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THIS PAGE Mmmm: the comfy lounge area's delicious heated limestone flooring. **RIGHT** Classic hit: the antique cherrywood dining table brings a casual elegance to the formal lines of the room.

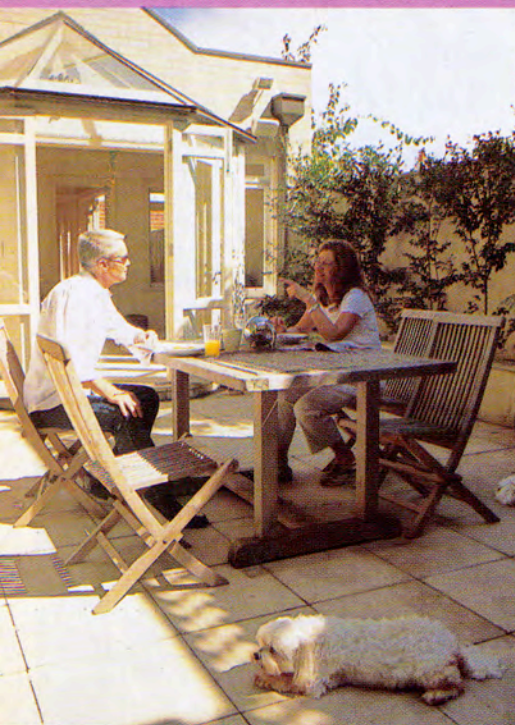


formal dress

All the character of a Euro chateau
in the heart of the inner city

PRODUCED BY NATALIE COULTER PHOTOGRAPHY JASON LOUCAS STORY JODIE THOMSON





TRUE CONFESSIONS

WHO LIVES HERE? Tina, 46, and Terry O'Loughlin, 52, who run a company supplying hospitality staff, and their dogs Frankie and Dinks.

YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE HOUSE? Terry: The bedroom is such a lovely area. I had the flu recently and I've never been so impressed with a house to be sick in.

WHERE DID YOU GET YOUR DECORATING INSPIRATION FROM? Lots of magazines, and really, from our architect, Phil Abram.

ANY RENOVATING LESSONS TO SHARE? Get a good architect, who will in turn use a good builder. Then sit back, be patient and trust them. Also, if there are any council meetings regarding people objecting to your plans, it's really important to be there.

WHERE DO YOU SPEND MOST TIME? In the family area, and the back courtyard, which gets lots of sun.

DID YOU TWO AGREE ON ALL THE BIG DECORATING DECISIONS? Our tastes do differ, but we have a lot of respect for each other's feelings, so we compromise.

DESCRIBE YOUR ULTIMATE DREAM HOUSE Our house, as it is, but right on the water. I'd like that one day.

YOUR FAVOURITE FURNITURE BUY? The cherrywood dining table, which we had custom-made.



in place of a jungle of rooms came an entertaining-friendly home



Eyes wide with horror, Terry O'Loughlin stood and watched as the rain gushed through his house. The next second he jumped as a large explosion boomed from the kitchen. The water had reached the electrical wires. Until this moment, Terry had been wholly optimistic about the potential of the decrepit inner-city terrace he and wife Tina had just bought. But on this stormy night, only their second in the house, he began to have a panic attack. "I wanted to go back to our old house," he recalls grimly.

But the next morning, as the couple woke to the glorious, quiet and leafy outlook, all seemed right again and Terry's old optimism came back. Looking at the refined elegance and beauty of the restored terrace today, it's hard to imagine those dark days. Fully >

LEFT European masterpiece: the cool white bathroom is alive with textures – glossy tiles, painted timber and dreamy limestone flooring.

RIGHT & ABOVE Workhorse: urban steel meets French country in the kitchen. Deep cupboards swallow all clutter and the timber floorboards add warmth.





ABOVE Snuggle up: to complement the clean lines in the house, Terry and Tina were encouraged to keep the colour scheme simple. They've used Dulux Russian White throughout. **RIGHT** The bedroom boasts a quaint viewing platform looking onto the park and water views.

< renovated, it now boasts acres of space and light, and a classic look that's more historic Europe than urban Sydney.

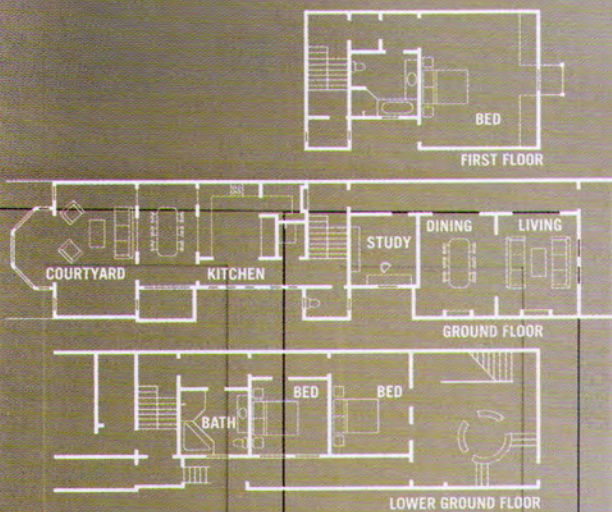
From the start the couple had a love/hate relationship with the house. They'd lived in the area for years but were looking for something bigger in a nicer location. Tina first spotted it on one of many weekends out hunting real estate. When she dragged Terry in for a look, he wasn't convinced: "I walked in and straight out. It was smelly, dark and dingy, and had been boarded up and empty for six months."

They put the place out of their minds until a few months later, when it came up for auction. This time, Terry and Tina peered through the back fence. "I saw straight past the old house and out to the park and water views, and I fell in love," Terry says. So they bought the house, cleaned it up as

best they could, and started making plans to renovate. Apart from the storm drama (and a minor altercation with some white ants in the floor) there were no other problems.

The real work started after they settled on architect Phil Abram, whose handiwork they'd admired in the area. From the moment they sat down with him to discuss ideas, they knew they'd picked right. "He came back after three or four weeks with some initial drawings," Terry says. "Now, my wife is pretty hard to please, but when we saw his ideas, we both looked at each other and said 'wow'."

Phil had captured their thoughts brilliantly and more. In place of the dark, two-storey jumble of spiral stairs and unusable winding pathways, he created a huge, entertaining-friendly home, complete with two extra storeys tucked >





< into the existing roof line and a sun-soaked courtyard. There's a giant living space downstairs and best of all, an open-plan kitchen, living and dining area upstairs. "We both enjoy good food and wine, and love having friends and family around."

The open-plan living areas are cleverly divided up by symmetrical cut-outs in the walls, and all are neatly trimmed in architraves that suit the age of the house. The flooring also divides the house, with floorboards in the kitchen and dining areas, and creamy limestone in the lounge, kitchen and bathrooms.

When it came to choosing colours, Terry had dreams of a colourful mix but Phil soon put a stop to that. "He talked us into a light, easy colour (Dulux Russian White) with a gloss on the trims." Terry also lost the decorating battle when it came to furniture: "If I'd had my way, I would have gone somewhere like IKEA and filled the house up," he smiles. "But Tina said it was worth waiting to get good pieces, even it meant going for years without."

Meanwhile, Phil had thought about the often-overlooked details too, like the wiring for the stereo. "He kept coming up with ideas, like where we might want cable TV or computer connections," Terry says.

The renovation process had all the usual hiccups, and more. It was meant to take eight months, but ended up taking 16, which of course meant extra costs. There were a couple of minor dramas along the way, too. "At one point we were both quite upset and Phil sat us down and said: 'In a year, when you're sitting in the finished house, you'll love it so much you won't remember this time'."

Sure enough, Tina and Terry are completely thrilled with the house and admit they love it more each day. "It's perfect," Terry says. "Everything in it is just right." **hb**

LEFT Garden party: the backyard required extra concrete walls and steel rod supports, but this sun-soaked courtyard was worth the added stress.

BELOW RIGHT The small but practical laundry tucked behind the kitchen.



THINGS WE LOVE

BUILT-IN WIRING

It's easy to get caught up in the big picture when you're planning a renovation, but it's just as important to think of the smaller details that make a space really functional. On architect Phil Abram's advice, Terry and Tina planned the wiring for sound speakers in all corners of the house (including their bedroom and courtyard), the computer and phone connections, a security alarm, and even two-way lighting so you can switch the lights on from different parts of the house. "When I first do plans, I always include furniture so you

idea 1

can accurately include these kinds of details," Phil says. "It's important to imagine walking through and living in the house."



idea 2

OPEN-PLAN LIVING

Making an open-plan renovation look right in an old-style house can be tricky. But Phil has blended the two brilliantly by using wall cut-outs as room dividers. The symmetrical wall openings, edged with detailed architraves, add warmth and character in tune with this old terrace, while creating a user-friendly open space. "It's contemporary spacing but the sense of separate rooms add a layering to, or enrichment

of, the space," says Phil. Keep colour schemes to a quiet monotone or the beautiful detailing will make the space seem too busy.