

A wonderful weekender

AT HOME

Interior designer's Southern Highlands pad is a spiritual retreat

SUE WALLACE

Sydney-based interior designer Cameron Kimber believes a home has to feed your soul and be a place you can surrender yourself to.

That's exactly how he feels when he steps through the white timber doors of his beautiful Southern Highlands weekender, which he designed and built a decade ago, on a spare block he stumbled upon in the village of Exeter.

"I was running early for once in my life and saw the perfect block and decided then and there I needed to build," he says.

"When I open the door after a busy week in Sydney, I immediately feel a change of pace."

It's a little like stepping into a charming English country house, with much-loved and treasured portraits adorning the walls, romantic floral chintz, rich velvets, fine English porcelain, lamps, Georgian gold rimmed mirrors and a comfortable country feel, which is exactly what Kimber set out to do.

"I love that type of decoration and always wanted my house like that – I had been collecting pieces for many years so it all fitted together very well," he says.

Kimber favours a layered approach to fabric, colour, furnishings, artwork and collectibles with an intuitive juxtaposition of the contemporary and vintage.

He has one rule when it comes to his weekender – he doesn't have anything in it that he doesn't love.

"I include people in that as well," he adds, sitting on a plush velvet ottoman in front of a roaring fire, while rain falls on the corrugated roof.

Kimber says he built his weatherboard house in four main sections, so it looked established with the air of an older house. He avoid-



ed internal hallways, which he says are a waste of space, and he didn't want the look of an attached garage. "To this day, I don't have a garage as I felt it was not right for this house," he adds.

The interiors are mainly white with florals and furnishings doing the talking, except for the snug – a warm cocooning room, where the chocolate brown walls beckon guests along with a comfy brown velvet sofa and florals.

The kitchen and dining area features glass-fronted cupboards for his ceramic collection, an oval drop-sided Georgian table with white painted 18th century English chairs. When cooking is mentioned, Kimber comments: "Well, let's just say if I can take a shortcut like buying a dessert or an entree, I do it."

When it comes to his favourite room it's the sitting room, and his most loved pieces include a paint-

Cameron Kimber's favourite room in his Exeter weekender is the sitting room, but other rooms also feature the things he loves

ing by Sir Godfrey Kneller, which he eyed off for some time before purchasing.

"I have a thing for old portraits – I love the scale of them and always think they add to the mood and charm of a place," he says.

Kimber says he simply fell in love with the Exeter area and loves the fresh country air and the assurance great coffee isn't far away.

"I'm not a real country boy at heart," says Kimber, who is work-

ing on projects including a villa in Tuscany, contemporary city residences and seaside holiday houses.

During the week he lives in his Potts Point apartment but from Friday to Mondays heads to the country, with his pug beagle cross Jaspia.

Interior design was a natural career choice for Kimber following his interest in textiles and ceramics.

He trained with the best, including the late interior design

doyenne Leslie Walford, before working alongside Thomas Hamel at Thomas Hamel & Associates, and in 1998 established Cameron Kimber Design.

His work reflects three words – comfort, relaxation and charm, with his much-lauded Woollahra window showcasing his style and flair. "I like the houses I work on to be a great backdrop for people's lives and look layered – not decorated," he said.