

RESCUE REMEDY: 10 instant pick-me-ups for lounge rooms

AUSTRALIAN

home BEAUTIFUL

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the how to issue

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what's coming,
what's going

PILLOW TALK

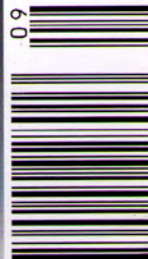
Blissful
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TIMBERRR....!

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no stress, no mess, no plumber

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The perfect spot for a lazy afternoon G&T, overlooking the pool and lush garden.



open house

In the mood for some country hospitality?
Try Philip and Freda's farm-fresh city haven

STORY BY ALIX CLARK PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT HAWKINS PRODUCED BY AMANDA MAHONEY



TRUE CONFESSIONS

NAMES Philip, 54, Freda, 51, Sasha, 20, and David, 18.

OCCUPATIONS Philip's an architect, Freda's a fashion designer, Sasha is at university and David has just finished secondary school.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THE HOUSE? Philip: That people think it's original. That's the ultimate compliment.

Freda: The bedroom. It's pretty, and that little seat up there is where I go to escape.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D DO DIFFERENTLY? Philip: I'd put underfloor heating in the marble hallway. It's like a coolroom.

WITH ALL THE TIMBER, IS THERE A LOT OF UPKEEP INVOLVED?

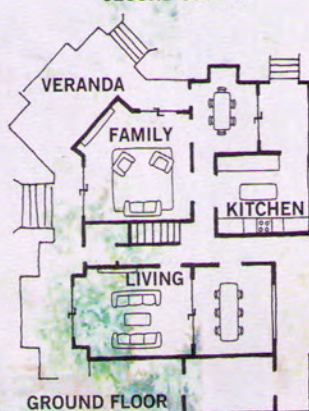
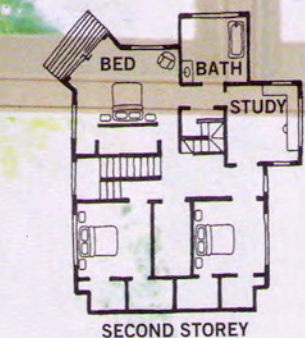
Philip: Well, we're not into a highly polished look so we're quite happy to let the house wear. That's part of its charm for us – that it's a worn, country-feeling sort of house in the city. I think it's a house that needs to wear, like an old shoe, a comfortable shoe.

DID THE RENOVATION TAKE LONG?

Philip: We still haven't finished! There are paintings we haven't hung yet and we haven't finished furnishing the living room. We'd like to buy a new couch.

ARE YOU ALL FOR FORMAL DINING?

Philip: The great thing is that formal and informal have become so blurred. People might have a formal and informal living room but dining areas have become the one multipurpose experience.



Sunlight, cool breezes,
soothing tones and plump
sofas make this the spot
to stop and drop.



At first sight, you'd think the Abram family home had sat there for a hundred years. Its wide verandas, lead-light windows and luscious paint colours are all vivid reminders of days when life was slower, sweeter and simpler. But looks can be deceiving.

The truth is, the glorious, three-storey Sydney home was nothing more than a tiny cottage when Philip and Freda bought it in 1984.

"It only had the bare bones of the original Federation character," Philip recalls. "The kitchen used to be the master bedroom, the breakfast room used to be the children's room, and the family room was the kitchen and laundry. We knocked all that down and replaced it all."

Philip, an architect, did the redesign and managed the 13-month renovation, which involved gutting the interior, tearing off the back of the house, and adding two floors. And we've got to say, he did a top job.

The marble hallways, polished timber floors and limewashed staircases hit just the right rustic note, without falling into the too-twee category.

These days, the house serves many purposes: Philip runs his architectural business from the third floor, fashion designer Freda works downstairs, and children, Sasha, 20, and David, 18, are in and out between school and university.

"The house is hectic," Freda agrees. "But it's not exactly hard being here."

She's got that right. The house has country hospitality stamped all over it, from the original leadlight window in the kitchen to the cosy living areas.

"It's all open plan, but you still feel like you're in a room," says Philip. "I like to open all the rooms up but still keep them as compartments."

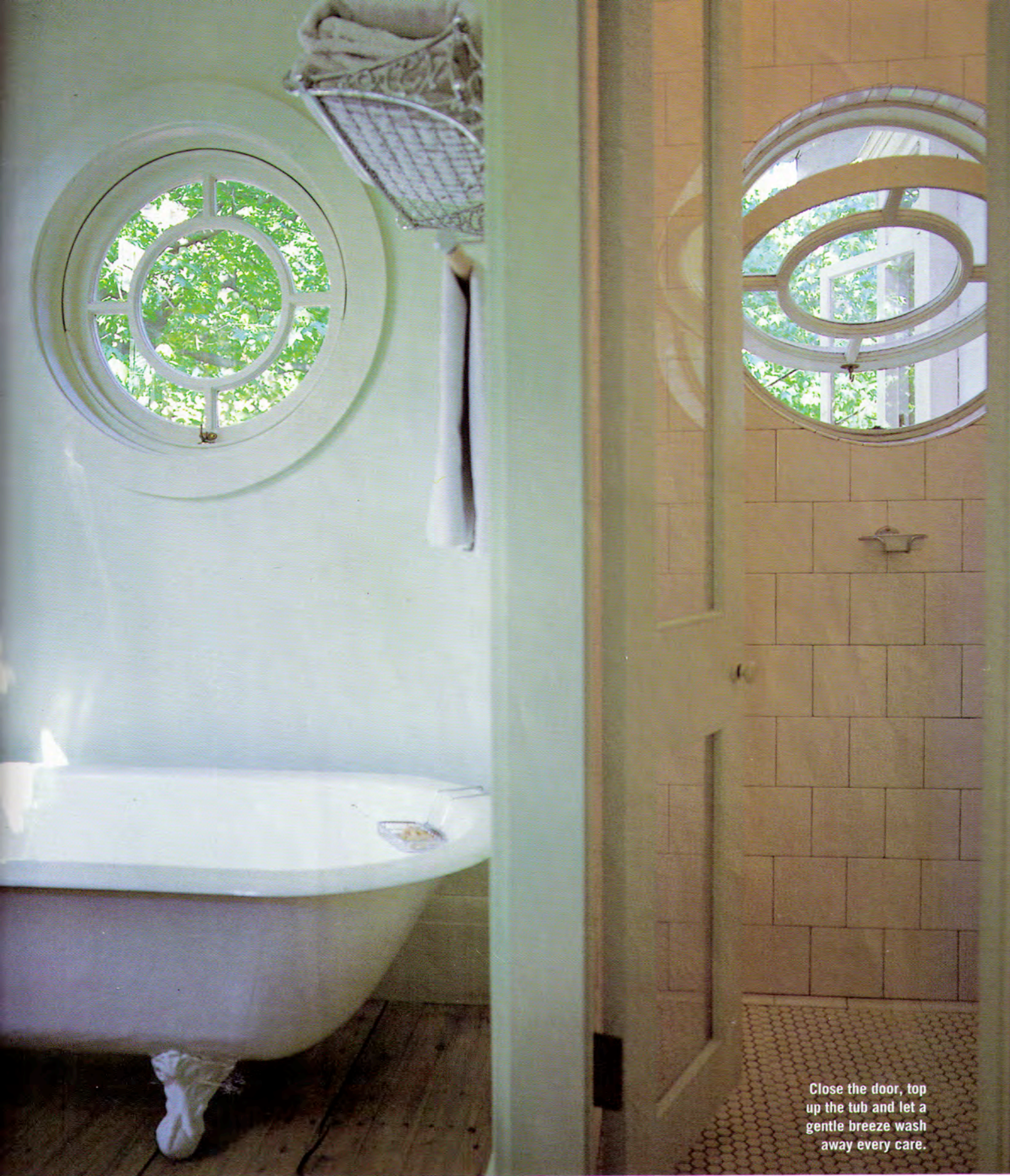
One notable compartment is the family room, a Federation-cum-American farmhouse blend of timber cabinets, sink-in armchairs, photos, and knick-knacks such as walking sticks.

"A lot of the pieces were picked up on travels. We always like to bring something back to remember the experience," Philip explains. "It's a very eclectic collection of furniture with a strong American country >



The light, airy bedroom is heaven on a Sunday. Below: Period touches add a little romance.





Close the door, top
up the tub and let a
gentle breeze wash
away every care.

It's a house that needs to wear, like
an old shoe, a comfortable shoe



A large skylight in the laundry lets lashings of light into even the most mundane room.

We're not into a highly polished look. It's a country-feeling sort of house in the city



Son David on food patrol in the kitchen.
Below: Limewashed stairs link the levels.



< influence. We just went around and picked up old pieces and had them re-covered to co-ordinate and complement each other."

The renovations were finished in the late 1980s when people were rediscovering timber dressers, the 'scrubbed' look, cornices, ceiling roses and timber fretwork panels above doorways.

"That was the thing at the time," says Philip. "Now, I'd have a much more streamlined finish. It would still achieve the same feeling, the same warmth, without the very strong decorative motifs around."

A timber staircase leads to the second floor, which houses bedrooms, bathrooms, a study and laundry. A large circular window fills the stairwell with light and showcases the backyard pool and garden.

Freda and Philip's bedroom is a peaceful retreat, with french doors opening onto a small balcony with built-in seat – perfect for reading or a spot of morning yoga.

Off the bedroom are 'his and hers' dressing rooms (no arguments over hanging space!), and a heavenly ensuite with timber floors, cast-iron bath, circular windows which pivot to let in the breeze, and a white-tiled shower 'room'.

"In the 80s I was doing a lot of marble," Philip explains. "People were very influenced by their travels and by hotel detailing and finishing. This bathroom was a real reaction against that."

A smaller, more delicate set of stairs leads to Philip's offices, where he has worked for the past eight years. "I never want to leave," he smiles.

Originally a playroom for Sasha and David, the workspace has skylights and dormer windows to ensure floods of light.

But the pièce de résistance has to be the wide verandas, furnished with natural cane and white wicker chairs.

"The house was designed for Freda, and she wanted an outdoor area where we could all sit," Philip says.

You only have to look at how the Abrams work, rest and play in their house to see this family isn't going anywhere in a hurry. "We like the setting and the trees. It feels like a country setting to us. We like being part of the street," Philip says. And the street is all the better for being graced by the Abram house. **hb**

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT... WALK-IN STORAGE

So your bedroom looks more like the city dump than a designer den? If you find it impossible to be neat, have a hidden storage cupboard built for all those odds and ends.

Some tips:

- Philip designed this recessed cupboard for Freda to keep her bits and pieces – what he calls her “girlie” things! – out of sight. Folding timber doors allow her to close the area off if it’s messy.
- Open timber shelves, made of kauri pine, form the perfect platform for perfume bottles, family photos, and sexy shoes. No more sorting through the dark depths of your wardrobe for that missing stiletto.
- The set-up includes a mirrored cupboard to keep personal items out of sight – and to do make-up. The mirror also creates the illusion of greater space.
- So what’s the price tag? Assuming you’ve got the room for such an addition, a carpenter would charge around \$1500 for materials and labour. hb

