

MATURE MASQUERADE

THIS NEW HOME'S TRADITIONAL FACADE
IS A STREETSCAPE CAMOUFLAGE FOR AN
INTERIOR DRESSED UP IN ELEGANT FINISHES
AND CRISPLY MODERN FURNITURE

PRODUCTION & STYLING JEAN WRIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS NICHOLAS WATT



The warm tones of the pinboard wall and rug in this Sydney home (opposite page) are echoed in the brown and orange vessels and Emily Pwerle painting (this page) in the dining area. →



The kitchen island bench ("the social hub of the home," say the owners) looks towards the Tony Twigg sculpture (opposite page) and the dining area (above), which features other artworks sourced by consultancy Artduo. (Below) Designer Ruth Levine, who worked on the home's interiors.



Inspiration, it seems, can spring from just about anywhere. In the case of this rebuild in Sydney's Hunters Hill, interior designer Ruth Levine, of Sydney firm RLD, drew ideas for her colour palette from the shade of the owner's hair. "It's a beautiful deep auburn," she says, "a gorgeous colour, and so rich. It really struck me." And far from materialising in small accessories, such as a scatter cushion or two, the tone is lavished on a feature pinboard wall that draws the eye from the moment you step over the threshold. "Straightaway, a view through to the back and out into the garden is revealed, with tantalising glimpses of a burnt-orange feature wall," says Ruth. "It's so welcoming."

From the street, this brand-new home presents a rather traditional facade, keeping its promise of contemporary elegance under wraps for closer inspection. But open the front door and there is an unexpectedly modern and airy interior. "It feels like a family home, and you're invited into their lives," Ruth says.

A feeling of openness, connectivity and functionality were priorities for the owners, who had lived briefly in the old house before it was demolished to make way for something more practical and contemporary. Occupying the previous boxy-roomed, spec-built house for a short time prior to rebuilding gave them a sense of future space requirements and the pros and cons of the block itself but did nothing to meet their demands for modern family living.

"We wanted the new house to feel very open and spacious but also warm and comfortable," say the owners, who first came across Ruth's work for RLD at the Australian Interior →



A Vergola roof (above) turns the tiled outdoor area into a versatile entertaining space with adjustable blades for heat and light control. Large sliding glass doors open to incorporate the living space (opposite page), where dark-toned furnishings add substance to the neutral backdrop.

Design Awards. "We connected with the style immediately – contemporary but welcoming and functional. Perfect for our new home, which had to blend family life with style."

Plans for the new structure had already been drawn up by Chateau Homes, and both Ruth and RLD senior designer Louise Spicer worked closely with the builders to streamline the flow and perfect the detailing. The outside is in complete harmony with the Hunters Hill streetscape, but the owners wanted to simplify the interiors by stripping out superfluous trims and doing away with any decorative excess. "Louise understood our objectives and was full of clever ideas. She was very detail focused, which we really valued," say the owners.

In order to meet the needs of a growing family, planning also included the future requirements of the owners' two young boys. Using the talents of all concerned and employing seriously sensible thinking bore great rewards, including incorporating a multifunctional room where the children can be as noisy as they want. The finished design also made provision for an extra bedroom, which can be called into use if the family expands or used as a guestroom.

The design marries family demands with a sense of peace. "We created multi-usage spaces that transform from child-friendly to grown-up environments," Ruth says. "Even though it's a family house, we needed to think about adults, too – not just children."

The expansive living/dining areas, which open fully to the outside, are furnished with deep grey sofas, the square lines of which mirror the imposing tiled chimneybreast. →

"EVEN THOUGH IT'S A FAMILY HOUSE, WE NEEDED TO THINK ABOUT ADULTS, TOO"



The owners "love the play of textures and materials" in the master bedroom **(above)** and ensuite **(opposite page)** – "It's a real example of everyday luxury and serenity". Against the restrained palette, the shiny metallic light by Yellow Goat Design **(below)** makes a statement on the stairway.



There are generous floor cushions for the boys and a pair of banquettes for added seating and storage. Signature pieces, such as the Moooi 'Dandelion' laser-cut light hanging above the dining table, and an interesting array of contemporary artworks enrich and personalise the rooms.

A spacious study (home to the hair-colour pinboard wall) links with the living room, while the kitchen is off the dining area. There's also a food-preparation corridor connecting the kitchen and laundry. "We love the way the whole living space flows," the owners say.

When the heavy-duty building work was complete, the owners could furnish the finished spaces – adding the detailing they had been planning in the process. Unlike many parents of young children, they were dedicated to investing in quality pieces that would last, rather than buying second-rate disposables to take kids' wear and tear. As the house took shape, so did their interior schemes. By the time the rooms were ready for the furniture, pieces had been selected with the utmost care and came together smoothly. Linking the look are white walls framing wenge and blackbutt flooring – handsome surfaces for the play of colour in artworks and accessories, including several accent items in the pinboard wall's 'auburn' tone. Rugs from the entry through to the living room and study carry the same floral design in rich ochre.

With the home finished, fitted out and furnished, the owners can really let their hair down and relax, secure in the knowledge that they now live in an elegant new home that caters just as capably for nitty-gritty family needs as it does for aesthetics. ✦



Q&A WITH INTERIOR DESIGNER
RUTH LEVINE, OF RLD

Describe your design style in three words.
Intuitive, textural, functional.

What should our readers think about when planning to undertake a renovation?
How they want to feel in their home, the renovation's purpose and their budget for building and decorating. Style is also essential - tearsheets from magazines help communicate specific likes and dislikes to their chosen architect/designer.

How often should you revitalise your home?
Well, is the interior reflecting and suiting your lifestyle? If not, make changes to ensure practicality and beauty that works for you. Some items may need updating due to wear and tear, others because you want things to feel refreshed. Easy changes can be as simple as a new painting, cushion or accessory.

Where do you find inspiration when designing?
My clients inspire me, as our designs are bespoke. The particular style and, therefore, the influence per project is individual. My inspiration is varied: from the colours and textures in nature (I just love the Tasmanian wilderness) to Picasso's perfect composition and Christian Liaigre's sophistication. For further information, call RLD on (02) 9331 4066 or visit www.rldesign.com.au.



LIGHT WORKS

In the bedroom, two curtains of different opacity were installed on separate tracks. "The sheer works well during the day, letting in light and adding a sense of luxury," says Ruth. "The blackout curtain can be used at night for light protection and privacy." Not only do these curtains transform the room, they also complement the white plantation shutters.

THINGS TO SOURCE...

➔ **SUSPENSION LIGHT** The 'Saturn Ring 100', designed by Australia's Dean Phillips, features a gilded-leaf interior and a high-efficiency LED. Phillips's design philosophy – classic but contemporary – is encapsulated in this luxe light. For more on Dean Phillips, call 1300 332 674 or visit www.deanphillips.com. 'Saturn Ring 100' lamp, \$2759.90, from Light Culture, 1300 300 904, www.lightculture.com.au.

← **DANDELION LIGHT** Designed by Richard Hutten in 2004, the 'Dandelion' lamp is made from laser-cut steel and inspired by the humble plant. At night, the light source at the centre creates silhouettes from the metal circles, giving an exotic and mesmerising look. Moooi 'Dandelion' pendant, \$3825, from Space, (02) 8339 7588, www.spacefurniture.com.au.

➔ **ARMCHAIRS** Launched in 2005, B&B Italia's 'J.J.' seating range by Antonio Cittero began with a chair available in two different sizes – one with a high backrest for lounging and a lower one for conversation. Later versions included a chair draped in Mongolian fur (released in 2007) and a rocker (2009). B&B Italia 'J.J.' chair in black pony skin with ivory straps by Antonio Cittero, \$5375, from Space, (02) 8339 7588, www.spacefurniture.com.au.



RATHER THAN HITTING GALLERIES, THE OWNERS TURNED TO ARTDUO TO SUGGEST AND ACQUIRE SUITABLE WORKS, SUCH AS THE EMILY PWERLE ARTWORK (LEFT). VISIT WWW.ARTDUO.COM.AU