

A U S T R A L I A N

INTERIOR

Volume 15 No 3

\$9.95

TRENDS

FEATURING BATHROOMS







Classics with a modern twist

Traditional interiors don't date, but they do evolve. The homes on these pages update the classic look with contemporary touches



Through the looking glass

Formal furnishings and antiques combine with a pastoral theme to bring this older apartment to life

Apartments built in the 1920s can be a mixed blessing for interior designers. They're inclined to be small with lots of dark timber trim. But the rooms are usually well proportioned with high studs.

The buildings also have classical features that lend themselves to traditional decorating treatments.

Designer Cameron Kimber believes it's important to relate home interiors to architecture. For his own 1920s

apartment, he chose to follow the classical lines dictated by the building – but he was not looking to restore 1920s charm to his interior.

“This is a traditional building with a very old-fashioned garden out the back. I wanted to make the most of that association but I didn't want to tie the interior to any particular period,” he says. “The apartment was dark and oppressive. I wanted to lighten the mood, and make a

Above: A collection of framed butterflies and a marble-topped painted table typify the formal but friendly feel of this 1920s apartment.

Right: Welcoming country touches, such as the painted chair and basket collection, balance the dramatic impact of the painting in the entrance.









relaxed, welcoming environment which still had a certain presence.”

Kimber also wanted to create several separate seating areas where he could relax with friends. And he needed an interior which would provide a backdrop to his antique and china collections.

The result is a light and airy apartment. The woodwork has been painted cream to complement a classical mix of styles. Large paintings and furniture bring a grand scale to the rooms and heighten a sense of drama. But at

Facing page: French doors between the living room and the smaller sitting room open up both areas. Black accents such as the chinoiserie sideboard and faux bamboo chair, help retain a degree of masculinity. The mattress ticking on the chair plays down the formality.

Top: Floor-to-ceiling curtains disguise different window heights in the living room. A mirrored wall between the French doors and the window adds a sense of depth to the room.

Above: The small sitting room, which the owner enjoys in winter, makes an impact with overscaled furnishings.



Top, above and right: Cane furniture, Colefax and Fowler chintz and lots of plants make the veranda a popular dining area in summer. Formerly dark bricks have been painted white to add to the fresh appeal of the outdoor setting.

Facing page: The pastoral theme continues in the kitchen where the walls are striped in lettuce green and white. The surfaces have been chosen to reflect as much light as possible. The green floor tiles are glass mosaics and the walls feature glossy white ceramic tiles. The benchtop is a pale green laminate. While the owner has opted for simple contemporary chairs, antiques still feature as accessories.

the same time the formality is kept relaxed with an almost pastoral atmosphere evoked by the owner's choice of chintz and china – such as the collection of Staffordshire china sheep.

In the entrance hall a large 1920s Italian painting in the style of the old masters dominates the small room, while painted furniture and green Colefax and Fowler fabrics hint at more country tastes.

The timber flooring has been stained with strips of black, a colour repeated in the high gloss paint of the





door. Just as a shade of green appears in every room, black also plays a role, linking the rooms and extending the feeling of space.

"I like to punctuate my interiors with pieces of black," says Kimber. "Collections of antique black chinoiserie furniture, tole trays and lacquered papier-mâché pieces add a masculine touch and stop the interior from looking too pretty and frivolous."

Black faux bamboo chairs upholstered in mattress ticking also help understate the living room and play

down the formality of the gold and gilt.

The living areas feature several wall-to-ceiling mirrors, placed between the windows and framed by the curtains.

"The mirrors increase the feeling of space and I like the way they confuse the eye," says Kimber. "It's a classic decorating device and it looks great. At night, when the lamps come on, the rooms sparkle."

Kimber has also used full curtains with pelmets to disguise windows of different heights – another common problem with older buildings.

While the kitchen has a more contemporary look, there's also a mixture of retro and Regency periods.

"I didn't want to reproduce a country kitchen in the middle of the city," he says. "I wanted a simple charm, a balance of modern and antique pieces. This was a very dark room, which is now bright and fresh. Every surface is designed to reflect light."

In the bedroom, the walls are upholstered in fine mattress ticking and mix the pastoral theme with more formal antique furnishings.





Left: The central themes in this apartment continue in the bedroom. A black lacquered bedside table with painted chinoiserie flowers sits beneath a Watergilt Regency-style mirror from the 1920s. The walls are upholstered with a fine ticking, similar to fabric used in the living room.

Top: Lamps and lanterns are the only types of lighting regularly used by the owner, as they cast an intimate glow which suits the interior.

Above: A large custom-made wardrobe features recycled architraves in the trim at the top. The French doors have pleated curtains.

Designer: Cameron Kimber (Sydney)

Builder: Bereem Construction

Kitchen manufacturer: Easydoor Joinery

Benchtops and splashback: Celadon and stainless steel laminates from Laminex Australia

Tiles: Green glass from Classic Ceramics

Flooring: Seagrass from Premier Carpets

Paint: Dulux Milky Way

Chinoiserie side table: Manning & Manning

Faux bamboo desk: Country Trader

Bedroom wallcovering: Maladar Cotton Co

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Photography by Simon Kenny