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By VIRGINIA JEN Photographed by PIER CARTHEW

RETURN TO GLORY Gifted with *original charm* and *treasured* Federation Queen Anne *hallmarks*, this family home in Mosman has been revived with *care* and the future in mind by AP DESIGN HOUSE and JAMES DESIGN STUDIO.

This page in the living room of this Mosman home, custom **sofas** and **armchairs** designed by AP Design House upholstered in Belgian linen; custom iron and salvaged timber **coffee table** designed by AP Design House; Mía Navy **rug** from Nanimarquina; custom **pendant light** from Anna Charlesworth. *Details, last pages.*





This page in the entry, custom **pendant light** from Anna Charlesworth; **floor** in square-cut tumbled Italian marble tiles; *Night Flowers* (1958) **artwork** by Charles Blackman. *Opposite page* in the dining room, custom walnut timber **dining table** designed by AP Design House and produced by Jonathan West; vintage timber and rush **dining chairs**; iron **chandelier** from Rose Tarlow; **floor** in roasted peat timber floorboards produced by Nash Timbers.



These pages in another view of the living room, custom **curtains** and Roman **blinds** in Belgian linen produced by Simple Studio; **small vessels** by Alana Wilson; plaster and steel **wall lamps** from Rose Uniacke; Viabizzuno **wall light** from VBO Australia.





These pages, from left in the butler's pantry, custom stainless-steel **shelves** integrated with Sub Zero **freezer** designed by AP Design House and produced by Jonathan West; tapered ceramic **vessel** by Alana Wilson; **floor** in roasted peat timber floorboards produced by Nash Timbers. In the kitchen, **island benchtop, rangehood** and **wall** in tadelakt produced by Jonathan West; custom **cabinetry** with veneer walnut panels designed by AP Design House and produced by Jonathan West; vintage timber and rattan **bar stools**; Lacanche Sully stainless-steel **oven and cooktop** from Manorhouse; Perrin & Rowe **tapware** from The English Tapware Company; custom **pendant light** designed by AP Design House; custom Roman **blinds** in Belgian linen produced by Simple Studio; *Echo XII (2022)* xerograph **artwork** by Sarah Mosca from Sarah Cottier Gallery.





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reserving the heritage narrative of a grand beauty is not without its hard-won victories. Tradition, of course, has its virtues, particularly if presented in a turreted property fashioned in a Federation Queen Anne style. This was the prospect that first greeted interior designer Alexandra Ponting of AP Design House five years ago. Ponting and her trusted team of artisans worked with architecture firm James Design Studio to place the original craftsmanship of this cherished Mosman family home that first charmed and romanced its owners squarely into focus. Not disrupting this thread of the past while bringing it into the present was a detail-oriented journey that required patience, understanding and above all, realising the intrinsic and ultimately rewarding value of protecting past treasures.

“These clients are quite conservative in their tastes,” says Ponting. “It was a bit of a challenge, because we wanted to push the envelope a bit more in some areas, but we really listened to them. We also listened

to the dwelling, but then we did get to be a little more contemporary in an elegant way with the interiors.” For the architectural team and director Jonathan James, “the architectural brief was to retain the Federation features... to have every part of equal quality, to imbue all the spaces with a sense of grace, proportion and dignity, and to take advantage of the views wherever possible”.

While the salvageable prospects of the generously proportioned seven-bedroom, seven-bathroom property — complete with idyllic garden outlook — were plenty, the floor plan required a complete rethinking with an ill-informed rear renovation of rabbit-warren nature demolished to make way for triple-storey additions and a basement level. “We also wanted to bring light into all parts of the house and avoid the dark heart that large nineteenth-century houses that have grown over time seldom avoid,” says James. Environmental impact was also an integral consideration for this renovation, with photovoltaic panels and an underground water tank added, as well as northern orientation and passive heating and cooling principles taken into account.

Avoiding being overawed by striking this fine balance of preserving the past to serve the present and future — the trope of old meets new — takes a particularly thorough approach. “Federation homes are handcrafted and detail-focused, but we are big believers in those things with our design,” says Ponting in consideration of her process. “I love working on beautiful old dwellings because of that attention to detail, the quality of materials and exceptional craftsmanship. My way is to soften the fussiness of that era by paring it back a bit and creating lighter spaces and bringing in tactility.”

Despite addressing a property of such dramatic scope, the devil is truly in the detail beyond the home’s restored cornices and rosettes, as Ponting explains with the case of the diamond checkerboard floor in the hallway. “We used tumbled marble tiles that we cut so they retained the tumbled surface but with square-cut edge. This is more Federation in style but I brought in a European influence.” And choices such as tadelakt plaster, stainless-steel shelving and panelled joinery offered “much more masculine and architectural appeal”.

This European sensibility with a few complementary modern elements offers a sense of warmth and invitation. It’s another hallmark of Ponting’s work and ties seamlessly with the Federation envelope. The furniture is primarily bespoke to match the home’s grand footprint and is a perfect expression of these influences, evoking the lived-in character and joy of craftsmanship. “The furniture is inspired by Axel Vervoordt and Vincent Van Duysen — tactile, Belgian, lots of linen and salvaged timber,” says Ponting. “The meals table next to the kitchen is inspired by an old Spanish table. And [for] the coffee table in the living room, our blacksmith made the frame and we had a salvaged timber top made in three pieces. All of the sofas and armchairs are custom made.”

A certain level of commitment is needed for such a painstakingly restored heritage dwelling to truly shine and reclaim its status. From the blacksmith welding a custom table frame to the plaster specialist ensuring the rangehood finish cures just right, the process isn’t without its challenges. But for the outcome to be positive and reflective of how its current custodians live is something that Ponting values above all else and does not take for granted. “I think the collaboration between all three of us — the client, architect and myself — is special. And perhaps during the process, it can be a challenge or struggle. But in hindsight, I can see how everyone’s voice made for a better outcome and has actually improved my craft.”

■ apdesignhouse.com.au jamesdesignstudio.com.au

This page in the pool area, solid teakwood Adirondack chairs from Cotswold Furniture; pavers in Beauford sandstone from Eco Outdoor; landscape design by Myles Baldwin.



These pages, from left in the powder room, custom **cabinetry** with veneer walnut panels designed by AP Design House and produced by Jonathan West; **vanity** in travertine from Mediterranean Marble; Perrin & Rowe **tapware** from The English Tapware Company; vintage **mirror**; **wall sconce** from Rose Uniacke; custom **pendant light** from Anna Charlesworth; custom **curtains** in de Le Cuona linen; **floor** in square-cut Italian tumbled marble tiles. In the main bedroom, custom **bed frame** designed by AP Design House; **bed cover** from Elias Mercantile; **bed linen** from In Bed; salvaged oak **bedside tables** produced by Jonathan West for AP Design House; suede **pen box** from Michaël Verheyden; custom silk **rug** from Cadrys; Viabizzuno **wall lights** from VBO Australia. *Details, last pages.*



