

STARTING OVER

This Sydney harbourside home dating from the 19th century has been sensitively updated for modern family living.



PHOTOGRAPHS ANSON SMART STYLING + WORDS ANDREA MILLAR

THIS PAGE The rear of the house has been reconfigured and opened up to the outdoors. On the floor are 'Easy Grey Natural' ceramic tiles from Bisanna Tiles which give the look of concrete but provide a smoother finish. Texture comes from a patchwork kilim from Koskela. Iconic modernist furniture includes a Knoll 'Barcelona' day bed by Mies van der Rohe from De De Ce, a Maralunga sofa by Vico Magistretti for Cassina, Alvar Aalto stools from Anibou, and Hans J. Wegner 'CH-07' chairs from Corporate Culture. OPPOSITE PAGE A wall of joinery conceals electronic equipment. The bifold doors provide access to the garden, designed by William Dangar. Chickens are by artist Jeff Thomson from Ray Hughes Gallery.



Houses – just like pop stars, celebrities, artists and fashion designers – periodically need to reinvent themselves. Reinvention is often the only way to stay relevant. Just ask Madonna.

For Mandolong House, a grand old home in Sydney's harbourside suburb of Mosman, the question of relevance began to simmer in 2005. The home already had a rich history of change. It started out as a Victorian Italianate-style mansion built in 1885 for the Littles, one of the area's original families. Later, when the house was transformed in an Art Deco style, the verandahs were half closed in, all windows reduced in size and lacework removed. The house changed hands a few more times until the early 90s when the current owners – a couple and their four young children – bought and restored it, in collaboration with heritage specialist architect Deece Giles, making it child friendly.

For the family, enamoured of the house and their nearly 20-year history together, the time was ripe for another refurbishment. No longer on the heritage list, the house could be given a contemporary redesign, one that would better suit the owners' collection of modern Australian art and a now grown-up household. Architect William Smart's sensitivity to the home and his desire to amalgamate the old with the new sealed the deal.

For William and his team from Smart Design Studio, the brief was clear. The couple wanted the same house – upgraded and improved with a monochromatic colour scheme, more private areas and bathrooms and better access to the outdoors. The property was also begging for a greater visual and physical connection to the tennis court and pool, the picturesque private gardens and sweeping views to Balmoral beach.



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Dining chairs are Cassina 'Pilotta', artwork to the right of the double doors is by Savanhday Vongpoothorn, to the left by Angelina Pwerle. Pottery by Merric Boyd and a Zettel'z chandelier from Space can be seen in the study. The mannequin was a school art project, artwork by Angela Brennan (top) and Noel McKenna (below). A Jon Cattapan work in the dining room punctuates the white space. OPPOSITE PAGE The new kitchen is in stainless steel and DuPont Corian.



THE LARGE-SCALE ABSTRACT AND LANDSCAPE WORKS PROVIDE A GALLERY-LIKE BACKDROP TO EVERYDAY LIFE, WHERE ENTERTAINING AND FAMILY GATHERINGS ARE FREQUENT.

The transformation was completed in July 2008. The grandeur of the original two-storey Victorian home remains but it is cut back with hard-edged restraint in a colour scheme of white and grey. Oversized artworks, Italian and Danish designer furniture, and finishes including stone, large tiles and DuPont Corian lend an air of opulence.

The main entry (via a porte-cochere) is flanked by the traditional formal lounge and dining rooms, which have been revamped with dark-stained, wide timber floorboards and contemporary lighting. In the dining room a square B&B Italia 'Maxalto' table punctuates the space and is surrounded by artworks including a bright red bird installation by Kate Rohde. The large-scale abstract and landscape works provide a gallery-like backdrop to everyday life where entertaining and family gatherings are frequent. "Always surrounded by artworks, our children are now collecting their own, mostly by young Australian artists," says the owner.

The living area, at the rear of the house, has been reconfigured to create a continuous flow to the outside, with bifold doors opening full width beneath a cantilevered awning. Here, the juxtaposition of old and new architecture is most apparent. The pool and modern native gardens by landscape designer William Dangar are now in full view and easily accessed.

The second storey was extended to provide new ensuites, in a blend of terrazzo and glass, and walk-in dressing rooms to complement the bedrooms. The main bedroom's existing ensuite and dressing room were combined, resulting in an area with luxurious scale. Here, smoked oak joinery and white tiles, a freestanding bath and dual sinks beneath a stretch of honed Statuario Venato marble are a dramatic contrast to the fussier Victorian bones of the home.



THIS PAGE In the living room, 'Longreach' sofas from Ambou have been re-covered in a Boyac fabric. Living Divani armchairs from Space, hand-knotted silk rug from Rugs, Carpet & Design, and large artwork by Dale Frank. Ochre and stringy-bark log poles by Nawiurapu Wunungmurra from Niagara Galleries. OPPOSITE PAGE Artwork at the bottom of the stairs is by Lucy Culliton from Ray Hughes Gallery.



THIS PAGE B&B Italia "Maxalto" dining table in brushed black oak is surrounded by chairs from Fanuli Furniture. Artwork to the right is by Lucy Culliton, and the red bird installation is by Kate Rohde. OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Timber shelves in the dining room display a mix of books, sculpture and art. A Rick Amor artwork hangs above the fireplace in the living room. A Charles and Ray Eames recliner and ottoman from Living Edge offer easy relaxation in front of the dining room fireplace. Artwork is by Gareth Sansom.

"I think this house is probably more about what we *didn't* do," says William, describing the simplicity of the new design. "The owner is not a pink and beige kind of person, so the design had to rely on getting the spaces right, rather than ornamentation." The proportions of the old house were carefully carried into the new, and cornices and architraves were matched in a clean, modern, robust style that William admits "took a lot of thought to get right". Layouts were reconsidered, with passageways added to hang art, and doorways and openings added to rooms to make them more functional.

William also introduced a number of environmental initiatives including a grey water re-use system, while the capacity for stormwater collection and retention has been increased. The architect's modifications also allow a greater opportunity for natural lighting, and a concrete slab to the new living areas utilises passive solar gain in winter and promotes cooling in summer.

The study, next to the all-white and stainless steel kitchen was once a walk-through room and it now provides the owners with space for displaying a collection of Merric Boyd pottery from the 30s and 40s, the organic shapes contrasting with the clean lines of the house. A contemporary paper chandelier, the Zettel'z by Ingo Maurer, with hand-written messages and quotes, is a reminder that these new spaces are a personal interpretation of times past. Sustainable and contemporary design principles plus places for art and adult family life have given Mandolong House relevance again in a new age. 17



SPEED READ

A grand Victorian Italianate mansion, Mandolong House, built in 1885 in a Sydney harbourside locale, has been reinvented by Smart Design Studio. After 20 years of residency the owners wanted a design better suited to adult family life. A reconfigured section at the back of the house provides easy access to the outdoors and creates a dramatic juxtaposition between old and new architecture. A restrained colour palette lets the owners' art collection take centre stage.

THIS PAGE A dressing room and bathroom adjoin the main bedroom. Joinery in smoked oak veneer, and a handmade palmwood and woven goat leather rug from Jason Mowen Gallery create a natural, monochromatic palette. OPPOSITE PAGE Bed from Planet Furniture dressed in Belgian linen, cushions and cashmere blankets. Handmade Moroccan wool rug from Jason Mowen Gallery. Eero Saarinen Tulip table from De De Ce. Artworks behind bed by Euan Macleod, Rachael Fairfax and Jun Chen.