

# Collected wisdom

An assemblage of intriguing and eclectic pieces for this Sydney eastern suburbs home is a nod to its previous incarnation as a gallery.

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**These pages** Antique furniture in the kitchen/dining area is a counterpoint to the contemporary nature of the kitchen design with its custom stainless-steel and microcement joinery by AP Design House. A set of Louis XIII Os de Mouton French oak dining chairs upholstered in a mix of French and Italian linens surround an 18th-century Spanish chestnut and wrought-iron refectory table. C1960 FontanaArte chiselled glass and chrome-plated brass pendant light. Honed terrazzo floor tiles from Surface Gallery. Cormatin 'Classic' oven in stainless steel by Lacanche.



Crafting a family home from a former commercial property offers challenges and opportunities in equal measure. So when Alexandra Ponting of AP Design House was tasked with breathing new life into the former gallery space of a high-end auction house in Sydney's eastern suburbs she took a bold approach, in keeping with her client who engaged her within two days of inspecting the property.

An iconic, red-brick Art Deco building dating from 1930 and in a row of three, it had the advantage of being freestanding, over two storeys and set on a deep, level block, despite a narrow width. The owner was initially attracted by its unique character including the arched windows and herringbone brickwork on the facade as well as its commanding presence on the popular street. In between its life as a gallery and the new owner's purchase it had been divided into two apartments and the owner decided to keep it as such in the interim, with a plan to turn it into a single residence at a later date.

The owner had been following Alexandra's work and, with full confidence, gave her an open brief for the interior design. In keeping with the building's former iteration as a gallery the designer embraced an array of bespoke finishes and artisanal pieces that lend a mood of intrigue and sophistication to the home.

The Art Deco features inspired the designer's aesthetic, starting with the new charcoal terrazzo floor tiles with an olive terrazzo border in the living area that riffs on the flooring of the era. "The dark floors give everything the strength it needs," says Alexandra, who was mindful of the paucity of natural light entering the home and so kept the walls and furnishings in a softer palette. "I used tactile and custom finishes on walls and joinery, such as tadelakt, microcement and travertine, which softens everything and provides interest," she says. »



**This page, from top** A new balcony, balustrade, gates and wrought-iron and canvas awning were added to the front of the property, all custom designed by AP Design House. Custom kitchen joinery by AP Design House in stainless steel and microcement. Louis XIII Os de Mouton French oak chairs upholstered in a mix of French and Italian linens and an 18th-century Spanish chestnut and wrought-iron refectory table. Murano glass wall sconce. Honed terrazzo floor tiles from Surface Gallery. Cormatin 'Classic' oven in stainless steel by Lacanche. **Opposite page** A serene mood pervades the living room with its custom sofa and roman blinds by AP Design House. A c1938 lamp by Pietro Chiesa for FontanaArte sits on the c1960 Italian glass console. Art Nouveau sculpted timber mirror from Aix-en-Provence from Studio ALM. C1950 Italian travertine coffee table. Glass dish is c1940 by Jacques Adnet and the artwork is an 18th-century original oil on linen, both found by Alexandra at a Paris flea market in 2019.

« Traditional ceiling mouldings and cornices throughout also tone down the rooms' sharper elements and are contemporised with lashings of Dulux 'Vivid White'.

The stainless-steel kitchen is "architectural and smart", says Alexandra, with the walnut-lined cupboards underlining the attention to detail throughout the project. The tadelakt rangehood and microcement wall joinery help to soften the more industrial nature of the stainless steel.

The two bedrooms are casually elegant with natural jute rugs, upholstered toile bedheads and distinctive lighting. To create more of a residential feel to the property Alexandra added a balcony off the master bedroom at the front which

offers a pleasing outlook, filtered by sheer curtains, over the busy, tree-lined street. The rooms also enjoy the leafy vista over a row of advanced maple trees that were planted along the side of the property.

When it came to the fittings and furniture, Alexandra specified a mix of custom pieces and curated classics, including delicate Murano glass wall sconces in the bathrooms and kitchen, as well as a Murano glass pendant light by Barovier & Toso in the main bedroom. The designer's favourite piece is the FontanaArte pendant light in the kitchen – "that green glass is just too special for words", she says. The green is echoed in the green glass side table in the living room, in the »



**These pages** In the master bedroom, a custom-designed bed by AP Design House is flanked by 'Twister' side tables by Sophie Davies. The ceramic lamp base by Carmen D'Apollonio has a custom lampshade by AP Design House. Artwork by Claude Garache. Murano glass wall sconce. Murano glass light fitting by Barovier & Toso. Curtains in sheer C&C Milano fabric. Walls are painted in Dulux 'Vivid White'.

This page, clockwise from below left In the powder room, a c1960 backlit mirror with hand-blown textured, clear and green Murano glass panels from Mazzega hangs above an antique marble basin, c1890, sourced by Alexandra in Greece in 2018. The splashback has custom tiles from Lucca, Italy. Perrin & Rowe tapware from The English Tapware Company. Murano glass wall sconce and glass towel rack bought by Alexandra on a trip to Italy. The main bathroom also has a Murano glass shelf and a curved tadelakt wall separating the shower. Perrin & Rowe tapware from The English Tapware Company. The ensuite bathroom has honed terrazzo slabs from Granite & Marble Works and floor tiles from Surface Gallery. Custom mottled glass shower door by AP Design House. Curtains in sheer C&C Milano fabric. **Opposite page** Honed 'Navona' travertine slabs from Granite & Marble Works meet the custom curved tadelakt walls in the main bathroom. Honed and filled 'Navona' travertine floor tiles from Surface Gallery. Custom 'Navona' travertine vanity by AP Design House. Perrin & Rowe tapware from The English Tapware Company.



**SPEED READ**

» Alexandra Ponting of AP Design House was engaged to convert the former gallery space of a high-end auction house in Sydney's eastern suburbs into a home. » Boasting attractive Art Deco features, the c1930 freestanding, two-storey property was already set up as two apartments which the owner wished to maintain while devising plans to turn it into a single residence at a later date. » Alexandra specified new terrazzo tiling in charcoal and olive that references the flooring of the era with softness introduced via tadelakt and microcement finishes on the walls. » A smart, architectural kitchen in stainless steel provides a contemporary punctuation point. » Elsewhere, bespoke finishes, artisanal pieces and custom designs offer intrigue and bring the spaces to life.

« style of FontanaArte, and the Murano glass shelf in the main bathroom as well as the mirror and towel holder in the powder room. They are all part of a collection of vintage pieces that Alexandra sourced on a buying trip to Europe, and which she describes as “quite rare and very special”. The artisanal pieces and the repetition of materials and motifs throughout enhance the characterful architecture and create a pleasing sense of harmony and timelessness.

“I am particularly happy with the artistic nature of all the finishes,” says Alexandra. “They all flow together yet each one has its own interest and provides curiosity.”

The owner is delighted with her new home. “I love the sanctuary of my bedroom and the wonderful light that filters from the balcony through the sheer linen curtains. They offer a feeling of romantic privacy but if I want to do some people-watching I simply open the doors to the balcony and the village comes to life,” she says. ■

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