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GUIDE TO
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A Venetian-
inspired
dining room
in Melbourne

indulge

IN WARM TONES AND RICH TEXTURES



renovation



Interior decorator
Cameron Kimber
transformed his Sydney
flat from a "terrible
Twenties design" into a
chic apartment laden with
warm, comforting
expressions of welcome.

you could be forgiven for thinking that you had stepped off a London street into a classic English townhouse as your eye scans the smart yet cosy interior of Cameron Kimber's Sydney flat.

The 30-year-old interior decorator moved into this apartment four years ago. "The minute I found it I wanted to change it completely. It was a terrible Twenties design, so there weren't any features worth preserving. Its faults were endless." This is typical Kimber: to know his own mind, to have rigorous aesthetic demands and at the same time be a touch contrary. His work has a classic timelessness that often sets it apart from the main design pack. This is no surprise, given his extensive training with such noted decorators as Leslie Walford and Thomas Hamel.

The first problem was the ugly "suburban entrance". Moving the front entrance to the other side of the flat did the trick. Now, instead of entering via the building foyer the visitor crosses a flowering garden with a hedge of *murraya* and *buxus*, through a gateway in the verandah wall, to the new front door.

That was just the beginning. The apartment was re-wired and re-plumbed and a glamorous new kitchen – a glistening cube of glass mosaic tiles – and bathroom installed. A second bedroom was converted into a library-cum-dining room and all the Twenties doors were replaced with chic French items.

It became essential to lighten and brighten the dark spaces. Kimber limited his palette to neutrals of every shade, favouring bright, spacious tones of bronze, caramel and buff. He added textures and tied it all together by introducing his collection of black papier-mâché, china, glass, antiques and paintings.

"I didn't want a showpiece," says Kimber. "I didn't want a slick modern New York look, and I didn't set out to decorate the place in one day. There were no Saturday afternoon shopping sprees."

Kimber wanted to create a kind of haven, a port in a storm. "I wanted it to feel like a small house rather than an apartment. I wanted lots of squashy sofas, chairs and cushions. It was really important to me that friends could visit and feel relaxed."

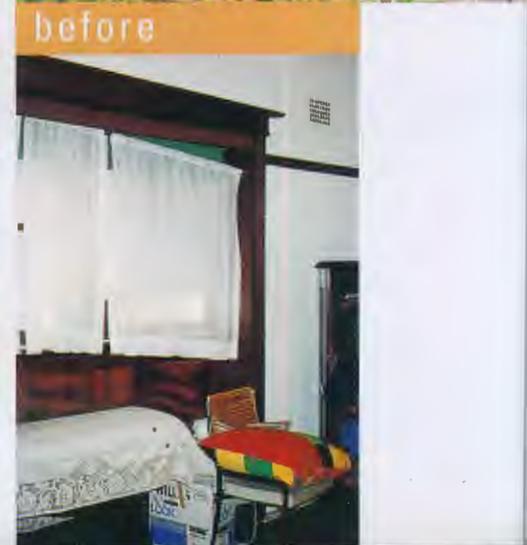


In the entrance hall
a welcoming glow
contrasts strikingly
with the stark, cold
look Kimber found
when he moved in
(opposite, below).





Opposite: "squashy sofas, chairs and cushions" distinguish the living room, which opens onto the balcony (below centre), transformed with the help of handsome urns from Garden Artistry from the barren, unattractive original (below). Left: a bedroom vastly more comfortable than its predecessor (bottom). Wardrobe is concealed by French doors lined with fabric from Malabar Cotton Company. Bed coverings are white cotton, curtains are Colefax and Fowler linen. Below left: sofa is covered in Colefax and Fowler fabric, cushions are covered in linen velvet from Boyac Decorative Furnishings; coffee table is a red-lacquered French item from the Antiques Centre.





The sitting room, with its plain yellow walls and polished floorboards, is light and warm despite its south-easterly aspect. Kimber added brightness to offset the sheer volume of his collections. The room is packed with comfortable chairs, tables piled with magazines, drinks tables groaning with bottles and flowering plants in *tôle* tubs.

He surpassed himself with practical touches, correcting the bad proportions of "the higgledy-piggledy windows" by designing curtains with straight pelmets that hang from the ceiling cornice. "These added weight to the room while softening the space," he says. Walls are trimmed with grosgrain ribbon, giving the room a classic formality.

A sofa upholstered in linen velvet sits among a variety of armchairs slip-covered in striped cotton and stools covered with old carpeting. "In summer I loose-cover all the furniture in pale blue and white floral linens and striped cottons for a fresh look."

The bedroom is testimony to his vision. His clothes are concealed behind French doors lined with pleated cotton. Ample folds of Colefax

and Fowler linen frame the windows with serpentine pelmets edged in a linen fringe and a two-tone fan edge at the top of the bullion fringe.

Most important to Kimber is creating an environment where he can improvise – adorning a table with a big vase of garden flowers or a stack of books, creating a different kind of mood. Kimber dreams and experiments with furniture, fabrics and bibelots on a grand scale.

Like most collectors, he is "more interested in harmonious forms and colours than in the value of objects. There is no good furniture here. Everything relies on colour, shape and texture." He looks for items of interest at local antique markets. "I'm not stuck with any one period."

It's sheer love of the thing, the excitement of discovering something wonderful that inspires his search missions. The secret to his look, he thinks, is that he has bought things whenever he has found them. "Things then have a way of placing themselves in a room." ●

MELISSA WALKER-SMITH

For further details, see [Selling Points](#).