inside

cosying up

Playing with a mix of texture and tone will set up an inviting living area

With cooler weather finally upon us, it's time to settle in. It's easy to think about the finishing touches – a generous sofa, plenty of cushions and a plush rug, but consider the surfaces of your space. For instance, the ceiling is an ideal canvas for interesting detail – in this Melbourne home, oak panelling adds warmth, as well as an architectural feature. A cement-rendered wall and stone platform add to the relaxed sophistication of this zone, and this blend of materials is also reflected in the accessories. For more of this refined family space, turn the page.

PHOTOGRAPHY: DEREK SWALWELL. STYLING: RACHEL VIGOR

CHEAT SHEET

Who lives here: Fashion stylist and presenter Anthea O'Connor; her husband, a company director; their children, Violet, 13; Tom, 11; Will, 9; and black labrador, Poppy.

Style of home: A 1920s house with a contemporary makeover.

The renovation was spread over three phases from 2012-2014, with a library due for completion this year.

$$$$ The total spend for the project was around $500k.

/SLOW/ /AND/ /STEADY/

Renovating isn't a race to the finish line as a considered update to this elegant Melbourne home proves

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LIVING AREA "It has always been my dream sofa," says owner Anthea of the B&B Italia 'Le Lambole' lounge. "I knew it was going to be the hero item with a contrasting navy-blue sofa." The blue couch is a 'Tufty-Too' couch from Space Furniture. A Poliform coffee table sits on top of a tactile rug from Loom Rugs that matches the concrete-rendered wall with a Jetmaster fireplace.

KITCHEN (above) The cooking zone sits alongside the living and dining areas, as well as a study. The custom-made island bench features drawer fronts made up of Royal Oak Floors floorboards from Harper & Sandilands. Lighting by Anna Charlesworth adds brass into the material mix. **OPEN-PLAN LIVING (opposite)** Old meets new with the Thonet chairs gathered around a sleek Poliform 'Concorde' table. Sculptural forms also have a presence with a large bowl by artist Emma Davies and a custom Douglas And Bec light.

When Anthea O'Connor moved into her home, she knowingly committed to an interim period of "hideous salmon-coloured everything". Unsure of when a renovation would commence, the confronting peachy-pink shade was minimised with a lick of paint and dyeing the carpet brown. "It turned murky khaki and unexpectedly took weeks to dry," says Anthea. "We had a crawling toddler at the time who constantly had brown feet and hands. The day that carpet went into the dumpster was nearly the best one of the entire renovation!" This aside, the property ticked all the boxes: land size, location and a pool, but it needed so much work that at one point Anthea and her husband even considered knocking it down. "It did have redeeming features though, so in the end we decided to keep the basic layout and push out from there," she says. It also made more sense financially." Architect David Neil of Neil Architecture was brought onboard to tackle the "Rubik's Cube of a challenge". Anthea also enlisted builder Joe Dema of BD Projects for the renovation work and Sanders & King Interiors to consult on the ensuite, furnishings and finishes.

The master plan was for a staged renovation, with the big reconfiguration involving re-orienting the kitchen. "Relocating the kitchen to the back of the house opened it up to the garden and was without a doubt the highlight," says Anthea.

"I FOUND WORKING AROUND CONSTRAINTS FAR MORE SATISFYING THAN GETTING RID OF EVERYTHING" ANTHEA O'CONNOR, OWNER

ARTWORK (OPPOSITE) PAINTINGS BY SALLY JOUBERT

BRIGHT IDEA

The change in floor level was a pre-existing feature and retaining it has been a stroke of genius – it works to define the zones in this open space. It's also one of Anthea's favourite elements of the home.

It's rare that a renovator welcomes a long building process, but Anthea somewhat embraced the waiting game. Years spent living in the space gave her time to "figure it all out" and David tweaked and adapted the original designs and plans accordingly. "The benefit of delay gave me time to think things through thoroughly," says Anthea. "I found working around constraints far more satisfying than getting rid of everything and starting again. You need to work harder and be clever in how you can make aspects that aren't perfect work. And when it does come together it's rewarding – and often more interesting."

While the process also brought a few years' worth of gathering furniture, art and accessories, Anthea's vision of oak floorboards, steel door frames and concrete benchtops never wavered. "I wanted texture, timber and unexpected finishes," she says. "I wanted a concrete floor but balanced by a warm ceiling, and a tan leather couch with a contrasting linen sofa."

Anthea's interior style is reflective of her fashion philosophy, cultivated over years in the industry as a commentator and stylist. "I don't like things that scream shiny and new – it's important to show a sense of individuality and personality," she says.

By way of example, Anthea cites the high-low-vintage combination of her dining area where a limited-edition David Band print sits alongside vessels by local artist Emma Davies and rattan placemats inherited from her husband's grandmother.

For the most part, Anthea's style ideas have come from "old-fashioned research," she says. A former Melbourne editor of *Vogue Australia*, Anthea refers to tear sheets from her magazine collection. With stacks piling up in the garage, they'll soon find a new home in the final phase of the renovation: the library. "And hopefully the last of the boxes will be unpacked!" ID

For more details on Anthea's work, see antheaoconnor.com. Visit neilarchitecture.com.au; bdprojects.com.au and sandersandking.com.

PORTRAIT (left) Owner Anthea relaxing in her dining area where a David Band artwork rests on the cabinet. **STUDY (above)** The custom-made desk also features the same Harper & Sandilands floorboards as the kitchen island bench. **OUTDOORS (opposite)** The 'Butterfly' chairs are from Angelucci 20th Century. The timber-panelled ceiling is carried through from the inside to the outside, further connecting the zones.

ARTWORK: (LEFT) DAVID BAND. (OPPOSITE) MICHAEL MUIR. PLANTS, GLASSHAUS. GLASSHAUS.COM.AU

STAR PERFORMER

Anthea's long-held love of steel-framed doors has been rewarded. The clean aesthetic of the Skyrange doors echoes the home's overall look and frames the garden view.

"IT'S AN UNASSUMING HOUSE THAT REVEALS ITSELF AS YOU WALK THROUGH" ANTHEA O'CONNOR, HOMEOWNER

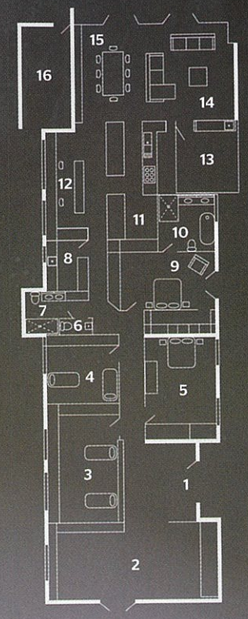
LESSONS LEARNT

"RENOVATING ALWAYS TAKES LONGER THAN YOU THINK!" ANTHEA O'CONNOR, OWNER

"As we did it in stages with a trusted builder, there were delays and surprises with things that needed to be fixed."
Anything you would change? "We would have liked to squeeze in a kids' playroom, but space didn't permit."
Biggest challenges? "We thought it would be quick and easy to rip up the old carpet and lay oak floorboards but it wasn't long before we discovered that the entire house needed re-stumping, which meant moving out. Being a 1920s property, it was not without its problems and that included rectifying lots of crooked angles."
Best surprise? "Retaining the 'dog leg' hallway instead of straightening it into a central spine, which would have sent the budget into another stratosphere. The house is slowly revealed as you turn the corner and I've really come to love this aspect of the design."

PAINT PALETTE 'Clean & Protect' low sheen interior **paints** in Grey Tablelands (1.), $60.90/4L, and Holey Moley (2.) and Neutral Grey (3.), $56.90/4L, British Paints, britishpaints.com.au.

BATHROOM (above) The tapware throughout the home is from Astra Walker. The Stone Italiana benchtop is "super durable and practical," says Anthea. "Just wash and wipe down." Both the floor and wall tiles are from Bespoke Tile & Stone. **MASTER BEDROOM (opposite)** A custom bedhead from Moss Melbourne adds another plush element to this elegant space with traditional cornicing and a palette of deep grey, navy blue, soft pink.



1. Entry
2. Front living area
3. Bedroom
4. Bedroom
5. Bedroom
6. WC
7. Bathroom
8. Laundry
9. Master bedroom
10. Ensuite
11. Kitchen
12. Study
13. Courtyard
14. Living area
15. Dining area
16. Shed

FEATURE FINISHES

1. 'White Petal on Silver' encaustic concrete **tiles**, $129/sqm, Teranova Ceramics, teranova.com.au. **2.** Vintage Turkish Oushak **rug**, from $4200/200cm x 300cm, Cadrys Classic, (02) 9328 6144. **3.** 'Mate' porcelain **tiles** in Terra Fumo, $173/sqm, Di Lorenzo Tiles, dilorenzo.com.au.

5 GREAT FINDS

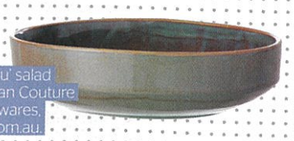
2 'Y-06' **chandelier**, $4150, Douglas And Bec, douglasandbec.com.

3 Citta Design linen **pillowcase**, $69.90/pair, Paper Plane Store, paperplanestore.com.

5 'Reel' **stool**, $650, Mark Tuckey, marktuckey.com.au.

1 B&B Italia 'Tufty-Too' **sofa** by Patricia Urquiola, $14,460, Space Furniture, spacefurniture.com.au.

4 Ferm Living 'Neu' salad **bowl**, $129, Urban Couture Design + Homewares, urbancouture.com.au.



ENSUITE (opposite) It's a slight change of pace in the ensuite, which has a bright airy feel. Encaustic tiles from Jatana Interiors bring bold pattern to the mix. Delicate 'Porcelight' lamps from Cult light up the double vanity while the Kado 'Lure' freestanding tub from Reece is made for relaxation. **GARDEN** This entertaining deck – with its custom-designed floating bench and barbecue area, as well as an old outdoor setting – makes the most of the lush garden designed by Scott Leung of Eckersley Garden Architecture.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: NATALIE JOHNSON. PLANTS (OPPOSITE), GLASSHAUS, GLASSHAUS.COM.AU. CERAMICS, LUKE FURNITURE, LUKE.COM.AU