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10 STEPS TO BUYING
SOFAS, BEDS & TABLES

BELOW Global vision: a Moroccan lantern, Turkish kilim, simple table setting and glass doors to the garden make a welcoming dining room. **RIGHT** Keen art collectors, the couple wanted plenty of space to hang tribal artefacts and paintings such as this one by Australian artist Matthew Johnson.





bohemian luxe

Treasures from a lifetime of travelling fill this sun-drenched home with personality

PRODUCED BY GERALDINE MUÑOZ PHOTOGRAPHY KIRSTEN STRECKER WORDS JENNY M. O'MEARA



LEFT Dressing up: This vintage clothes display is just one of many instances of original thinking when it came to decorating the house.

BELOW Every item, from artworks to furniture to knick-knacks, conveys a rich sense of colour.

RIGHT Keen to avoid too many modern appliances, the clients purchased a 1950s Kooka oven. Its age meant it wasn't insulated, so firewalls had to be constructed to house it next to the bench.

Even a trip to the bathroom at this home transports the visitor to exotic cultures. Thanks to the beautifully-crafted Balinese mirror that hangs above the 1920s pedestal basin, visitors are momentarily swept away to a place where temples reign and worship is a way of life – and that's just while you're washing your hands.

It's not the only thing in this house, nestled among the trees in Sydney's eastern suburbs, that's capable of stirring memories of far away lands. Moroccan lanterns hang where more run-of-the-mill light fittings once cast their glow, and authentic Persian rugs stretch over the tallowwood floor.

"The owners came to me with so many things they wanted to include," says architect Philip Abram, "things they'd collected over the years during their travels – everything from African dolls to Balinese brackets and Indian elephant masks. So, as well as working on changing the house structurally, I knew that I had to provide lots of spaces to hang and display the things they'd collected.

"They also wanted a house that was unpredictable, with loads of light, warmth and openness. And they liked the look of timber floorboards with exposed ceilings and beams – a very boathouse feel."

The result is a unique and character-filled home that does justice to the phrase 'treasure trove'. Originally a single-level, two-bedroom house with a series of separate rooms out the back, today the home has a second storey, complete with new main bedroom and bathroom. It is flooded with >







TRUE CONFESSIONS

WHO ARE YOU? Philip Abram, the architect who designed the house. I also specialise in interior design and project management.

HOW DID YOU COME TO WORK ON THE HOUSE? The clients had shot an advertisement in my house and were taken by its detail and warmth. They kept me in mind, and called me when the time came to do their own home.

WERE THERE ANY MEMORABLE STORIES ALONG THE WAY? There was a ginkgo tree in the yard that, for some reason, attained an almost spiritual significance for us. We made a constant effort to work around it so it could stay – but it was always under threat. The painters even emptied their tins of paint on it – very sensitive! Thankfully, the tree survived.

HOW MUCH DID THE RENOVATION COST? The budget was \$238,000.

When you do a lot of timber-work, it winds up being expensive because it's very labour-intensive and a lot of your money gets eaten up in labour costs rather than the visible result.

ANY RENOVATING TIPS? As a home owner, anything you or your interior designer does should reflect your personality, otherwise you lose the soul and identity of the house. And be sure to choose a builder who will be sympathetic to the result you're trying to achieve, otherwise you might not be happy with the final product.

< natural light and, downstairs, is mostly open plan. Dotted all over are the textures and colours that represent the many cultures the owners held so dear.

"We started by stripping off the crumbling roof tiles and installing a Colorbond corrugated iron roof. Immediately, this made the house friendlier, with that boathouse feel the owners were after. Then we stripped off the back of the house to build the new combined kitchen, dining and living area."

The space inside, surrounded by windows and bathed in tree-filtered light, is incredibly inviting. Not keen to clutter the area with too many cupboards, Philip opted for open shelves that host everything from bottles and jars to utensils, and give the kitchen a much-loved feeling. The room is designed to become home to a big rustic shop counter, which will sit alongside the 1950s Kooka stove – testimony to the couple's bent towards combining the old with the new.

In line with that philosophy, the two original downstairs bedrooms were retained – one made lighter and larger by the addition of a bay window. To merge the new area of the house with the old, a library-cum-hallway floats in between.

ABOVE Bookish by design: step into the hallway and you will also find the library, a great way to use an often neglected space.

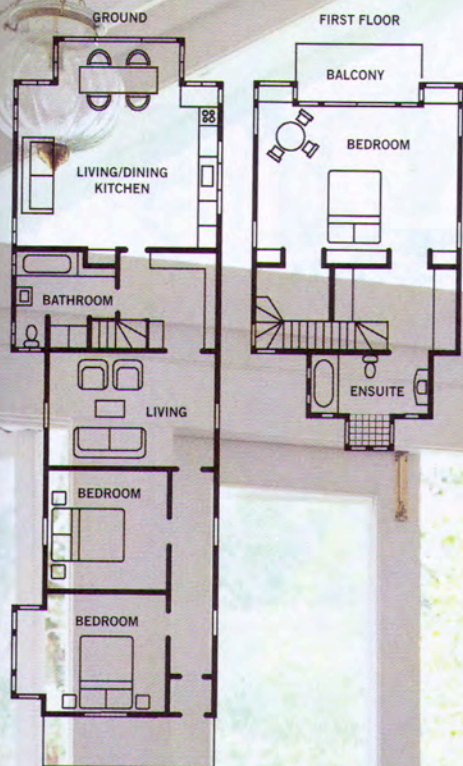
RIGHT Painted pine rafters and boarding line the exposed roof in the bedroom. The tallowwood floors in the house were finished with tung-oil, a low toxicity varnish.

Brimming with shelves and ledges that house treasured books and paintings, the bookcase also creates a clever visual link to the kitchen through the insertion of an open alcove that stretches to the ceiling.

"Creating a hole in the bookcase not only helps with visibility, it also allows light from the living area to flow into the hallway – an area that traditionally can be quite dark."

Of course, it's not the only secret to the house's abundant natural light. "At the top of the stair shaft, I set a series of windows high up into the ceiling. This creates a light well that floods both the centre of the house and the main bedroom with daylight," says Philip.

Not that the bedroom needed much help in the light stakes. "By exposing the roof in the new main bedroom, we also created an open gable that's fitted with two, sail-shaped, triangular, glass windows." Set above a series of multi-fold, >



warm sunlight filters into the living space through lush trees





a balinese mirror and 1920s pedestal create an exotic, timeless style





LEFT Retro grading: the floor design uses hexagonal, square and rectangular Purcell tiles with curved cove tiling around the shower and bath, which is set into a modern platform. **FAR**

LEFT An ornate Balinese mirror is married with traditional sink and tapware for an inspired, eclectic match.

< glass doors, the windows let the morning light stream in with the bonus of a lovely, treehouse-style view out over the balcony.

Next door to the bedroom sits the new bathroom, with its Balinese feel, crisp white-tiled walls and

a shower that literally pops out the side of the house. "The shower box was designed to be like a small, bay window, complete with large panes of glass. It's a great way to let light into the room," explains Philip.

Today, two years after the renovations began, the house is light-filled, welcoming and overflowing with the passion the owners clearly have had for creating surroundings that are more than a little special.

"They were incredibly passionate about their home – and involved. They would regularly come to me saying, 'Look, I've found these little cabin lamps or strap hinges, what should I do with them?'"

"In fact, midway through building, they came home with recycled doors, so I had to chuck the existing plans and fit them in. But it was great and meant we worked together to create their perfect home."

From Philip's point of view, a fair indication that it has turned out well is that his own wife and daughter have also fallen in love with the house.

"Believe me, they certainly don't like all my work, but my daughter actually babysits there, and – she'll kill me for saying this – has admitted that she would be quite happy to do it for free, simply because she loves the house so much." **hb**

THINGS WE LOVE



WINDOW-MOUNTED SHELVING

Instead of mounting shelves against a wall, why not place them across a window without a view? It's a great way to add a point of interest – filtered sunlight can turn the most uninspiring jar of pasta into something to behold! These shelves and the bench were custom-made from jarrah. The brackets were created by a local caster, who modelled them on an old, cast-iron toilet cistern bracket brought to him by the couple. If you're going to use this idea for foodstuffs, it's a good idea to ensure the shelves won't be exposed to harsh sunlight, which would spoil the food. Expect to pay from \$19.40/metre for 150x38mm jarrah planks.



MULTI-FOLD DOORS

Creating the perfect entrance to the upstairs balcony and the leafy view beyond, these folding doors are hinged off each other rather than on a track – which means you can have as little or as many doors open as you like. And, while it's tempting to have doors that offer an uninterrupted view, framing the view with elongated windows creates the perfect balance between cool simplicity and toasty cosiness. Total cost: \$2600 including installation.