

Perfectly formed

In this compact Melbourne apartment, a family-focused makeover delivered on practicality *and* style.

STORY *Chris Pearson* | STYLING *Penny Del Castillo* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Isamu Sawa*

KITCHEN Ligne Roset 'Stump' marble occasional table, Domo. Sovereign rug in Quartz, The Rug Establishment. Ash marble on splashback and benchtop, CDK Stone. Chambord Louis sink, Abey. Classics kitchen mixer, Brodware. Joinery by Unique Interior Services. HT114 cabinet handles, Kathy. Brass trays, Satara. Pitcher, Georg Jensen. Rusticote flooring, Veneto Group (throughout).





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The owners of this Melbourne apartment had a grand plan when they bought it in 2017 - in more ways than one. Proud grandparents, the country-dwellers envisaged it as a city pad to accommodate their three grandchildren, now aged between four and eight. They also wanted to restore the home, located in a majestic heritage building, to its former splendour.

The building, an 1890s Italianate hotel, had been subdivided into apartments about 25 years before. "It reminded us of our time in London," says the owner. "They don't make them like this anymore."

But the apartment's bland, cookie-cutter fitout was out of step with the building. And, unlike the building's spacious common areas, the 80m² floor plan felt squeezey.

Despite that, the apartment had plenty of pluses, says interior designer Penny Del Castillo of In Design International. "It had 3.6m-high ceilings, stunning old-school windows and easy access to a generous courtyard." The owners wanted the home to look like it belonged in a heritage building, but be finished in a contemporary way.

The home also had to be child-friendly. "Everything revolved around the grandchildren," says Penny. "It had to be open plan, with enough floor space for the kids to play." It also needed to be low-maintenance, wipe-clean, and able to stand the rough and tumble of active youngsters. ▶



Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes allow.



The palette

Dulux
Whisper White
(throughout)

Ash marble
(kitchen
splashback and
benchtop)

Osborne & Little
'Monchique'
wallpaper (main
bedroom)

LIVING This page and opposite 109
Sofas, Great Dane. Coffee table, Globe
West. Triple Oracle suspension light,
Christopher Boots. Fire surround,
Schots Home Emporium. Scope 500
Bioethanol fireplace, EcoSmart Fire.
Table lamp, Design Nation. Roman
blind in Mokum 'Magnolia'.
COURTYARD Floor lamp, Obodo.
Lantern, sofas, coffee table and side
tables, all Satora. Umbrella, Shelter
Australia. Original bluestone paving.

The layout



DINING Dining table, One World Collection. Dining chairs, James Richardson. Leather on chairs and banquette, Camo Leathers. Brass trays, Satara. **BATHROOM** Bath, Schots Home Emporium. Topware, Brodware. *Drawthatout* artwork by Julia Brenes. Tiles, Perini. **MAIN BEDROOM** Opposite, top right and bottom Pendant light, ECC Lighting+Furniture. Table lamp, Bloomingdales Lighting. Sheer curtain in Camengo Emoi fabric from The Textile Company. Osborne & Little 'Manchique' wallpaper. Bed by Studio Del Castillo. Jewel cabinet, Zuster. Studio del Castillo ottoman in Catherine Martin for Mokum Powder Blue fabric. Lunar mirror, Grazia & Co.



THIS IS THE LIFE

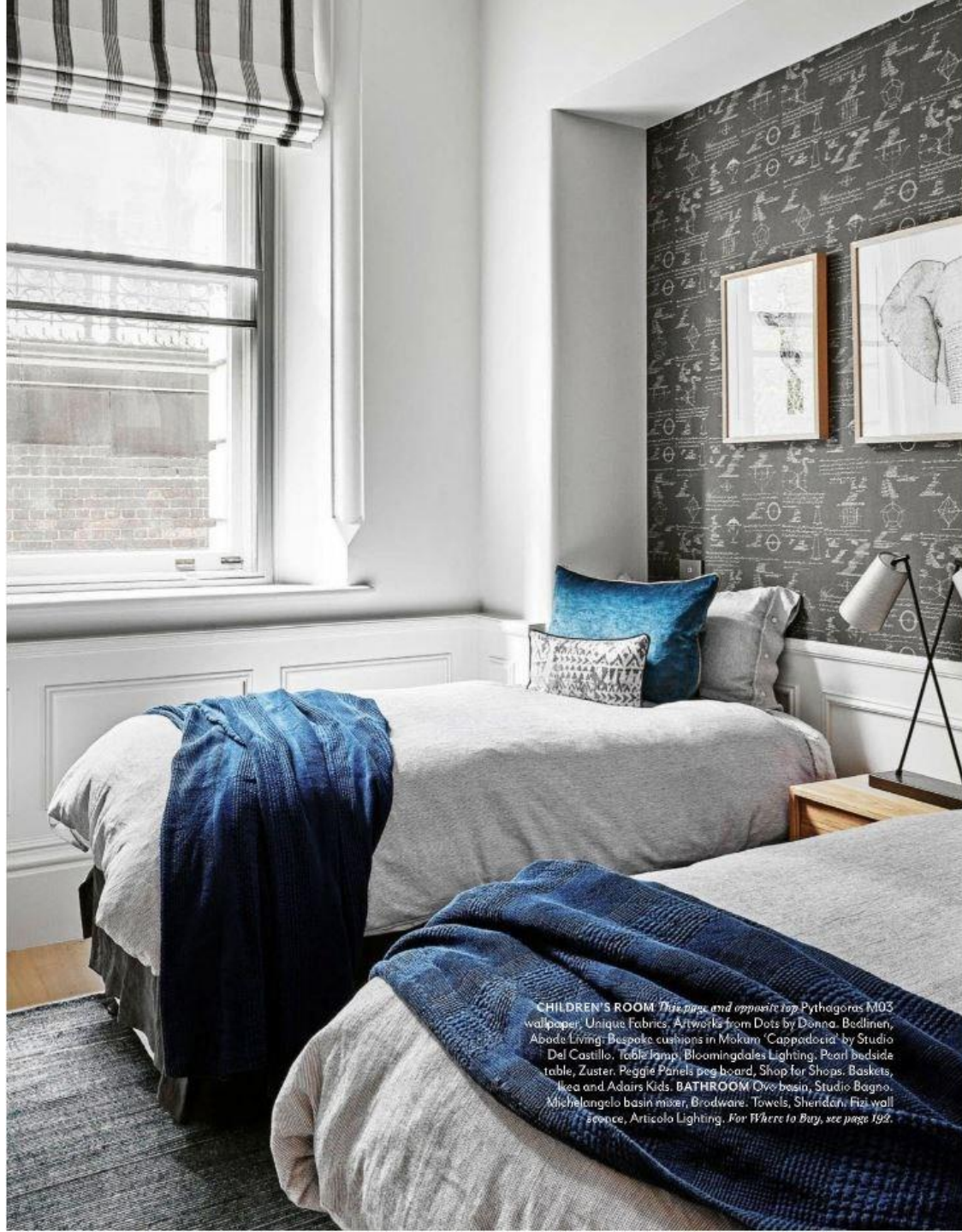
They might live in the country, but this 'weekender' is used regularly by the owners and their extended family, including their adult children and grandchildren. "We love sharing it and never feel squished, even with everyone here," says the owner. Thanks to the in-line kitchen and dining banquette, internal space is maximised while the fully furnished courtyard, a room in itself, provides a second living area.



Penny began by rejigging the layout. The front door now opens directly into the open-plan living area, with the kitchen along one wall to the right. A dining area with banquette is located to the left of the entrance. Laundry appliances were shifted to create a European-style laundry in the kitchen, freeing up both bedroom and bathroom space. The generous courtyard - more than half the size of the apartment - was furnished to create another living space, including all-weather umbrellas for both shelter and privacy. Meanwhile, attic storage was converted into a playroom accessed by remote-controlled drop-down stairs. Little wonder the children call it their 'secret room'...

Decorative elements such as wainscoting, cornices and ceiling mouldings were added for character. Together with the wide-gauge French oak flooring, marble in the bathroom and brushed tapware, the sumptuous, timeless interior looks as though it had always been so.

By allowing the architectural elements do most of the talking, Penny was able to avoid decorative clutter. ▶



CHILDREN'S ROOM *This page and opposite top* Pythagoras M03 wallpaper, Unique Fabrics. Artworks from Dots by Donna. Bedlinen, Abode Living; Bespoke cushions in Makum 'Cappadocia' by Studio Del Castillo. Table lamp, Bloomingdales Lighting. Pearl bedside table, Zuster. Peggie Pirelli peg board, Shop for Shops. Baskets, Ikea and Adairs Kids. **BATHROOM** Ovo basin, Studio Bagno. Michelangelo basin mixer, Brodware. Towels, Sheridan; Fizi wall sconce, Articolo Lighting. *For Where to Buy, see page 192.*



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The magnolia-print roman blind on the living room window is a de facto artwork, she says. Its brocade trim, however, is evidence of Penny's attention to detail. "The apartment is opulent and layered, with handcrafted elements and lots of detail. It's maximalist rather than minimalist," she concedes.

As a counterpoint to the decorative features, Penny kept the palette natural to make the space feel more open. "It gives the decor longevity," she says. Similarly, the furniture has clean, contemporary profiles to offset the architectural detailing, as do the smart light fittings. A king-size bed in the main bedroom plays with scale and, paradoxically, makes the room appear larger than it is.

Accordingly, the once 'plain Jane' apartment now punches way above its weight, both in practicality and elegance. While the owner adores the living areas and their focus on family time, the bathroom is her favourite space – because with its freestanding bath, beautiful wall of feature tiles and separate shower it belies the modest area it occupies. "I love the feeling of space and how Penny took our interpretation of what this apartment should be, and made it even better," she says. "There's everything you would see in a big space neatly tucked into a small space." And all thanks to a shared grand vision. H&G

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