

# Hidden depths

An elegant fusion of old and new gives a timeless feel to Fiona and Nick's Melbourne family home

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## ← ENTRANCE

The brilliant blue of the doorway and glorious wood pendant light tell you you've arrived. 'The paint colour was the last decision I made on the house and I was exhausted,' admits Fiona. 'I thought I'd change it later, but now I like the spontaneity of it.'

**GET THE LOOK** The school bench is from *ICI et là* in Sydney. Try *Andy Thornton* for similar. This is the Red Serpent artwork by Aboriginal artist Long Tom Tjapanangka. *JGM ART* is a good source of Aboriginal art. Find the Lora pendant shade by *Wepight* at *Spatial Lighting*.

## Home profile

**THE OWNERS** Fiona Richardson, an interiors stylist, her lawyer husband Nick and their children Noah, nine, Alfie, seven, and Louis, four.

**THE PROPERTY** An extended Edwardian house in Melbourne, Australia. On the ground floor, there's an open-plan kitchen/dining/living room, as well as a pantry, utility room, master bedroom with en suite and dressing room, a guest bedroom/music room, bathroom and study. The first floor has two bedrooms, a playroom and a bathroom.

## LIVING ROOM

A stone fireplace creates a focal point at the centre of the open-plan space and is the ideal chill-out zone, come rain or shine. In a simple decorating scheme, pops of colour provide impact - here, it's the glow of the teal footstool against the charcoal sofas.

**GET THE LOOK** The Claude sofas are by *Pinch*, upholstered in *Linara Shadow* linen by *Roma*. The small side table is an auction find. Try *Alfies Antique Market* for similar. The fireplace was designed by Melbourne architect *Stephen Akehurst*. See *Ideas to Steal* for similar.



# A little trad, a little mad...

That was the thinking when it came to doing up this Edwardian suntrap, tucked into a leafy corner of Melbourne. 'I agonised about what look to go with because I didn't want a typical Australian renovation with a copper box on the back of the house and big doors opening on to the garden,' says owner Fiona Richardson. 'We definitely have four seasons here in Melbourne and inside-outside living would only work for a fraction of the year! Plus, we have a lot of inherited family pieces that we needed to fit into our scheme. I love that you can't tell in this house what's new and what's been here forever. The design is seamless, but we left room for spontaneity. You have to have fun with your home.'

When they bought the house 12 years ago, neither Fiona nor her husband Nick had experience in property development – she was working in PR and he is a lawyer. What they did have was a love of architecture, a serious auction habit (Fiona can always spot a furniture 'fixer upper') and a beady eye for good design. (It runs in the family – Nick's grandmother was renowned for raiding the bins of her artist friends and taking their rejects home.)

At the time, the Edwardian part of the single-storey property had been split into two apartments, with two more bedsits tacked on to the rear of the building. 'It was rented out as student digs and hadn't been touched since it was divided up in the Sixties,' says Fiona. 'Basically, it was a rabbit warren, with rising damp and a couple of scary bathrooms. I was horrified when a friend told me it looked like a school – in my head, it was already a family home.'

Over the past ten years, as well as having three boys, the couple have totally re-imagined the house. The family moved from room to room as the ground floor was renovated, culminating in the looks-like-it's-been-there-forever extension that contains the kitchen and living area. 'We would knock through to open up a space and literally let the kids write on the walls!' says Fiona.

In due course, she and Nick added an extra floor for the boys' bedrooms. 'There were stressful times, but I think of it like having a baby – it's very painful, but you forget all that afterwards when you see the beauty you've produced,' says Fiona, shrugging. In turn, she also launched a new career: fired by her part in the makeover, she has set up an interior styling and design business.

When it came to decorating, Fiona's ally was her interior designer sister Sally Richardson. 'We grew up in the countryside and we were so bored, we constantly rearranged the bedroom furniture. Now we're both obsessed with interiors,' says Fiona, laughing. 'Nick always complains Sally's on my side and it's probably true! Like me, she loves dark walls, whereas he took some persuading about the grey colour scheme. But he brought back door handles from France, where we went on our honeymoon, so I think we're even!'

What the pair share is a love of history and heritage – the heirlooms that add depth and narrative to a home and the fresh finds that expand the story for a new generation. 'I love the painting of Nick's grandfather in the living area. He was an orphan, a mysterious, Don Draper figure and I like the cool way he stares out at us from his portrait,' Fiona explains.

And then there's the new Aga in the kitchen – Fiona's grandparents had one just like it that she'd huddle around when she was little. Now her children do the same thing in her kitchen; different setting, same sense of comfort. 'We shaped this house – it's reflective of us,' says Fiona. From flea pit to family home, it's a house that's grown up with them. For more information about Fiona's styling work, visit [richardhallandson.com.au](http://richardhallandson.com.au)



## LIVING ROOM

'It took me four months to convince my husband to go with these dark walls,' admits Fiona. 'But now he loves them.' A pale wood floor reflects light from the windows and hits of strong yellow keep the look glam, not gloomy. **GET THE LOOK** The portrait is of Nick's grandfather. Artist Simon Foxall has a similar style. The bust belonged to Nick's grandmother – try Rockett St George for busts. For a similar paint shade, try Off-Black estate emulsion by Farrow & Ball. For a similar round table, try Lombok. The armchair, an auction find, was reupholstered in Peonies in Lemon by Michael Sael for Christopher Farr Cloth. Head to George Smith for a similar chair. Find the Josephine 7 pendant light by Jaime Hayon for Metalorite at Foundry Light + Design.



**UTILITY ROOM** ↑

Like ghosts of scullery maids past, faces gaze down from the utility room walls. 'I thought, "I'm going to be in this room a lot, why can't it be beautiful?"; says Fiona, laughing.

**GET THE LOOK** The Fornasetti Tema e Variazioni wallpaper by Cole & Son has been discontinued. Check out the latest Fornasetti/Cole & Son collaboration at [cole-and-son.com](http://cole-and-son.com). For antique French kitchen scales like these, try Sunbury Antiques Market. The glassware and silver is a mix of gifts and antique finds. Try Pittfield London for similar.

**LIVING ROOM/  
SHELF DETAIL** ↗

For tradition with a twist, you can't go wrong with this Fornasetti wallpaper. 'I love how it contrasts with the vintage woven chair,' says Fiona. 'That freedom to clash styles and not be restricted to an era or look is really important to me.'

**GET THE LOOK** This is the Fornasetti Riflesso wallpaper by Cole & Son. The Italian woven chair is from Geoffrey Hatty Applied Arts in Melbourne. Try 1stdibs.com for similar. The Stanley stool is from Jordan in Melbourne. Vitra does a similar stool. The shelf/drawer unit was designed by Melbourne architect Stephen Akehurst. Try Lago at Living Space for similar.



**KITCHEN-DINER** ↑

Despite its contemporary feel, the kitchen is filled with touchstones that add a note of history and tradition. The white china was a gift from Fiona's mother-in-law, who runs a cookery school, while the pendant light was brought back from a trip to France. 'The open shelves add warmth, which is the feeling I wanted throughout the house,' says Fiona.

**GET THE LOOK** For a reclaimed kitchen table and bench, try Pacha Design. Find a pendant light like this at Hector Finch. The kitchen units were designed by Melbourne architect Stephen Akehurst. Try Pacha Design for similar. The rug is from Pacha Design in Melbourne. Find similar at Lulu's.



← **BOYS' BATHROOM**

This room has a contemporary feel, but careful use of materials links it with the more traditional elements elsewhere – the metro tiles match those in the utility room and the natural wood of the cabinets mirrors the furnishing throughout.

**GET THE LOOK** The bathroom cabinet was designed by Stephen Akehurst. Try CP Hart for similar. Head to Mandarin Stone for limestone floor tiles. The Jade lamp table (used as a stool) is by Wilhelmina McCarroll for Zuster in Melbourne. Try Objekten for similar.

↓ **GUEST BEDROOM/MUSIC ROOM**

Fiona says the furniture and artwork inherited by her and Nick helps to ground the house, adding depth and narrative. 'When we met, we were quite young,' she says. 'But he was clear that his "old stuff" was part of the deal. I'm so glad we kept it now, although at the time, I wasn't so sure.'

**GET THE LOOK** The portrait above the fireplace is of Nick's grandfather by Australian painter Gill Jamieson. The piano was Fiona's grandmother's. Find similar at Markson Planos.



**Home truths**

**THE HOUSE IS EMPTY FOR ONCE, WHAT DO YOU DO?** In my dreams, read a magazine on the window seat. In reality, put the washing on!

**WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE TIME OF DAY?** I love being up and about in the morning, before anybody else.

**HOW DO YOU CELEBRATE YOUR WEDDING ANNIVERSARY?** It's generally pretty low key, but for our tenth, we spent ten days in New York.

**SOUNDTRACK TO THE SEASON?** Anything from Nina Simone to Powderfinger.

**YOU'RE GOING ON HOLIDAY TOMORROW; ARE YOU READY?** I pack well in advance. My husband packs at the last tick of the clock, which I cannot stand.

**THE BEST THING ABOUT BRINGING UP BOYS?** Their energy – you know you're alive! Plus, they forgive and forget quickly.

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**GUEST BEDROOM**

Friends say this Aussie house has an English feel, according to Fiona. 'I'm inspired by Abigail Ahern's rich colours, which suit a house full of boys,' she says. The embroidered cushion was brought back from London by Fiona's sister.

**GET THE LOOK** The pineapple lamp base was bought at Leonard Joel auction house in Melbourne. Try Heathfield & Co for similar. The shade is covered in Florence Broadhurst fabric. Borderline sells her designs. This is the Tale of Two Cities cushion by Charlene Mullen. The metal table came from Geoffrey Hatty Applied Arts in Melbourne. For a similar table, try Andrew Martin.



The blueprint



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR