



HOME



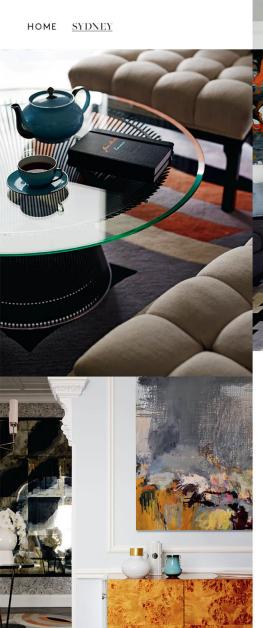


he eyes have it in this home's living room, but the 16 Fornasetti plates on the wall aren't the only beguiling faces the three-bedroom Federation house in Sydney's inner west presents to the world. Its crisp restored facade relives its origins, while the multi-layered interior design lends a fresh and glamorous twist to its preserved period features.

But, when designer Greg Natale sighted the brick bungalow in 2009, previous renovations had almost erased its past. And a beige 1970s twostorey mishmash of rooms on the back didn't reference any era or style. Thankfully, original detailing in the front section - including arches, cornices and ceiling roses - was intact and it drew the owner to the house. "The minute I opened the door and looked up and saw those original features, I could visualise what could be done and, with the high ceilings, I knew it could be something special," says Lena Moawad, who lives here with husband Adam Haddad and their girls Sabine, 12, and Amelie, eight.

Having seen Greg's previous projects in Belle, she knew he was the person for the job. "I loved the flamboyance. He has his own confident style, which is a little bit classic, a little bit modern," says Lena.

Her home's proportions and detailing provided inspiration and a ready canvas for Greg's design, while her passion for Fornasetti became part of a potent mix. But, first there was an extensive renovation to do in a project that lasted four years. The couple wanted two living spaces with the parents' wing separate from that of the girls, and to open the home to the outside with a new verandah at the rear. A library was a must. "I am passionate about books, so it was important to have space for them," says Lena. What better way to decorate it than with Fornasetti 'Ex Libris' wallpaper.



With the house being in a heritage zone, the council insisted that the facade be restored to its original brickwork and Greg couldn't venture beyond the footprint and existing height at the back. He removed the render, sandblasted the exteriors and repointed the brickwork. Meanwhile, the extension was gutted to the slab and its painted brickwork stripped to match the facade. Banks of French doors added at the rear upstairs and down ensure an easy connection with the outside.

Greg opened up the hallway, knocking out a wall to connect it to the formal lounge and creating a vestibule, while sliders between the library and the living room, once permanently shut, were prised open. "The central vestibule is the core of the house and creates so much light," says Greg. Adds Lena, "It's the roundabout in our house – there are four access points and people meet there." Off this core are the lounge, a study, the kitchen-cum-dining and the bedrooms. Downstairs are the family room and outdoor area leading to the garden and pool.

Arches connecting the rooms to the vestibule provided Greg's starting point for the classically inspired interiors. "Arches became the theme," he says, which was reinforced by the panelling he introduced throughout. Drawing cues from the reborn brick-and-tile exterior, he used splashes of terracotta in the rugs. "That and the powder blue work so well together. The blue adds that pop." Also adding the pop is Lena's love of Fornasetti, expressed in the wallpapers and the plate wall, and accentuated in the kitchen tiles. With their Fornasetti arches, they fuse two recurring motifs.

The result is a house that, although glamorous and stylish, never takes itself too seriously – this is a family home, after all. It offers many faces, being "classical, mid-century, graphic and a little playful," says Greg, "but it's also warm, soft and layered, thanks to the rug by Catherine Martin and the Kelly Wearstler white leather 'Souffle' armchairs."

"Who would have thought those chairs would work so perfectly with the classic lounge?" says Lena. "But Greg pulled it off beautifully." 15

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