

VOCAL LIVING

AUSTRALIA

CONSUMER MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR *

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PLEASURES

A young Melbourne family peel away the grandeur of their Victorian house to reveal a warm and unpretentious home.

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The pared interiors of this Victorian home are simply painted in Dulux 'Natural White'. In the living room, OPPOSITE, a marble-topped Thonet table, circa 1920, from Geoffrey Hatty Applied Arts, displays a collection of Danish ceramics from Twenty21. Above it is a CFL pendant by Michael Anastassiades. In the dining room behind, a Louis Poulsen 'Onion' light hangs above a Florence Knoll table and Bertioia chairs from Dedece. In the family room, THIS PAGE, are a Hans Wegner 'Peacock' chair from Great Dane Furniture, B&B Italia 'Tufty-Time' ottoman and a patchwork kilim rug from Loom Rugs. A lined oak bar sits on a marble plinth, both by interior designers Hecker Guthrie. Details, last pages.



The sitting room is elegantly decorated with the classic 'Maralunga' leather sofa and chair by Cassina, from Corporate Culture, a Zanotta 'Derby 875' chair from Space Furniture, a Mark Tuckey 'Egg Cup' stool, Tom Dixon 'Offcut' stool from Dedece (background) and Cloud 'Relax' stool by Tim Collins. The lamp is from Spence & Lyda. Under the window is a Driade 'Frate' table from Space Furniture, bearing Marcello Fantoni pieces, circa 1960. The low table is a Living Divani 'Menhir' in embossed oak, from Space Furniture. The 'Ptolomeo' book stack is from Format Furniture and the 'Sintesi' TV unit is from Poliform.



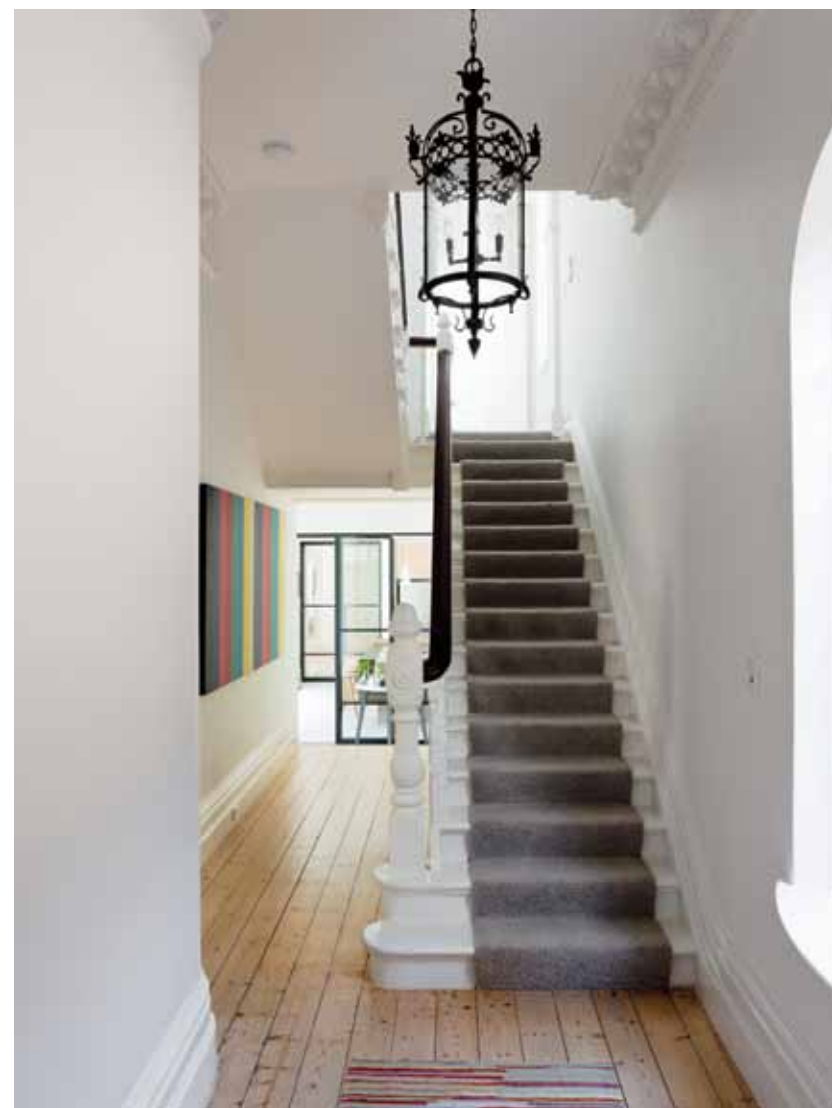
SO MUCH WAS right when Melbourne couple Briony and Andrew Ryan first walked into their imposing Victorian house. The house had wonderful bones; it was elegant, airy and graceful with high ceilings, marble fireplaces, substantial mouldings and frankly grand proportions. That grandeur was also where the fit wasn't altogether comfortable. For a young and unpretentious couple, the painted ceilings, swagged curtains and thick carpets were beautiful but just too formal, too proper, too much.

"Our parents walked in and said, 'Why would you change it?', Briony laughs, "and that was enough to make us sure we wanted to change it." Says Paul Hecker of interior designers Hecker Guthrie, the house was simply too old for the Ryans. "It was a bit mumsy, and Briony and Andrew are absolutely not 'Canapes, anyone?' kind of people."

They're not, particularly with a rambunctious dog then and the same dog plus a full-throttle toddler, Gretchen, now. That said, the Ryans thoroughly admired the house's architectural attributes. From the beginning, changes were never intended to detract from what had appealed to them in the first place. Instead, they wanted to remove embellishments and introduce a fresh and youthful simplicity throughout. "This was very much about paring back the house to its bare bones and then putting lovely things inside it," says Hecker.

Having spent time in Denmark, the couple empathised with the Scandinavian aesthetic, with its clean lines and hushed hues. To establish that sensibility in their own space, Hecker Guthrie first exposed and then limed and waxed the original pine floorboards. This reduced the pine's yellowness, and the floors now underscore the calm breeziness of walls painted white everywhere except in the study, where a slightly deeper shade provides a contrast for the adjoining sitting and dining areas.

"THIS WAS VERY MUCH ABOUT PARING BACK THE HOUSE TO ITS BARE BONES AND THEN PUTTING LOVELY THINGS INSIDE IT"



In the dining room, OPPOSITE, is a circa 1920 Bologna University display case, from Geoffrey Hatty Applied Arts, filled with new white objects, including owner Andrew Ryan's Nike sneakers. The painting is Joshua Yeldham's Moon Song. In the hallway, OPPOSITE, BELOW, is a computer-designed print on canvas by Andrew Ryan. Sky Range glazing replaces the kitchen wall. The pendant light was an existing fitting. THIS PAGE: next to the kitchen entrance, a Gervasoni 'Gray' marble table from Anibou is topped with fern-filled medicine jars by florist Fleur McHarg. The far glazed doors lead to the family room.

The kitchen features 'Leather Touch' black granite benchtops from SMG Stone, 'Diamond in the Rough' floor tiles by Popham Design and handmade ceramic wall tiles. The extractor fan is enclosed by an old-fashioned Georgian wired safety glass. The joinery is in limed American oak, designed by Hecker Guthrie. Above it all hangs a Pandul 'Tip Top' pendant light, from Bromhead Design.

The bathroom is in white marble, with ceramic tiles and a 'Ball' light by Michael Anastassiades. The downstairs powder room, OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT, features a Parisi 'Miniwash' basin from Mary Noall below a Norman Lindsay etching. In the bedroom, OPPOSITE, RIGHT, are oak cupboards by Hecker Guthrie. The walls of the study, BELOW, are painted in Dulux 'Candle Bark'. The desk is by Hecker Guthrie and the chairs are MDF Italia 'Flow'. On the wall hangs an Established & Sons 'Font Clock'. The light is a Jielde 'Augustin' pendant, from Euroluce. Details, last pages.



Windows were freed from heavy curtains and are now either barely shaded by falls of unbacked linen or left uncovered to welcome the streaming natural light that sets this freestanding Victorian apart from many of its contemporaries. Structural changes were largely limited to the kitchen area, where a solid wall at the end of the main hallway was replaced by glass panes that allow a visual flow between the front of the house, the kitchen and a large family room beyond.

Steel glazing bars in this wall and in the double doors to the family room pick up on judiciously introduced steel elsewhere, in curtain rods, the occasional pendant light and in a remarkably contemporary looking extractor fan made of Georgian safety glass. Granite used for benchtops was etched with acid for a 'leather touch' effect, while handmade ceramic splashback tiles are washed by light from an existing light well. All cupboards, designed in limed oak by Hecker Guthrie, were made to appear more as furniture than joinery.

That, and updates to the bathrooms, was about the extent of it. Once the house was shed of its lily-gilding encumbrances, the fun came down to furnishing, says Hecker. "Of course, it's also a challenge. It's not like going through a catalogue; we had to be mindful of what we'd already selected and how it all works together."

"One thing you take from the Danes is how they collect pieces one at a time and over a lifetime," adds Hecker Guthrie stylist Simone Haag. "That way, you're not going to walk into a friend's house and see the same light or mirror or whatever."

Combining a mix of vintage and contemporary pieces, the Ryans have been adding furniture only as each piece has felt right. It's a brave approach, says Hecker. "You can't look at something and say, 'Well, I bought it from X so it must be good.'"

A '60s Viennese Thonet table and a slightly rusted Italian cabinet in the dining room are typical of the Ryans' confident juxtaposition of old and new, important and just for fun. Having decided that the cabinet, a 1920s metal display case from Bologna University, would look great with its imperfections contrasting against a medley of perfect whites, they went shopping for display items. "We had a shelf left and I thought, 'I've got the perfect thing!'" says Andrew. The bottom shelf is now home to three white Nike sneakers, part of an extensive collection stowed wherever space allows.

Thrilled with the home's evolution from grand to relaxed, Briony asserts that the change "was never about dumbing down".

"We've got a messy dog and are going to have more kids, so we didn't want to be precious about anything. Everyone walks in here now, no matter what age they are, and loves it." **VZ**

