

VOCAL LIVING

AUSTRALIA

CONSUMER MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR *

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Modernity



DESIGNER CAMERON
KIMBER'S COMPACT
SYDNEY HOME, P118

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The simplicity of white timber-panelled walls in interior designer Cameron Kimber's Sydney home (full story overleaf) underscores an interior of rich complexity, punctuated with accents of black lacquer and gilt; an 18th-century console table, tole clock and black lacquer chair, all from Martyn Cook Antiques. The Vaughan crystal lamp base is from Brook Street Trading. Details, last pages.



Interior designer Cameron Kimber reversed logic in the renovation of his tiny Sydney terrace by moving the kitchen to the front and removing the wall between the original split-level kitchen and dining room at the back to create a new sitting room opening onto a courtyard. A Louis XVI chair from Andre & Cecile Fink in cola-coloured leather and an 18th-century English oval portrait from Ros Palmer Interiors helps create the feeling of an entrance hall, OPPOSITE. Details, last pages.



HOME

With the ease of the consummate professional, interior designer Cameron Kimber recreates a personal space of restrained elegance and unexpected glamour in a simple Sydney terrace.

PHOTOGRAPHER: PRUE RUSCOE
PRODUCER/WRITER: HELEN REDMOND





Kimber added a fireplace and central skylight to inject warmth and light into the narrow interior of the sitting room. An 18th-century portrait hangs above the generously proportioned sofa, which was re-upholstered in white cotton to blend with new tongue-and-groove wall panelling. A black tole clock and pair of black lacquer chairs are from Martyn Cook Antiques. Accents of green from the rear courtyard spill into the interior scheme in a Boyac velvet-upholstered ottoman, with armchairs and cushions in a Rossetti striped cotton. The natural floor matting is from International Floor Coverings.

*The all-white interior evolved naturally.
"Because the street outside is intense inner-city,
a bit gritty, I wanted to open the front door
and immediately see a pristine, crisp space"*







The mood in the tiny television room at the top of the stairs is more intense, with dark chocolate and white Schumacher fabric covering walls, windows and furniture. Timber tongue-and-groove wall panelling is continued at dado level, but painted in black. The room is anchored by a 'B Harmer' velvet sofa from The Classic Chair Company, with cushions in silk-velvet from Robert Allen. Above it hangs a 1940s French painting bought at auction. On an 1890s English cabinet from Howell & Howell sits a whimsical Chinese ivory tower found at a secondhand collectors' market.

CAMERON KIMBER UNDERSTANDS how to create a *home*, not just a glamorous interior: the comfortable sense of wellbeing generated by just the right balance of elegance and restraint – and his own homes are no exception. Having photographed Kimber's former residence, a smart, sophisticated and carefully edited '60s apartment in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs (*Vogue Living* July/August 2008), we were eager to see how the 'look' could translate to his most recent abode, a perfectly proportioned but tiny "shoebox" terrace tucked into a gritty, inner city laneway.

The circa 1880 cottage is tiny, yes, but its effect is as well-heeled as its owner. The large-scale paintings, gilt mirrors, antiques and generously proportioned furniture are perfectly at home in the understated, whitewashed interior. Kimber wasn't looking to buy a late 19th-century house, and certainly not a terrace, but instantly liked the feel of the building. The layout was predictable; front living room stepping up to a dining room, up again to the kitchen and then to a courtyard at the rear, sensed rather than seen underneath broken pots and bamboo. The house had had a '70s makeover – "ugly, brown plastic and hideous" – but Kimber liked its proportions; its aspect (the side windows looking on to trees in the next-door property that gave the terrace a sense of the country); its 'secret' locale, the silence of the no-through-road – and, most attractive, he knew he could do something with it.

The "something" amounted to a complete about-face. Using reverse logic, Kimber moved the kitchen to the front of the house and shifted ceiling heights and levels to accommodate a new sitting room opening onto the rear courtyard. "Lowering the ceiling made it seem less like a Victorian terrace and more like a Georgian house," says Kimber.

Facing the street, the front room is kitchen, dining room and entrance hall rolled into one. "I had to get the feeling of all three rooms into one tiny space," says Kimber. In the centre of the room, a marble-topped table sits beneath an over-scaled lantern – in nickel, to match the kitchen handles. Aligned on one wall is a practical work area, with stove, refrigerator, marble benchtop and plain white cabinets. Opposite, narrow, glass-fronted cabinets for glassware and silver serve as a butler's pantry. Louis XVI dining chairs in cola-coloured leather are lined against the walls to make the room appear more spacious and less like a dining room. When entertaining, the chairs are simply drawn up to the table. An 18th-century oval portrait helps create the impression of an entrance hall. The juxtaposition of elements is unexpected, but it works. "A lot of people come to the house and ask where the kitchen is, unaware they've just walked through it!"

Kimber demolished the wall between the original kitchen and dining room to create a single room at the back, level with the sandstone-walled courtyard. The addition of a fireplace and central skylight inject warmth and light into the narrow space. Raising the floor solved the problem of split levels and the lowered ceiling disguises a new ceiling beam. Careful measurement ensured his tallest furniture and largest painting would fit. A staircase opened up in the '70s was enclosed, and walls clad with white-painted tongue-and-groove timber. "The panelling adds character and subtle texture to a small space," he says. "Wallpaper would close the room in too much." The panelling continues in the kitchen and in the television room upstairs, at dado height to break the rhythm. In a serendipitous twist, Kimber uncovered original timber panelling in the upstairs room that was an exact match, along with traces of chimney brickwork virtually above the new fireplace.

Recognising early on that the house was on the narrow side, Kimber reupholstered his generously proportioned sofa in loose white cotton, to visually blend into the walls. The all-white interior evolved naturally.



In the centre of the kitchen-dining-entrance room, **BELOW AND BELOW RIGHT**, an oversized nickel-plated American Visual Comfort lantern from Laura Kincaid is suspended above a marble-topped table. On one side is the work area; on the wall opposite are shallow glass-fronted cupboards for glassware and silver. The original floorboards were stained black. An 18th-century English deep green lacquer console table is a favourite recent acquisition. **RIGHT:** Kimber with Jaspa, his black (naturally) pug-beagle cross.







"Because the street outside is intense inner-city, a bit gritty, I wanted to open the front door and immediately see a pristine, crisp space."

The simple interior is punctuated with antique pieces, black lacquer, a little mahogany, and accents of gilt. Kimber's sleight of hand ensures the mix is balanced and restrained. "It's a small cottage but the paintings and furniture are largely the antitheses," says Kimber. The contrast and unexpectedness is what makes it exciting. "It's a huge balancing act," he says. "And it's constantly being edited. I like rooms to have a certain glamour without being too tricked up."

Upstairs, a tiny second bedroom has been converted into a television room, intense with bitter-chocolate and white checked fabric, black tongue-and-groove panelling, a large scale armchair and a wall devoted to books. The master bedroom follows on with the white walls, given an element of drama with a black four-poster bed, its canopy and drapes replaced with antique brass rods. An elegant, scalloped pelmet and curtains in a classic Colefax and Fowler 'Seaweed' fabric, long discontinued but reproduced for Kimber as a special order, brings scale into the room. The balance of old and new, large and small, understated and ornate that plays out in the bedroom is, in a sense, a microcosm of the contradictions that underscore Kimber's skill. "It's intangible," explains Kimber. "It doesn't matter if your taste is modern or traditional, classic or retro. If a house has a good feel to it, it will always be a home. It's about giving the house personality – and soul." **VL**

A four-poster bed adds a sense of theatre in the bedroom, OPPOSITE. The rear mirrored wall extends the feeling of space while a scalloped pelmet and curtains, made from a discontinued Colefax and Fowler 'Seaweed' fabric, add scale. On the walls are a collection of 19th-century engravings. BELOW: an 18th-century bureau bookcase from Kimber's previous apartment. "I never liked the colour of the original mahogany," says Kimber. "So I had it entirely black lacquered. It cost a fortune, and I've not regretted it for a second."

