

# Style revival

Restoring this charismatic Federation home presented certain challenges, but the designers discovered they could incorporate some of its 80s renovation quirks.



This page In the hallway, the original tiled floors were cleaned and restored. 'Sathi' stone console from Papaya. 'Pebble' and 'Stone' vases from Dinosaur Designs. 'Pop 500' pendants from Ism Objects. Berber Knot 'Atlas' runner from Armadillo & Co. Opposite page The prime view of the Harbour Bridge.



This page In the dining area, chairs from Casa Mia. 'Exhabier' table from Artifex. 'Vall' vase from Papaya. 'Panama' rug from The Rug Establishment. Gervasoni 'Brass 95' pendant from Anibou. Artwork by Diana Watson. Grasscloth wallpaper in Harbour from Porter's Paints. **Opposite page, from top** In the dining and living areas, sofa by Octagon Custom Design. Coffee table from King Living. Sancal 'Tortuga' chair from Ke-Zu. *Isola dei Fiori* artwork by Diana Watson. Smaller artwork was bought in Cambodia. In the kitchen, Castillo stone on island bench from RMS Natural Stone & Ceramics. Travertine Grigio honed floor tiles from STS Stone. Artwork by Jo Mellor.



While its spectacular view of Sydney's 'coathanger' has remained solidly constant over the years, this imposing Federation house, in brick with shingle-clad upper levels, has not shared the same fate. When the owners first laid eyes on it, a 1980s renovation had left its calling card, compromising the wonderful heritage flourishes and adding dated touches of its own. The palette, too, had a serious case of the beiges.

Returning from a stint in Singapore, the professional couple with two teenage children bought the three-and-a-half level home on the lower North Shore in 2017. Spellbound by the quintessentially Sydney aspect, they were also charmed by the home's generous proportions and period features, such as its lofty ceilings, cornices, and painted frescoes on the dining-room doors. But the renovation had also left arched windows at odds with the original architecture, as well as raw brickwork, cream carpets and faux stained glass that mimicked the original windows elsewhere, all of which were de rigueur in the 1980s. Similarly, the country-inspired kitchen, with honey timbers and black granite benchtops, looked decidedly undercooked. On friends' recommendations, they hired interior designers Sarah Marriott and Dani Hans of Sarah Jayne Studios, together with Laurie Liskowski of Liskowski Architects, to breathe new life into the home.

"This amazing heritage property was in need of updating and added warmth," says the owner. "We required help to modernise, yet we wanted to retain many of the original period features to make this beautiful and elegant house a truly great family home."

"We saw so much potential," adds Sarah. "We could have fun and play up the proportions and the quirky features. We also wanted to make each space its own special area, distinct from all the others in the house." The family, too, needed private spaces to retreat to, as well as gathering places to share meals and relax.





Few changes were made to the floorplan. With the removal of a doorway, a library-cum-bar was created from a poky room at the end of the hallway. The design team ripped out the kitchen and replaced it with one in marble, while the bathrooms with their faux period features were replaced with modern, clean and contemporary finishes. Meanwhile, the attic level was opened up for the owners' teenage son, and includes a sitting area and what Sarah calls a "fabulously indulgent" shoe and bag room.

On the entry level are a formal dining room and living room, the library, and new kitchen and informal dining behind the stairs. A study sits off the stairway between the ground and first levels, hence the half floor, while four bedrooms occupy the first floor. The top floor comprises an attic bedroom and sitting room.

"For the interiors, we took inspiration from the house itself," says Sarah. "There is light and shade, traditional and more whimsical elements, paying homage to the architecture, but with magic moments." But first, they pared back the house and "removed all the 80s beige". Sarah and Dani laid new oak flooring on the ground floor and in the upstairs main bedroom, while also restoring the tessellated hallway to its former grandeur. Using crisp white, they played up features such as the cornices, skirtings, leadlights, panelled doors and the staircase. The latter, juxtaposed with black-stained balustrades and risers, references the black and white-tiled flooring, in a house that's full of light and dark contrasts. Pops of colour, echoing the gorgeous original stained glass in the front door, enliven a palette of tranquil neutrals and graphic black and white.

Inspiration for the dining room came from the frescoes on the doors and the celadon-green sideboard the clients brought back from Singapore. "We wanted to keep it dramatic and bold, with the grasscloth teal walls which give a textured, Asian feel," says Sarah. The generous mirror heightens the drama.

Perhaps most dramatic of all, in a master stroke of upcycling, an arched window in the main bedroom, once a stained-glass window between the sleeping area and ensuite, has resurfaced with steel-framed double doors as a theatrical entry to a brand-new ensuite from the walk-in. Separating the bedroom from the walk-in, Sarah has added low-level joinery, its shelves boasting a rich ruby hue, echoed elsewhere in the room's furniture and partly inspired by the home's stained-glass windows.

"The heritage details and proportions of the original architecture were carefully retained and restored," says Sarah, "with small moments of magic created in every room – from the dining room, with its deep teal wallpaper, to the library with its rust-upholstered armchairs."

"I love the tiny library," adds Dani. "With the high ceilings and the richness of the chairs, it's sophisticated, but also playful." Much like the rest of the house. At every turn, its provenance is respected, but given a fresh and novel twist, in an homage that will ensure it remains timeless – not unlike that iconic view that initially wooed its owners. 15

For more, go to [sarahjaynestudios.design](http://sarahjaynestudios.design); [liskowski.com.au](http://liskowski.com.au).

#### SPEED READ

» When the owners bought this heritage home on Sydney's lower North Shore in 2017, it bore the less desirable results of a 1980s renovation.

» They hired designers Sarah Marriott and Dani Hans of Sarah Jayne Studios, and architect Laurie Liskowski of Liskowski Architects, to restore it to its former grandeur while giving it a modern twist. » The designers played up the original features and made the most of quirky later additions to give the home personality – a standout feature is an arched window in the main bedroom, upcycled as stylish steel-framed doors separating the room from its ensuite.



This page, clockwise from top In the main bedroom, custom doors by Fabrika Engineering and bedhead by Octagon Custom Design. De La Espada chair and side table, both from Spence & Lyda, beside an artwork by Eduardo Santos. In the ensuite, Omvivo 'Latis' basin from Candana and vanity from Evener. Opposite page, from top Looking into the dining room with its European oak floor from Woodcut. Artwork is a family heirloom. In the library, Expormim Team shelving unit and Sancal armchairs from Ke-Zu.

