

All in THE DETAIL

With its historic appeal preserved, this Melbourne home provides a gorgeous backdrop to modern family life.

STORY JUDY OSTERGAARD | STYLING JO McCOMISKEY
PHOTOGRAPHY ALICIA TAYLOR



Innerspace Interiors designed sofas and the ottoman on a grand scale for Mark and Amanda Cubits' formal living room. Tray and jug from Gaudion Furniture. Tree and ornaments from My Christmas. **OPPOSITE** Milton, rescued from the RSPCA, poses by the entrance. Chair from Ellis Outdoor Living. Seat cushion and small topiary ball from Provincial Home Living. For Where to Buy, see page 292.



'The owners wanted a home, not a palace. They wanted colours, fabrics and styles that wouldn't date.' JENNIFER HUTCHINSON, INTERIOR DESIGNER



H&G houses

In the formal dining room, a mirror reflects the grand light fitting from Antique Chandelier Co. Reindeer ornaments from Innerspace Interiors. Stocking holders from Celebrating Christmas. For similar stockings, try Flora & Ceres. **OPPOSITE TOP** Amy (left) and Ashleigh Rose trim the tree. *Travel Bliss* painting (far left) by Catherine Fitzgerald. *Iris No. 110* woodblock print (far right) by Kazutoshi Sugiura. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM** Chairs by Innerspace Interiors in Sahco Rubina silk-cotton fabric. For Where to Buy, see page 292.

Mark Cubit sees himself not as the owner of the grand Italianate home that he and his wife, Amanda, bought four years ago, but as a caretaker who will maintain the fine architecture and history of the building and pass it on in years to come. It's the kind of responsibility that comes with St Osyth, a landmark home in Melbourne's inner suburbs.

Originally known as Monda, the home was built in the 1890s for renowned engineer George Michell and his family, at a cost of £145. The Michells lived in the house until the 1960s, since which time it has been renovated twice, most recently just before the Cubits became the owners. "We weren't really looking to move," Mark says, "but this house caught my interest." Already living in the area, he and Amanda were happy to stay close to the schools of their daughters, 16-year-old Ashleigh Rose and Amy, 14.

"The previous owner had undertaken a huge extension and renovation of the house before circumstances obliged him to sell," says Mark. "I did some research and contacted the builder, who was very open in telling me that no shortcuts had been taken. The attention to detail and the standard of finishes and fittings used were the best possible."

There was no doubt that the house was lavish but Mark, a former stockbroker who now manages two charitable foundations, and Amanda, a fitness instructor, really wanted a home where they could relax and put their feet up. It was also clear, once they had moved in, that they would need some help on the interior decoration front. >



Christmas cheer

"We lean towards a traditional Christmas," says Mark. "For the past 15 years we've bought our Christmas tree from the local scouts, and we get together as a family to decorate it. We open presents around the tree on Christmas morning. Christmas lunch is alternately celebrated here or at another family member's house. When it's here, there will usually be about 18 people, and we always do the time-honoured roast turkey and plum pudding. I make the pudding a year ahead, using my mother's recipe."

Custom-made cherrywood furniture adds warmth to the informal dining space. Candlesticks from Gaudion Furniture. Angel ornaments from Celebrating Christmas. Lantern from The Works. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Amy, Mark and Amanda in the kitchen. Sink from Manorhouse. Snowflake ornaments from Celebrating Christmas deck the halls. **For Where to Buy, see page 292.**



< For a start, the size of the rooms and the height of the ceilings made their existing furniture look "as though it belonged to pygmies," says Mark. Interior designers Jennifer Hutchinson and Andrew Frost of Innerspace Interiors were recommended by Mark's brother, and they brought a keen eye for proportions and plenty of other sage advice to the table.

"They wanted a home, not a palace," says Jennifer of the brief Mark and Amanda gave the firm. "They wanted colours, styles and fabrics that wouldn't date. They didn't want someone to walk into the house in 10 years and pick the era it was decorated in. Everything had to be practical, too. Ashleigh Rose and Amy both gave us input into how they wanted their rooms to look - girly, but in a way that wouldn't need replacing as they grew up."

The bones of what Jennifer and Andrew had to work with were first-class. The previous owner's extension blends seamlessly with original parts of the house. Pausing to admire the tiled verandah and spun-sugar wrought-iron trim, one goes through the front door into a spacious foyer. To the right are the formal dining and living rooms. Ahead are stairs going down to a cellar and up to four bedrooms. At left, a hallway leads to a study and living room, then to an extension with open-plan kitchen, informal dining and family living spaces, featuring glazed double doors that open to the garden and pool.

High ceilings, moulded skirtings, cornices and architraves have been continued throughout. The flooring is beautifully aged 100-year-old wandoo timber, a West Australian eucalyptus, that was >





TOP The walls of the main bedroom are upholstered in a Thai silk from Silk Trader. **ABOVE** In the study niche, a delicate drop chandelier from Antique Chandelier Co hangs over a desk from Innerspace Interiors. Artwork by Kim Kennedy. **OPPOSITE** Ashleigh Rose's dreamy bedroom gets a jolt of colour from bold fabrics. Curtains in Designers Guild Ariani silk in Cassis. For Where to Buy, see page 292.



Colour palette



Heritage Paints Kirkland (living and dining rooms)



Heritage Paints Valkyrie (kitchen)

Add a dash of...



Bristol Gypsy Pink



Porter's Paints Mudlark

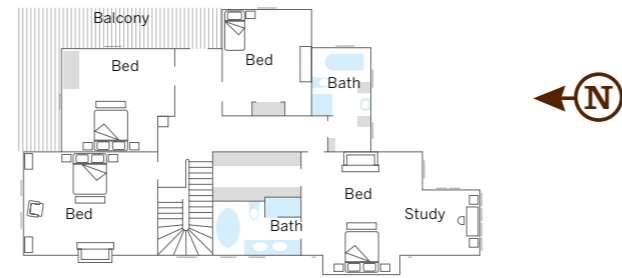
Shades of deep berry and warm ochre lend charm and character to the family bedrooms.

Paint colours are reproduced as accurately as printing processes will allow.

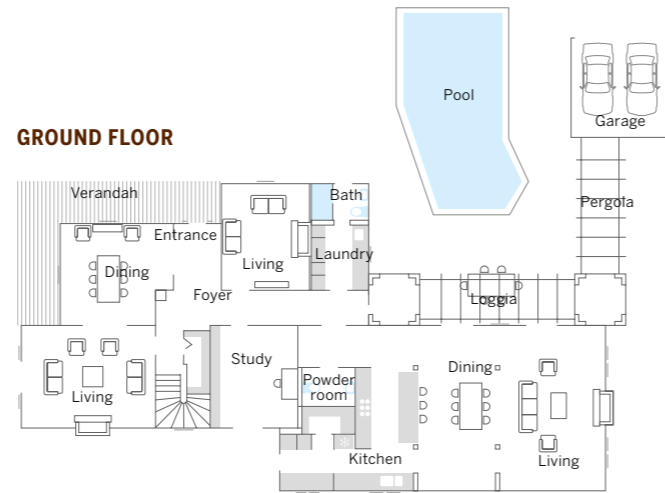
'Seeing the difference that cushions on a sofa or a mirror on a wall can make to a room has been wonderful.' MARK



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



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< recycled from an old woolshed. Light fittings – chandeliers, pendant lights and sconces – are perfectly in keeping with the character of the home and the new kitchen is modelled on that of a French country villa, featuring Calacatta marble benchtops, a traditional butler’s sink and a Lacanche stove.

Jennifer and Andrew had all the furniture in the living and dining spaces custom made, including deep sofas – a soft one to suit Mark’s taste and a firmer one for Amanda’s comfort – and a pair of highly inviting wingback armchairs. “We had seen similar chairs in a hotel we stayed in,” says Mark, “and we love the way they’re big enough to curl up in.”

New fittings dovetail beautifully with the old but have been cannily devised with an eye to the future, too. “The large storage unit in the family living room almost reaches the ceiling,” Mark says, “yet it comes apart in three pieces and can be easily moved, which will be very handy if we ever need to get to the wiring behind it.”

Respect for the property has underpinned the design process, one which Mark has thoroughly enjoyed. “The whole exercise has been a learning experience,” he says. “I’m a practical person, a finance guy, and to gain knowledge from seeing the difference that adding cushions to a sofa or putting a mirror on a wall can make to a room has been wonderful. Every piece of furniture that arrived was like a new adventure.”

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Innerspace Interiors, Prahran, Victoria; (03) 9510 7946 or innerspaceinteriors.com.au.



This is the life

“The pool area really comes into its own in summer,” says Mark. “We’ll have people over in the morning and they’ll often end up staying for a casual barbecue dinner.” This active, outdoor-loving family also travels a lot, often to visit projects supported by Planet Wheeler Foundation, a charitable organisation set up by Tony and Maureen Wheeler of Lonely Planet fame and managed by Mark. “Both the girls say their best holiday ever was to a school that we helped develop in Tanzania.”



All set for an alfresco celebration. Large vase from Provincial Home Living. Wreath on wall from My Christmas. OPPOSITE TOP Clad in Bianco Venato marble, the girls’ bathroom features a Duravit basin from Finer Bathrooms and Astra Walker tapware. OPPOSITE BOTTOM Cutlery and dinnerware from Provincial Home Living. Bird place-card holder from The Works. For Where to Buy, see page 292.