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NEW ORDER Restoring a heritage charmer

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renovation



Up and away A dark, ramshackle rear extension (inset) was replaced with a bright, sympathetic, two-storey addition (left) with skylights, lightwells and a southern wall of louvres.



Cool combo In the kitchen, polished CaesarStone benchtops in cashmere and green colour-backed glass splashbacks have created a contemporary, serene space.



Blurring the line A freshly landscaped patio and pool replaces the scruffy garden, giving the house a resort-style ambience.

Colliding worlds

A potentially tricky old charmer gets a modern makeover.

After renovating a dark Victorian terrace in England, the owners of this elegant Sydney home longed to buy a modern, light-filled property. But when they saw this character-filled house on the lower North Shore, they fell for its old world charm.

"They thought they were totally over period renovation, but ended up buying this house – which was always a point of amusement," says architect Melonie Bayl-Smith, whose firm Liquid Architecture specialises in heritage conversions.

While the owners wanted their outdoorsy Australian dream, they were also keen to retain the home's gracious features. "The clients loved the charm of the house, which was built in the late 1890s, but they wanted a great outdoor lifestyle and modern living spaces," says Bayl-Smith.

Council restrictions and a

southern orientation made the renovation tricky. The owners, who have two children, wanted to retain four upstairs bedrooms, introduce more light and create a large, open-plan kitchen/diner that would flow to the south-facing pool and garden.

But the house was like a rabbit warren – a small kitchen surrounded by underused formal living rooms and a series of hot, west-facing lean-tos, enclosing the laundry, family and informal dining areas, meant the rear section was poorly connected to the yard.

"The house was a wreck and the structure wasn't good," says Bayl-Smith. "Most of the additions had been done soon after it was built and 1970s textured wallpaper and horrible fittings were everywhere."

Downstairs, a small, single window in the north wall made interiors so gloomy that lights had to be constantly

switched on. The architects made use of previously filled-in verandas and installed ceiling lightwells, bifolds and walls of louvred glass.

"It was important it felt as connected and spacious as possible," says Bayl-Smith, who designed the rear, timber-framed, kitchen/diner addition around a double-height section of louvred, screened windows. "This connects the upper floor and living room, acts as a lightwell and allows good cross-ventilation."

Original features such as bay windows and slate roof tiles remain, as does the timber staircase beside the louvred wall, which is flanked by a modern, toughened-glass balustrade.

The contemporary look has thrilled the owners who feel they have the best of both worlds. "The design encapsulates how old and new can work harmoniously," says Bayl-Smith.

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Splash of colour Pink glass mosaic tiles bring an element of fun to a daughter's bathroom (above), while a double-height void between the glass-edged staircase and tall, southern louvres maximises light (right).



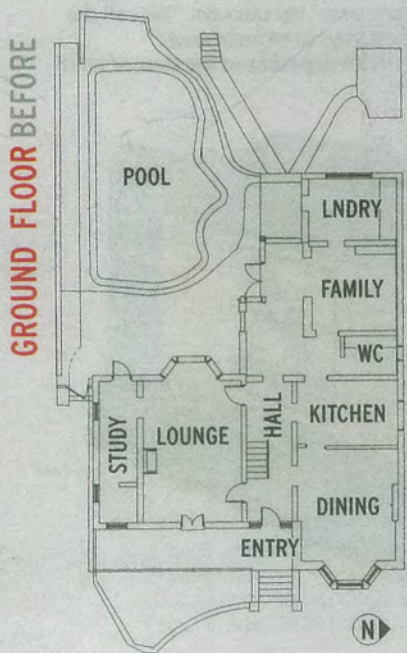
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Art of glass The rainforest green glass splashback is repeated under the island bench (left) and illuminated by a new northern skylight. The indoor/outdoor feel is accentuated by full-length stacking glass doors (above).



Well preserved Original features such as an existing bay window in the formal lounge were retained and sympathetically restored.



Well connected As well as giving light, the high louvred wall on the south face helps connect the new upper floor and ground floor kitchen/diner.

