



Designer Chelsey Hing preserved the Victorian era's architectural detail in the dressing room of this Melbourne house, where grey walls and black-stained timber floors serve as the new base canvas for Jessica Rowe's print, *Lara Stone Lips*, and an Andrew Martin tub chair. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Laila Jeffreys' *Terry* sits on a restored marble mantelpiece. A Flexform sofa, vintage table by Hestorberg, stool by Douglas and Bee for Kate Sylvester, Tom Dixon 'Hex' copper bowl and bookshelves displaying a Kat Macleod illustration and Mary Lou Pavlovic floral sculpture make for Hing's essential style mix of personally meaningful pieces, pops of colour and pattern on pattern. The rug is by Madeline Weinrib. **Details, last pages.**



LEAP OF **FAITH**

VICTORIAN-ERA ORNAMENTATION IS PAIRED WITH MODERN ELEMENTS IN AN INTERIORS OVERHAUL OF A MELBOURNE TERRACE.

PHOTOGRAPHER **NIK EPIFANIDIS** PRODUCER/WRITER **ANNEMARIE KIELY**



Hing specified Resene's 'Double Stack' paint for dining room walls to conceal their imperfect state. Cut crystal decanter pendants by Lee Broom twinkle in a setting of Thonet chairs and a Hay table. **OPPOSITE PAGE, FAR LEFT:** a gold hall table from London's The Grosvenor Hotel is mismatched to a black-and-white rug and Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri's *Tingari* painting in a hallway that, once stark white (as per 'before' image), was recoloured in Resene's 'Half Stack'. Kate, the client. **BELOW RIGHT,** returned to refreshed rooms in which her travel finds and art had been curated into the dining room, **TOP RIGHT,** and living room. **BELOW LEFT,** where Sean Bailey's *Heads of Rome* hangs above a vintage French armchair. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** a detail of an artwork by Melbourne artist Minna Gilligan.



The great English artist David Hockney once made the distinction that art has to move you but design does not — “unless it’s a good design for a bus”. And many would agree. But interior designer Chelsea Hing has made it her practice to prove that design can transport you to a ‘higher’ place when certain strategies are artfully applied. “I’m definitely a proponent of the form follows function maxim,” she declares, citing a CV that includes work stints in some of Melbourne’s best ‘modernist’ practices. “But I really think they have to be considered together — getting the function right and then laying the form over.”

It’s an ethos that is pertinent to her makeover of this Melbourne house, a down-at-heel Victorian terrace that was bought ‘sight unseen’ by a savvy young publicist who, at the time of purchase, was residing overseas. (A redo that has resulted in a nomination for Residential Design at this year’s Australian Interior Design Awards.) According to Hing, the sale of said house was finalised on the client’s wedding day — a Las Vegas whirlwind, the news of which greeted the designer with the urgent request to have all ‘renos’ ready for the newlyweds’ return to Melbourne in three months time.

“Three months,” repeats Hing, stiffening her posture in recall of the breakneck speed at which the design commission unfurled from first long-distance issuing of the brief through to concept sketch, line-up of trades, construction, finishes, soft furnishings, and handover of house keys. What started as a simple repaint and carpet rip-up snowballed into a re-jig of the plan, a redesign of the kitchen and bathroom, a re-wire, a re-light, a re-think of colour (away from 1970s Bordeaux-red feature walls) and a re-floor (carpet up, timber boards polished and graphic rugs selectively sited).

With characteristic calm, Hing describes the ensuing rollercoaster ride as “exhilarating”, qualifying that the leap was one of faith made entirely by her client. “This kind of project requires a special kind of synchronicity and trust. Kate was an amazing client and we were in constant contact for those three months. At times, it did feel like a long-distance romance.”

But one that obviously didn’t sour, I suggest, affirming Hing’s belief that the most successful projects are often those in which the client allows the designer to fly. “Well that’s what you have to do if you want an interior to excite and thrill you,” she agrees, before sharing her hard and fast rules for interior happiness. “Don’t be too serious! No really, too matchy, matchy and too much good taste can come off as boring. Mix up scale, shape and proportion. And you must use colour; plus a mix of imperfect or quirky things add that touch of delight that you just can’t get when everything’s a bit too new or restrained.”

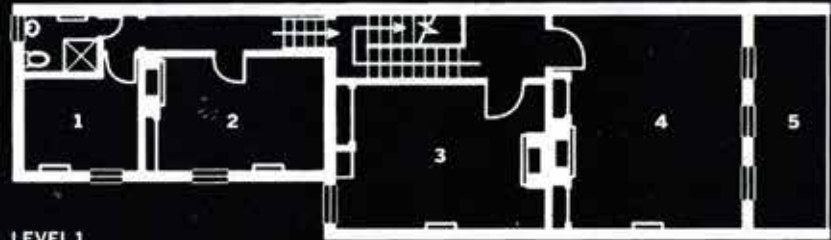
Bringing it back to design that moves and making all of the above advice fit into a scheme that still tells the client’s back story, Hing declares “discomfort” as an essential ingredient of the memorable creative oeuvre. “You should feel a bit nervous when you are getting out of your comfort zone. Only then are you creating an interior that’s exciting and full of surprises.”

So how did it all end, I ask, pushing past mention of a murderously small bathroom, crumbling walls, vintage finds matched to Pinterest picks, rifling for perfect props in the client’s storage container, to the time-clock stop at the three-month mark. “We made it,” says Hing, recalling her client’s taxi ride from Melbourne airport straight into a house that incited squeals of disbelief and delight. “We made it!” **VL**
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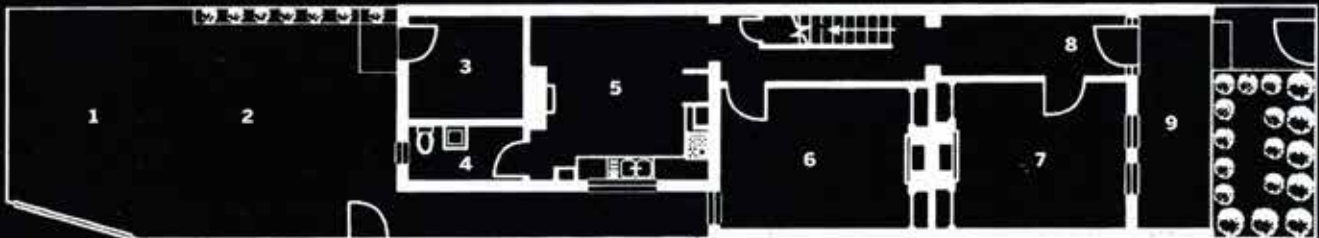


BEFORE



LEVEL 1

1 bedroom/study 2 bedroom 3 bedroom 4 bedroom 5 balcony



GROUND LEVEL

1 carpark 2 courtyard 3 sunroom 4 laundry 5 kitchen 6 dining 7 lounge 8 entry 9 verandah



BEFORE

Aim of the renovation? "To breathe new life into this stuffy Victorian within the existing bones. The interior had to fit a young professional couple with a European aesthetic," says Chelsea Hing.

How long did it take? "The record time of three months!"

Best advice? "Find a designer you connect with and then trust them."

Would you do anything differently? "No! But it was risky and my husband probably wouldn't do it again."

What do you most love about the renovation? "That we respected the house and stayed true to its classic features. And, the kitchen, just generally; brass and marble — what's not to love?"

Materials used: "Resene paint in 'Double Cod Grey', 'Double Stack' and 'Half Stack'; Carrara marble; brass tapware; white subway tiles; colourful and graphic furnishings and art."

Interior designer: Chelsea Hing, (03) 8506 0417; chelseahing.com.au.

Builder/joiner: Silverstream Constructions, (03) 9459 1747, 0425 851 666; silverstreamconstructions.com.

The dated kitchen (as per before shot, OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT) was reinvented by filling with a rejig of jewelry. She specified white Carrara marble for benches, bevelled-edge tiles, semi-pendants by Gubi, vintage Miss van der Rohe chairs and a benchmark farm table to contrive the ambience of a 1930s French bistro. OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT: the bathroom (before shot, TOP LEFT) mixes a vintage material palette with modern touches such as Tom Dixon's wall hooks, Lightyears' Calabash pendant light by Komplot Design, Elements of Style's zinc mirror and a Pozzi Ginari hand basin. Details, last pages.

