools from Great Dane Furniture add a splash of mint. "I like putting colours together in unusual ways," comments the creative Cat. >

MAIN BEDROOM (this page & opposite top right)

An early Alan Jones artwork sets the earthy palette in Cat's bedroom and is matched with a 'Ziggy' quilt cover and pillowcases from Jordan, plus a woven 'Leran' pendant from Ikea. But it's the handwoven Indian 'Sumake' jute rug in Turmeric from Planet and hand-knitted Little Dandelion bed runner that provide sigh-inducing texture. Leading into the ensuite, a teak Danish chest of drawers houses a collection of vessels including a set of Norm Architect DK/Menu felt storage baskets from Top 3 By Design.



THROW

Get the look with moss stitch unspun wool bed runner in Silver, \$895/80cm x 205cm, Little Dandelion.

top right)
palette in
quilt cover
pendant
jute rug
Dandelion
Leading
houses a
Architect
By Design.



"I wanted plenty of *timber* to soften the aesthetic and keep our home feeling *warm* and friendly" - Cat





FLOORBOARDS
Blackbutt select-grade
85mm solid timber
flooring, \$85/sqm,
SE Timber.

KITCHEN The island bench is illuminated by rattan 'Leran' pendant lights from Ikea, while an Alan Jones painting entitled *Painting 55* adds drama behind. The existing floors were replaced with blackbutt timber to unify the open-plan layout.



INSIDE STORY

Who lives here?

Cat; her seven-year-old son Leroy; and Petal, their schnauzer-poodle cross.

What was your initial vision?

Cat: "I knew I wanted a classic little cottage that was totally unrenovated so that I could bring something new without having to undo someone else's renovation. The main idea was to build a contemporary space onto the back that was open and airy, but had warmth and privacy."

What's the essential ingredient in your home?

"Art! I studied at the National Art School in Sydney and have collected works by my contemporaries and artist friends like Alan Jones and Lucy Culliton over the years. I love art so I spend more on it than I should!"

Why were you attracted to the beachside area?

"After years of living in the inner city, I found this a much less intense place to be. The proximity to the beach and open streetscape appealed to me. It took two years to find the right unrenovated cottage, but even in its sad, dilapidated state, its cute facade won me over straight away."



Cat was drawn to the home's picture-book facade with its high-pitched roof and sandstone walls.



The guest room provides a cozy space for guests.

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