

BACK TO THE FUTURE

This Federation house has
been reinvented as a sleek
contemporary home with
a nod to its graceful past.

Photographs NICHOLAS WATT + JENNY HARE
Words JEAN WRIGHT



This page 'Hemel' candle and metal light
from Kevin Reilly Lighting hangs in the
entertainment/media room. Diesel by Moroso
'Cloudscape' armchair from Hub. Christian
Lialgre 'Nagato' stool (in foreground), and
'Bazane' stools in front of the fireplace. 'Soori'
coffee table from Poliform. Maxalto bookcase.
Artwork by Joanna Kitas. 'Etched' rug by Hare
+ Klein for Designer Rugs. Opposite page In
the games/billiard room, bowls by Ruth Levine
sit in front of a painting by Terri Brooks.



These pages Sofa designed by Hare + Klein in the entertainment/media room. 'Soori' coffee table from Poliform. Maxalto bookcase. Christian Liaigre 'Bazane' stools. Artwork by Joanna Kitas. Kevin Reilly 'Hemel' hanging light.



"By turning the formal rooms into fun, lived-in spaces, while restoring their original features, we were respecting the house's history as well as our casual way of life."

When the new owners acquired this circa 1906 Federation house (one in a row of three) in Sydney, they took on their role as custodians seriously. They had the best interests of the house at heart and they decided there were to be no short cuts in any work they did to bring it up to speed.

The house occupies a generous block of land with two street frontages, a tennis court at the front and beautiful gardens. But the home had lost much of its character with 40s alterations and tacked-on additions. The original windows at the front had been replaced with inappropriate steel windows and the fireplaces had been removed. It was depressing, dark and disjointed.

The owners called in Meryl Hare of Hare + Klein interior designers who had worked with the family previously on their beach house. As luck would have it, she had also worked on the Federation-era house next door.

The brief was part-restoration and re-purposing, combined with a new addition to create a contemporary home for a couple with a family of four, aged from eight to 14, who love casual living. "It's nice when you work with people the second time around. There is an understanding and trust, and communication is already established," says Meryl.

The Hare + Klein design team – Meryl and Dimity Chitty, project manager – were responsible for the restoration of the original house and the interior detailing of the new extension; Melanie Kightley looked after the furnishings and decorating. The team worked alongside Albert Hoggett Architects who designed the extension.

An open-plan kitchen, living and dining area form part of the new double-volume addition. Full-height doors open to a barbecue and outdoor entertaining area, and the William Dangar-designed gardens beyond. The owners were keen to change the usage of the original formal reception rooms at the front of the house. "We thought that by turning the formal rooms into fun, lived-in spaces, while restoring their original features, we were achieving our desired balance of respecting the house's history as well as our casual way of life."

These two front rooms are now lively family rooms – one fitted with table tennis and billiard tables that the owner sourced in the US – while the other is used as a media/TV room with casual furniture that welcomes the whole family. The original decorative plaster ceilings were restored, recessed downlights inserted, and painted a contemporary blue-grey shade. The original double doors that link the rooms were reinstated, while a new fireplace was designed by Dimity to be in sync with the house and its now more contemporary mood.

The floorboards had to be replaced after it was discovered that the joists and bearers were not in good condition, and new 250mm-wide solid oak boards by Dinesen in Denmark were laid throughout, greatly contributing to unifying the link between the old house and its new extension.

A study/library in the original section is filled with pieces that reflect the interests of the owners, who lived for many years in London and are keen travellers – a true indication of the eclectic nature of this new-old house. 18

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SPEED READ

» Interior designer Meryl Hare of Hare + Klein was called in to refresh a Federation-era house in Sydney, reworking the formal rooms for modern living and adding a contemporary addition. » In place of the reception rooms at the front of the house, an entertainment/media room and a games room fitted out with table tennis and billiard tables now draw the family together. » The original features of the house including the decorative plaster ceilings, mouldings and panelled doors have been restored or re-created, and provide a foil for the casual, modern furnishings. » Wide oak floorboards laid throughout bring unity to the old and the new.

This page: Gervasoni 'InOut' oak rocking chairs from Ambau on the master bedroom balcony. Antique rain drum from Orient House. Opposite page: clockwise from top left the facade of the Federation house is a mixture of brick, stone, shingles and terracotta tiles. Dinesen wide oak floorboards provide continuity between the old and new sections of the house. Artwork by Jenny Tapfer. The modern joinery in the study in 'EvenAlmond' timber veneer from Elton Group was designed to fall short of the decorative plaster ceiling. Wine barrel stools from The Country Trader. Apaiser 'Seascapes' bath from Rogerseller.

