

DECORATING BEFORE AND AFTER

A Trapeze 6 light from Criteria Collection is the stand-out feature in the kitchen, where a panelled wall — painted Dulux Lexicon quarter — conceals the new laundry (formerly a small bathroom). Three handmade ceramic handles from Anne Black are designed to double as hooks and camouflage the door. The island bench has an ash timber top and lower cabinets are painted Porter's Paints Grey Pepper. For stockist details, see page 135.

A FINE BALANCE A HERITAGE HOME IS BROUGHT TO

LIFE WITH SMART DESIGN AND CONTEMPORARY ACCENTS.

WORDS NATALIE WALTON PHOTOGRAPHY JACK SHELTON





WHEN RESTORING HERITAGE buildings is your livelihood and passion, creating your own home is going to be a carefully thought-out process. That was the situation for Tom Carson and Soma Giovannini, co-founders of Abode Restoration. When they bought their Victorian terrace in late 2016, the couple wanted to make the most of the building's footprint and called upon interior designer Carole Whiting to help them create a space that could incorporate both their style and practical everyday living considerations, including family time with their 12-year-old daughter Aisha.

The two-storey, four-bedroom building had been in the same family for two generations, before it was sold to a builder who started renovating it but never managed to finish the kitchen, bathrooms or laundry. When Tom and Soma came across the property, it was in a shambles and it had no storage, but as Tom says, "We were both caught up with the beauty of the building."

Unfortunately many of the original features had been stripped back or removed in the previous renovation so the brief the couple gave Carole was to economically fit-out the house, without replicating original elements. She was to create a modern, functioning home that paid homage to its history in a simple, understated way.

LIVING

Before The living room was a small empty space with few existing features. The couple wanted to add storage and enough furniture to accommodate their family comfortably.

After A custom-made storage bench was fitted to run the length of the room and doubles as extra seating. The furniture and homewares are mostly new with an eclectic mix of stand-out pieces and some inexpensive items.

DINING

Before The space was bare with white walls.

After Soma found the fireplace on eBay and sourced a vintage mirror from Izzi and Popo to sit on the mantelpiece. Custom joinery to the side of the fireplace sits on an oak platform. "It was all about keeping the design timeless," Carole says. "You don't know if it's old or new." Also, the panelling has been kept to a similar style as in the bathroom and bedroom for continuity.

EXTERIOR

The exterior of the home was one of the few areas of the house that was left untouched. Its softly mottled salmon-pink finish reminded the couple of old homes in Italy or France. "Though many would have seen it as vital to re-render and paint, in our eyes it was what gave the home character beyond any we had seen," Tom says. >



BEFORE



BEFORE AND AFTER DECORATING

A Cloche pendant from Porcelain Bear hangs above a Piuma table from Criteria Collection. The No 18 chairs are from Thonet. **FACING PAGE A** view into the dining room from the kitchen; the De La Espada Frame sofa, Fort Standard candlesticks and Apparatus incense burner are from Criteria Collection. For stockist details, see page 135.

“Carole designed a space that we could not really have imagined ourselves. It is exactly what we wanted but better and much more than we could have dreamed.”

KITCHEN

Before When Tom and Soma bought the house, it didn't really have a proper kitchen, just some basic elements stashed into the living area. The brief was to open up the space, introduce light and create room to move. **After** One of the key features of the kitchen space is the exposed recycled brick, one of Tom's favourite aspects of the house. “It was an element that caused a lot of discussion and debate,” Carole says. “I had to be brought around by them on it, but it really adds something.”

The brick is toned down by the colour palette of the rest of the space and the wooden bench. “I was keen to use recycled timber to give it that hard-working kitchen feel,” Carole says. Tom loves the resulting warm, country feel of the room especially as it reminds him of time he spent living on a country property in Glenlyon, central Victoria. >

ABOUT THE OWNERS

Tom has 39 years of experience working on some of Australia's most important landmark buildings and is trained in stonemasonry, which he studied in France and Italy. Prior to starting Abode Restoration with Soma in 2015, Tom was involved in the restoration of Central Station, Sydney Town Hall, St Mary's and St Andrew's cathedrals in Sydney, as well as The GPO and The State Library in Melbourne. “Historic homes hold such an appeal because they connect us to our past,” says Tom, who has a commercial builder's licence and oversaw the renovation of his own home. “They are also often beautiful in proportion,” he adds. He and Soma, an artist and designer who takes care of the marketing side of the business, chose to specialise in heritage homes and buildings because they love the way these places tell a story.

The eat-in kitchen overlooks the courtyard through large panelled windows cut into the exposed brick wall. The bricks were recycled from the back of the house, which was knocked out to allow for an extension. The tap and mixer are by Brodware and the under-sink cabinets are painted a custom black by Dulux. Reclaimed pine floorboards that have been sanded, wire brushed and stained with a hint of Fiddes Timeless Grey hard wax add a little rustic character to the room. For stockist details, see page 135.



ABOVE Terrazzo floor tiles were chosen to keep with the palette of the joinery, which is painted Porter's Paints Grey Pepper — the same colour used throughout the house. "I tried to keep the palette limited and consistent," Carole says. BELOW Carrara marble was used in the bathroom with tapware from Reece that was stripped back and coated in a brass finish. For stockist details, see page 135.



BATHROOM

Before The house had two separate wet areas and there was debate over whether to make one large bathroom or leave it as two smaller ones. "The one big space won the day," Carole says. "There was also a lot of debate over the windows and in the end we removed one to simplify the north elevation."

After "This room was so much more complicated than it looks," Carole says. There were restrictions as to where the plumbing could be incorporated — a wall of panelled cupboards concealed some of this. The panelling was introduced to be sympathetic to Soma and Tom's preference for a more traditional-style home. "It was a great device to give a nod to the home's heritage without replicating period features," Carole says. "It still has a contemporary feel."

BEDROOM

Before The bedroom had little left of the original building and really was the perfect blank canvas.

After A panelled feature wall was created to frame the bed and acts as a bedhead. Storage nooks were left on either side. A full wall of wardrobe storage was also installed and a point was made of not adding too much furniture. Carole says the key to making this space work was to keep the furnishings sparse and allow the panelling and light fittings to be the heroes. Linen curtains help to soften the space. *Ch*

EXPERT ADVICE

While Tom and Soma have experience in restoration work, this project was different so they were keen to engage the expertise of interior designer Carole Whiting. "We were truly sold when we saw her home," Tom says. "We admired her brilliant use of space; seeking out every area for storage, her use of light and subdued colour." It was also Carole's respect for heritage elements that attracted the pair. "We wanted a traditional, European feel without it being a 'reproduction', and were impressed by Carole's ability to sympathetically introduce a fresh, modern take on both design and practical elements required." The project was a collaborative one, and while Soma admits that she found some of the initial concepts challenging, she is thrilled with the final results.

DETAILS

Interior design Carole Whiting Interiors and Design, (03) 9972 8779; carolewhiting.com

Builder Abode Restorations, 0405 847 147; aboderestoration.com.au

Joinery Morris Acciarito and Associates, 0413 803 683; morrisacciarito.com.au

Antiques Izzi and Popo, (03) 9696 1771

Furniture Criteria Collection, (03) 9421 2636; criteriacollection.com.au

Paint Dulux, 13 25 25; dulux.com.au

Porter's Paints, 1800 656 664; porterspains.com

"We wanted a traditional, European feel without it being a 'reproduction.'"



The bedroom was quite bare when the family bought the property so Carole built a floor-to-ceiling bedhead as a feature wall. Soma added the antique fleur-de-lis wall sconces as a finishing touch. The panelled wall was painted Porter's Paints Grey Pepper. Bedlinen is from H&M Home. For stockist details, see page 135.

BEFORE

