

# CONTEMPORARY VICTORIAN

Retaining all the historic features of the landmark Victorian Italianate house, contemporary furnishings and artwork bring the residence to life as a sophisticated and comfortable family home.

TEXT VANITHA PAVAPATHI IMAGES COURTESY OF MAREE HOMER



THIS PROPERTY IS RECOGNISED AS AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF A LATE VICTORIAN HOME AND IT'S IMPORTANT FOR BRENDAN TO RESPECT THAT WITHOUT NECESSARILY MIMICKING IT.

Victorian houses are found in many former British colonies like Sydney, for example. Built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Australia's colonial heritage is still visible across the country's well-established suburbs. Respectful renovations and meticulous upkeep mean these decades-old buildings have stood the test of time; one of them is this imposing 1890s mansion.

Once served as a private hospital and later a 22-room boarding house with separate entrances, the mansion is now home to a couple and their three children. With a strong affinity for art, period architecture and design, the couple engaged interior designer Brendan Wong, who shares the same sentiment, to maintain the historical structure while dressing the space with warm and elegant furnishings. Fortunately, the historic details were only concealed and not removed by previous owners, which permitted Brendan's strategy for decoration.



Brendan's interiors typically project visual highs amongst moments of visual quietness, establishing a visual tension such that the space becomes a cohesive yet energetic experience; the approach for this two-storey property is no less different. Brendan painted the walls a soft grey to highlight the ornate over-scaled cornices that once serviced gas lighting. The colour also offsets the generously proportioned door frames and skirting boards. The towering 3.5-metre-high ceiling, on the other hand presented the opportunity to introduce contemporary chandeliers as both a visual update and to illuminate the period details.



The artwork is integrated seamlessly with the decorating selections which allow both to have equal importance.





Rich textures such as wool upholstery and brass detailing are then layered upon the neutral base palette to create a visually interesting yet calm interior which the Sydney-based designer is famous for. In the dining room, a large landscape painting by Alexander McKenzie is placed in such a way that it almost feels like a view to the distant landscape beyond. The greenery in the artwork inspired the bold introduction of emerald-coloured velvet dining chairs by Lelievre Paris. This approach is also mirrored in the entrance where a faceted emerald foyer cabinet is placed to add an element of surprise and drama.



The emerald green cabinet injects colour to the space and creates visual links to the dining chairs.

WITH MAGNIFICENT PROPORTIONS, THIS GRAND 1890S HOME REQUIRED A DECORATING APPROACH RELEVANT TO THE OWNERS AND THEIR INTEREST IN CONTEMPORARY FURNISHINGS, ART AND PERIOD ARCHITECTURE.



Where facets are concern, the pair of matching mirrors above the marble fireplaces in the dining room and formal sitting room is given a contemporary twist by cutting and faceting the mirrors so they become modern artworks in their own right, offering reflections that are edited and unexpected. Separating the two rooms is a near-invisible lucite desk matched with a vintage chair from Los Angeles. Intended to function like a traditional parlour, the formal sitting room boasts a baroque piano - a family heirloom - across the custom library shelving tucked on both sides of the marble fireplace.

Having worked across properties from all eras, Brendan masterfully balanced the old and new in the home. Vintage pieces are interspersed with contemporary furnishings to blur the plane of time, evoking a sense of nostalgia within a modern context; as if generations of the family have lived here. As the idea was to create a contemporary and functionally relevant home for the family, the overall result is an interior that respects the existing architecture whereby finer details continue to reveal themselves well beyond the first glance. ❖

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