

Anything *but* ordinary

Inspired by his Italian childhood, LUIGI ROSSELLI'S collaboration with ARENT&PYKE sees the update of a Victorian villa in Sydney into a wholly unique CONTEMPORARY and RESTORATIVE family retreat.

By Chris Pearson Photographed by Prue Ruscoe

THESE PAGES in the living area of this Sydney home, Edra Standard sofa by Francesco Binfare from Space Furniture, upholstered in textured mink chenille; bespoke cushions from Arent&Pyke; vintage burl timber coffee table, Two-tier Contemporary Ceramic Cloud side table in Chrome Green and vintage Chinese silk rug, all from 1stDibs. *Details, last pages.*





THIS PAGE in the kitchen, Carrara marble benchtop and fluted island; splashback in Blue Dreams marble from Euro Marble; custom stained timber joinery designed by Arent&Pyke and Luigi Rosselli Architects; Rubn Lighting Long John pendant light, enquiries to Fred International. **OPPOSITE PAGE** the rear exterior of the home.

At first blush this home in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, with its fretwork, gable and bay window, appears to be a traditional 1880s villa. But the pink render and a brise-soleil running along the roofline hint that this is no prim and proper Victorian. Away from the street, the house lets it hair down, thanks to an inspired extension crafted by architect Luigi Rosselli and interior designer Juliette Arent Squadrito of Arent&Pyke.

While the front reflects its origins, the back boasts a renovation with a dash of Italian brio. Inspired by his Lombardy upbringing, Rosselli added a second brise-soleil to allow generous glazing without compromising privacy and comfort. For him, this feature recalls grain sheds ventilated by *laterizio* (perforated brick) walls peppered across the Italian countryside. Instead of bricks, he recycled tiles from the dwelling's roof. "A brise-soleil creates an amazing space inside," he says. "The light is broken by warm terracotta tiles, full of texture and age." In further echoes of his youth, this home evokes a holiday villa overlooking Lake Maggiore and is named La Casa Rosa for its washed pink render — this, too, has been christened accordingly.

Such quirks delight the owners because they hired Rosselli to eschew the ordinary. "We chose him for his timeless vision and distinctive aesthetic," says one of the owners. "You can often pick a Rosselli house, even though each is different."

She and her husband bought the home in late 2015. "We loved the elegant facade, high ceilings and backyard with established trees," she says. But there the love ended. "The 1990s open-plan addition got very hot in summer. The garden was large, but on four levels.

We wanted to bring light into the back and connect the living areas with the garden."

Rosselli shaved off that extension and replaced it with a light and breezy open-plan zone on the lower level while above, the ensuite boasting the brise-soleil and main bedroom soak up views of soaring eucalypts. Meanwhile, he utilised the existing roof cavity to accommodate a study — its clerestory windows sport the brise-soleil seen from the street. Downstairs, the original section comprises two bedrooms, a family bathroom and rumpus room.

While the addition is startlingly different from the Gothic Revival front, it also pays homage to it. The extension embraces sweeping curves — a Rosselli trademark — in the vaulted living room ceiling, the fireplace wall, an arched kitchen window and the sinuous staircase. On the rear external wall, a curve sweeps into a cantilever. "It expands in the direction of the garden. I wanted that column-free link," he says. Earthy formwork concrete in a Rosselli rosa hue echoes the textured render on the street side, while the arched window suggests the bay at the front.

The interiors were a collaboration, with Rosselli focusing mainly on the spatial aspects and Arent Squadrito on materials and furnishings, but with a toing and froing between both them and the owners. "The client was interested in how the house would make her feel, how it would engage the senses," says Arent Squadrito. "Our brief was modern but timeless, uncluttered but cosy, with drama in the materials and colour," adds the owner.

But that drama never sacrifices intimacy. With its oak panelling and rich hues, the original section is an exercise in colour and texture, but the palette at the rear is more neutral and often >>



THESE PAGES in the kitchen and dining area, Thonet No. 811 Hoffmann **dining chairs** from James Richardson Furniture; Collection Particulière Rough **dining table** from Ondene; Mattiazzi Branca **bar stools** (in kitchen) enquiries to District; Akari 16A and Akari 23A **pendant lights** by Isamu Noguchi for Vitra (above dining table) from Living Edge; linen **curtains** from Simple Studio.



THIS PAGE in the rumpus room, Valley sofa from Jordan; custom cushions from Arent&Pyke; silver travertine coffee table; vase from Becker Minty; sculpture from Planet; rug from 1stDibs; needlepoint from Etsy; Moon Man artwork by Bardayal Lofty Nadjamerrek; Drunk Struggling to Focus Ten artwork by Andy Harwood; Black Forest Animal artwork by Laura Skerlj. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the main bedroom, Michaël Verheyden stool from Ondene; Joy chair from Jordan; Sri Lankan chest; Akari Light Sculpture UF3-Q floor lamp by Isamu Noguchi for Vitra, enquiries to Living Edge; bed cover from In Bed; rug from 1stDibs; curtains produced by Simple Studio with Inge Holst fabric.





« moodier, while texture rules here, too, with a fluted marble kitchen island framed by inky-blue timber joinery, a caramel marble splashback and salmon pink terrazzo underfoot.

“Everything’s matt, soft and muted, creating an earthiness that ties in with the concrete and brise-soleils,” says Arent Squadrito. “It makes the kitchen feel part of the furniture, while glossy grey travertine in the bathrooms creates contrast for added interest.” And crafted detail pervades, right down to the dressing room with its signature Faye Toogood wallpaper on its wardrobe doors.

Furnishings included statement splurges such as a squishy Edra sofa and a hefty Collection Particulière dining table. The owners specified a modular sofa for the living room to give the family space to relax, its rounded asymmetry emulating Rosselli’s curves.

The couple’s collection of bold artworks flows throughout, such as a Sri Lankan wall scone made of, yes, screwdrivers near the front door. “It makes it a richer, more robust story when the clients bring in personal objects that we can weave in,” says Arent Squadrito.

“Vintage rugs were among the first items we sourced with Arent&Pyke,” adds the owner. “The other elements and colours fell into place after that. We went with our gut — whether we absolutely loved a particular rug or Murano pendant light and whether it would make us feel happy and inspired to have it in our home.”

That dialogue between the wow and the cosy throughout is worlds away from the starchy formality of the bungalow’s distant past. “We considered a bigger renovation, but we’re so glad we didn’t,” says the owner. “We use every room every day, with no wasted space.”

“The clients wanted an intimate house, favouring materiality over square metres,” adds Arent Squadrito. “While there’s an openness at the back, there’s also a fabulous soft, inward quality.” **VL**

arentpyke.com luigirosselli.com



THIS PAGE in a kid’s bedroom, **bed linen and cushion** from Hale Mercantile Co.; **Latitude bedhead** from The Family Love Tree; vintage **brass wall lamp** and **timber bedside table**; custom **timber joinery** designed by Arent&Pyke; antique **Persian rug** from 1stDibs; *Crisis of Hegemony III* (2013) **artwork** by Vajira Gunawardena. **OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP** in the main ensuite, custom **beech timber vanity** with Calacatta marble top and **brass-edged mirrors** designed by Arent&Pyke and Luigi Rosselli Architects; Perrin & Rowe **tapware** from The English Tapware Company; **Bikini wall light** from Servomuto. In the walk-in robe, solid beech **wardrobe doors** with insets in Woodland wallpaper by Faye Toogood for Calico; vintage **rug** from 1stDibs. *Details, last pages.*