

Herald Sun

home

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Hot and happening
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Puppy love
A garden designed
with a pooch
in mind

Making of a dream

The fine art of transforming a derelict
house into a thing of beauty

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Dressed to thrill



The little things made a big difference when transforming this dilapidated Edwardian house

Words Karen Woods Photography Chris Groenhout

We've all heard the saying, "the devil is in the detail", and when renovating this old Essendon house, there were many details to consider.

When Frances and her family bought the large brick Edwardian house, it had been a rental property for a number of years and was in a state of disrepair.

A heritage overlay meant a simple demolition and rebuild was out of the question. And so the hard work began.

Prized possession

A long sought-after limestone fireplace is the family room feature (top left)

High life

A balcony off the main bedroom is a stylish touch (above left)

European class

Corbels underneath marble give the kitchen benches a French feel (left)

The family called Paul Grossi, of Grossi Constructions, to help them with the task ahead.

"A lean-to at the back of the house was demolished, then we added three metres to the back to accommodate the new kitchen and adjoining dining area," Paul says.

"All the old brickwork had to be tuck-pointed again. The house needed underpinning, re-stumping and new floor joists, and that was before we started work on building the upper storey."

To meet height restrictions, Paul cut into the existing roof when adding the upper storey. In sections of the roofline, where there wasn't the height in the ceiling to provide liveable space, storage was built.

"Whatever we could use from the original building, we did, as well as replicating elements so the integration of the old and new would be flawless," Paul says.

This included reusing terracotta roof tiles and decorative finials, as well as retaining the original diamond glass leadlight windows at the front of the house. Small window boxes were installed to create a point of interest in the new upstairs windows.

But it's only when you step inside that you really begin to see how carefully this house has been planned and built.

Throughout the home there are ornate paint finishes on cornices, walls and door surrounds.

To keep consistency throughout the old and new sections of the house, decorative cornices, some featuring floral patterns, have been used.

Frances spent many hours browsing magazines, visiting home shows and tracking down suppliers for the items she wanted to include in the interior.

"When you look and look and look, you come up with the ideas," she says.

"I also constantly picked Paul's brain. He was full of helpful ideas and suggestions."



"When you've been working on or thinking about something for a long time, it's good to get someone else's perspective."

A number of items that were hard to come by a few years ago are more readily available in the market, such as the limestone fireplace in the lounge room.

"When we started renovating, I couldn't find one of these anywhere, but now they are available," Frances says.

Luxury fittings and fixtures have been used throughout the house.

Family life is easily accommodated in the large, provincial-style kitchen, with an informal dining and adjoining lounge room.

Leather couches are clustered around the fireplace, and the room features elaborate decorative panels on the ceiling, highlighted by two-toned paint work.

Carefully selected furnishings in timber team with stylish brocade curtains with a fringed bottom to complete the room.

The kitchen is ideal for a chef to prepare a gourmet feast.

A pitched roof was used in this section of the house so no posts were needed internally, allowing for a four-metre, coffered ceiling with a conservatory-style look.

Family hub

There's room for all the family in the new kitchen (top)

Haven sent

A spa bath has transformed the bathroom into a relaxing haven (above)