



GRACE & style

AN ELEGANT HERITAGE HOME IN MELBOURNE RECEIVES A CLASSIC MAKEOVER THAT WORKS WONDERFULLY FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

STORY ANNA McCOOE STYLING WENDY BANNISTER
PHOTOGRAPHY SHANIA SHEGEDYN



SPACE TO GROW With bespoke shelves stacked with books and artworks all around, the living room of Melbourne couple Natalie and Chris's home is a positive environment for their two teenage boys. "They see us reading and witness the enjoyment we get from it," says Natalie. The Eames 'Classic' lounge and ottoman from Luke Furniture is primed for sinking into with a good book. >

SITTING ROOM

"This is the adult sitting room," says Natalie. "The kids will hang out in here, talking and playing chess, but they are not allowed in here with food and there's no television. Surprisingly, it gets quite a lot of use at night and on the weekend." Timeless furniture gives the sitting room its sophisticated edge: the couple found their pendant light at Mondo Luce while the armchairs were bought from Grange Furniture many years ago and were recently re-covered in velvet. The oak coffee table is another investment piece that has come good: the couple found it at Zuster more than a decade ago, and recently organised for the company to refinish it to suit the room's grown-up mood.



Right now someone in Australia is daydreaming of a bigger house. Seven years ago, it was Natalie and her husband, Chris, living in a two-bedder with their twin boys, Joshua and Bailey, dreaming of more space. These days, their reality is a harmonious 1920s home in inner Melbourne, wrapped in gardens and natural light with four bedrooms and a study. At first, the boys were excited to have their own rooms. Then, as they attuned to the larger house, they decided life was better with a roommate. “Ever since then they’ve shared a bedroom,” says Natalie. “Occasionally one will threaten to move out, but they’ve never done it!”

Like just about everything else in this house of methodical madness, the sleeping arrangements work – most of the time. With its elegant Edwardian structure fleshed out with contemporary work areas and storage, this is a home so considered, life actually seems to run smoother within. Just as well, considering both Natalie and Chris juggle full-time careers with two busy kids. “We needed our home to be a refuge from the chaos,” Natalie explains from her seat in the kitchen. “Not another frantic space.” As she speaks, she has one eye on the kids who are playing games outside – out of earshot but not out of sight.

Formal and informal areas spread across the ground floor of the home and extend into a series of outdoor rooms. The kitchen, casual dining area and terrace serves as congregating space but the two living spaces and study mean there is always a spot to read in or look out to the garden. The beauty of the arrangement, says Natalie, materialises mid-party when the adults can retreat to the front sitting room, leaving the kids to go wild in the lounge room. “I sound like we don’t like spending time with the kids,” she laughs. “But it’s just nice for everyone to have their space.” Midweek, after school and work, the spaces work just as harmoniously, usually with one of the boys doing homework at the dining table and the other in the nearby study. “It means they can work separately, and I’m not running from one end of the house to the other to help them,” Natalie says.

The family lived in the original home for two years as they planned for a large-scale extension with plans fast-tracked when the couple realised they could work within the home’s boundaries. Their builders, Good Constructions, put them in touch with interior designer Fiona Austin who then drew up the interiors, joinery and selections. >

“I WANTED OUR HOME TO BE *comfortable* AND HOMELY WITH A GOOD BLEND BETWEEN *modern and traditional*” ~ NATALIE

LIVING ROOM

Although it serves as the home’s library, the living room’s (top right) main use is as a television room. “It’s where we all come together to watch TV,” says Natalie. The rug from Hali is a long-time love of the couple, as is the leather couch that was bought from Country Road more than 15 years ago.

DINING ROOM

On most evenings, this sturdy Country Road dining table (right) flanked by Eames dining chairs serves as a study spot for the boys. “We can shut off the TV area with glass doors but we can still see in and out,” says Natalie. However, the space still serves its intended purpose when the family has people over for dinner.



ARTWORKS (OPPOSITE): 'BEACH BASKETS #2, CUXHAVEN, GERTHANT'; AKOS MAJOR, (THIS PAGE, TOP) FRED COLLA

KITCHEN The warm and homely feel continues into the kitchen where the hard, practical fittings and finishes are artfully played down. Panelled joinery in Dulux Natural White 2-pac make the kitchen feel like part of the furniture, while the Floor-Tech 'Matt White' tiles on the splashback nod to the finishes in the bathrooms. A warm single slab of honed calacatta marble from CDK Stone is a welcoming surface for the front bench. The Astra Walker 'Icon Plus' mixer and Reece undermount sink are understated touches, while the Dunlin 'Madison' pendant and 'Emeco' stools from Cult finish the space with a polished look.

WE LOVE...

double-duty areas

Using spaces efficiently opens up new possibilities for how areas can work together. The wide benchtop doubles as a place to gather around and chat. The kitchen also flows into a pantry that multi-tasks as a laundry (opposite, far right). "With front-loading washers and dryers being so good these days, you can put them under the bench alongside the sink and use space as an overflow for the kitchen," explains interior designer Fiona.

< Fiona brought a lot of beauty to the project, but Natalie says the designer's masterstroke was the idea to create the entry to the laundry from the kitchen so it could become a butler's pantry as well. "Everything can be put away," says Natalie. "I feel so much better when things are tidy." This philosophy of contained chaos extends upstairs to the sleeping quarters where the boys all share one bathroom and Natalie gets the ensuite to herself. "It keeps all their mess together so I'm very happy with the idea," she says.

The result is a calm, measured home but it's not without exuberance: Natalie and Chris have been collecting mid-century classics, Australian design and the odd bargain for around 15 years and it's this unexpected mix of pieces that perhaps shouldn't go together that creates a calm, collected and much-loved home. "I guess when you buy what you love it will somehow work," Natalie concludes.



KITCHEN & CASUAL DINING

Interior designer Fiona Austin designed the marble benchtop so it could use just one slab with a 40mm square edge to save on masonry work. "Even though it's honed and sealed I still wouldn't cut up beetroot on it," Natalie concedes. The kitchen window seat (above) is a master touch as a place to gather and admire the view. "It's great when people are over," says Natalie. "If Chris or I are busy in the kitchen, our guests can sit and chat." Designer Fiona chose the Schumacher 'Fjord Stripe' fabric in Ebony to dress

the seat. "The classic French stripe works well in an updated traditional home," says Fiona. The Eames dining setting (top right) is where the family shares most of their midweek meals.

PANTRY & LAUNDRY

The secret to remaining in control in a busy household is condensing the mess to a few hardworking spaces: case in point is the clever combined pantry and laundry (right). The zones are visually connected by Caesarstone benchtops in Snow on both sides. >



"IT'S *so nice* TO HAVE SO MANY SPACES WHERE YOU CAN LOOK AT THE *garden* OR *read* A BOOK" ~ NATALIE



FLOORING
'Matt Graphite'
300mm x 600mm
porcelain tiles,
\$95/sqm, Floor-Tech.



“WHEN THE BOYS WERE LITTLE WE ALL NEEDED TO *be together*, BUT NOW THEY ARE *teenagers* IT’S NICE NOT TO LIVE ON TOP OF EACH OTHER” ~ NATALIE



CARPET
Best Wool ‘Natural Collection’ carpet in Grain, from \$70/sqm, Rugs Carpet & Design.

ENTRY FOYER

The decision to use a Feast Watson Black Japan stain on the ground level floors (top left) was a pragmatic one: when the couple first moved in, they ripped up the carpet to find a mismatch of floorboards. “I love the contrast of black with the white, but really the floors were stained to hide two different tones,” says Natalie. The ‘Obi’ pendant from Mondo Luce came with the couple from their previous home, while their artworks, *Taking The Plunge* by Mandy Shadforth (on the left) and *Bush Yam* by Mary Pitjara (on the right), are new-found treasures.

MAIN BEDROOM

Painted Dulux Natural White to match the walls, trim and joinery, the strapped ceiling of Natalie and Chris’s bedroom (left) reveals

the Edwardian home’s charming structure. In search of something special for the sun-dappled spot under the window, Natalie and Chris found their Jonathan Adler ‘Mrs Godfrey’ settee and ‘Buenos Aires’ side table at Coco Republic. Dressed in an ink ‘Kiko’ throw from Voyager Interiors, the vintage-look sleigh bed was bought by the couple years ago (for similar, try Temple & Webster). Both cushions on the settee are also from Voyager Interiors.

TWINS’ BEDROOM

Bailey and Joshua’s room (above) was never intended to be a shared space but it serves the twins well. Matching ‘Star’ quilt covers from Pottery Barn Kids dress the Forty Winks beds, while a replica ‘Egg’ chair from Milan Direct creates a retreat by the sunlit window.



TERRACE With bluestone paving underfoot, the barbecue area is an entertaining hotspot in the warmer months. "We can have 40 people over at Christmas or just one other family and it still flows," says Natalie. "Depending on the weather, we like to follow around the sun or shade." The couple bought their teak dining setting with the house (for similar, try Jati) and beyond the terrace, a bench from House Of Orange is the focus of an oasis wrapped in lilly pilly hedges and golden robinias. >

SITTING ROOM Framed by the entrance to the sitting room, Deborah Paauwe's 'Unknown Dance' photographic print brings an ethereal quality to this quiet adult space. The captivating artwork above the armchair is by Fabrianne Peterson Nampitjinpa. The pretty Citta Design rose velvet cushion and 'Sahara Knit' throw are both from Voyager Interiors.



PAINT

Wash & Wear Barrier
Technology in
Natural White,
\$74.95/4L, Dulux.



SOURCE BOOK

INSIDE STORY

NATALIE & CHRIS'S HOME



Who lives here?

Natalie, 45; her husband Chris, 45; their identical twin sons, Joshua and Bailey, 13; and two Russian blue cats, Otto and Oscar.

How do you choose furniture as a couple?

"We don't have a fixed style but we have one rule; we both have to love it or we don't buy it."

Best advice when renovating?

"Think about how you'll use the house as a family and plan for how your life is going to change. The more time you can spend thinking about your own life the better the end result."

Saving grace during your renovation?

"Having a great interior designer - it was money well-spent to get help with the things we didn't have answers for. Also, having a builder who communicates well and understands what you are trying to achieve makes a big difference."



BOYS' BATHROOM

Instead of divvying up the upper-floor bathrooms by generation, Natalie allocated them by gender. So while she gets the ensuite to herself, Chris, Bailey and Joshua all share the main bathroom. "All the boys use it and they are responsible for keeping it clean," she explains. Luckily, they have

a head start with easy-to-maintain 'Matt Graphite' and 'Matt White' Floor-Tech tiles, plenty of bespoke storage in 2-pac Dulux Natural White and Polytec laminate in Finegrain Truffle Lini and a frameless glass shower screen from Urban Wardrobes & Shower Screens. Navy Marimekko bath towels add touch of colour and pattern.

PLANS

GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



CONTACTS

Interior designer

Fiona Austin,
Austin Design Associates,
(03) 9592 6411,
austindesign.com.au.

Builder

Good Constructions,
(03) 9584 1433.