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india style
INSPIRING, COLOURFUL, EXOTIC



THIS PAGE: AN 18TH-CENTURY PORTRAIT LOOKS OVER 18TH-CENTURY CHAIRS FROM ANDRE & CECILE FINK AND AN ESPRESSO-COLOURED PARQUETRY FLOOR. OPPOSITE PAGE: IN THE BEDROOM A LAMP, ONCE AN 18TH-CENTURY VASE, GIVES LIGHT TO A CHINESE FIGURE FROM JANET NIVEN AND BRUSHES FROM MICHAEL GREENE ANTIQUES. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.

inner beauty

*A love of antiques and Eastern treasures
frames a collection of elegant pieces in
Cameron Kimber's '60s Sydney apartment.*



PHOTOGRAPHER: PETRINA TINSLAY
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OPPOSITE PAGE: IN THE BEDROOM IS A 19TH-CENTURY CHEST OF DRAWERS AND AN 18TH-CENTURY ENGLISH PORTRAIT FROM ROS PALMER INTERIORS. THE WALL FABRIC IS A PAISLEY COTTON FROM RUBELLI. **LEFT:** THE LIVING ROOM, WITH A SOFA WALL BUILT TO ALLOW THE MIRRORS ON EACH SIDE TO BE RECESSED. THE PAINTING IS *VICTORY WINGS ARE MADE OF STEEL* BY BEN GOSS. A CUSTOM-MADE SOFA IS COVERED WITH YELLOW AND WHITE COTTON LINEN FROM SCHUMACHER. **BELOW:** CAMERON KIMBER. **BOTTOM:** THE WRITING DESK OF AN 18TH-CENTURY ENGLISH MAHOGANY SECRETAIRE. THE LAMP BASE IS A 19TH-CENTURY VASE FROM HOWELL & HOWELL, WITH A SHADE FROM BROOK STREET TRADING.



“WHAT I LOVE about this apartment is the light factor, the south-facing aspect and the tree tops out there,” says interior designer Cameron Kimber. “The location is great [in Sydney’s Woollahra], handy to everything, but it really was a ‘plain Jane’ apartment.” A view of palms and foliage that evokes Pacific islands is certainly a plus, but it took a special eye to see the potential of this small flat in a bland block. “It was a very ugly 1960s untouched space, but I knew I would end up with a lovely long sitting room, a small television room, which I always like, and a reasonably sized bedroom.”

Kimber lived in the apartment for a couple of years before renovating. He replaced the floors with espresso-coloured parquet, added new skirting boards and architraves and converted one bedroom into a television room, and moved the bathroom door. “Before, when you opened the front door you looked into the bathroom.

“I wanted something timeless, that didn’t look as if I was trying to recreate a period,” he continues. “I didn’t want it to look like a 1960s apartment, but I didn’t want an 1870s house either – this is apartment decorating. So I didn’t use cornices. I added skirting boards and designed an architrave that is neither one period nor another. I used heavily textured straw-coloured raffia on the walls, to co-ordinate with the blond brick on the building and tone it down.” Meanwhile, floor-to-ceiling plantation shutters disguise unattractive windows.

Kimber is a master of sleight of hand. *Vogue Living* first noted it in his previous apartment (*Vogue Living* May/June 2004), where mirrors and the manipulation of walls made a tiny apartment seem twice the size. Here, he pushed back some walls, drew others forward, created niches and recessed two wall mirrors, “to break up that dreaded apartment thing of the very long wall with a row of pictures.” Small as it is, this room, with its yellow and white striped sofa, recalls Nancy Lancaster’s famous butter-yellow drawing room in London, completed in 1958 when she was co-owner of Colefax & Fowler. “I’m inspired by Colefax & Fowler, but didn’t want chintzy,” says Kimber. “I love their colour palette. The fabric on the armchair is an early Colefax & Fowler pattern, ‘Moire Stripe’, a vintage piece that I’ve had for years, now discontinued.”





THE LIVING ROOM FEATURES A MARGOT MONTGOMERY GAINSBOROUGH CHAIR, LACQUERED BLACK AND COVERED WITH VINTAGE BLUE AND WHITE COLEFAX & FOWLER 'MOIRÉ STRIPE' FABRIC. AN ARMCHAIR, COVERED IN MOKUM CANVAS, HAS AN ORANGE CUSHION IN GAUFRAGE SILK VELVET.

The gleam of dark floors, the richness of Chinoiserie and gaufrage silk velvet are played against simple textures: cotton, paper, cane





OPPOSITE PAGE: THE TELEVISION ROOM, WITH ITS CURTAINS AND OTTOMAN COVERED WITH A FRENCH PATTERN ON LINEN, IS GROUNDED BY A DEEP GREEN SOFA. THE ARTWORK IS A 1940S FRENCH PAINTING. **BELOW:** 19TH-CENTURY CHINESE GLASS PAINTINGS HANG IN THE TELEVISION ROOM. **RIGHT:** THE BEDROOM WITH A LACQUERED CHINESE CARD TABLE, CIRCA 1810, AND AN ABUNDANCE OF PAISLEY RUBELLI FABRIC. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** THE TELEVISION ROOM CAN BE SEEN THROUGH A NEW OPENING IN THE BEDROOM. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.



What to bring and what to jettison when you move can be difficult. “I collect lots of things,” Kimber admits, “Chinese porcelain, Regency furniture, 18th-century pictures, 19th-century Chinese glass pictures. I didn’t get rid of much and I always re-interpret the furniture I love – if I sell something I upgrade to something better.”

A sofa went to a client and black Regency dining chairs, judged too small, were replaced with four Louis XVI dining chairs upholstered in cola-coloured leather. “I had a new sofa made, armless, because I thought it might look more chic.” A mahogany chair by Margot Montgomery is now black, and an English 18th-century secretaire has pale green pleated silk, a gift from Ros Palmer, behind its glass panes instead of fine woven straw. The gleam of dark floors, the glow of leather, the richness of Chinoiserie and the splendour of gaufrage silk velvet are played against simpler textures: cotton, paper, cane.

“I wanted the contrast of mahogany furniture with plain card lampshades, black and gold chairs with tie-on canvas covers, just to casual it up. I wanted straw baskets with books sitting on polished wood, and hurricane shades because of the shine. That’s what makes interiors exciting. I didn’t want period splendour, I wanted flashes of brilliance.”

The bedroom and television room have an intimate feel, with an emphasis on fabrics. In the bedroom, a large-scale Rubelli paisley is used on walls, curtains, the bedhead and blinds, “because it’s a small space and I wanted to disguise the boundaries of the room. It’s a fabric I’ve always wanted to use.” The walls in the television room are covered in a woven silk and rice-paper fabric. The curtains and an ottoman are in an I. Redelman & Son French linen (Kimber bought the last roll). A sofa from his previous apartment was recovered in a textured velvet, and hanging above is a 1940s French painting he bought at auction for the room and had re-framed. “I was inspired by some of Picasso’s frames.”

He adds: “I could have done beige in this apartment but I wanted more colour.” Unlike many who talk of it in pejorative terms, Kimber loves beige. “It can look stunning. But for beige to look top notch you have to have very good stuff.”

He also loves white upholstery with good furniture. “That always looks new again.” White will feature in his new project, a 19th-century terrace in the inner city, as a backdrop for his antiques. “It will be very simple, probably blue and white in the bedroom with flicks of colour again.” Watch this space.

BETSY BRENNAN

