

AT HOME

Build your dream life

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My best mate
Farmer Dave introduces a furry friend

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Come on over

TV's Dennis Scott on the perfect garden layout for family and friends



Locals only

Homewares from Indigenous Australian artists and makers



The Fixer

Clever techniques to protect and preserve a water-logged garden



INSPIRATION

Taking centre stage

A theatre couple's starring role

Words: Catherine Nikas-Boulos Pictures: Simon Whitbread



Margie McCrae enjoys some downtime in her banquette seating in the dining/kitchen.

Creative folk famously suffer for their craft, but surely that can't be an open-ended arrangement? Tell that to actors Andrew James and Margie McCrae, a couple in their 60s who had dedicated their entire adult life to ensuring the continued success of playhouse productions, and in turn had plainly forsaken their own home comforts for the longest time.

In fact, when architect Daniel Stukel Beasley first viewed their narrow inner-city home, he was surprised by what he saw.

"It looked like they were living in an art share house. It was a very humble and run down semi-detached home," says Daniel.

"They are people who have worked very hard. They were both actors who had dedicated their life to the arts world, and they got to a stage later in their life where they had some money, and basically they deserved to live in a house that wasn't falling down around them. There were holes in the

wall you could put your hands through and the place was leaky and draughty."

Margie had bought the circa 1900s home in Sydney's inner-west in 1988 and while some minor work had been done to the property, including adding bi-fold doors to the rear of the property and a deck that still stands, it needed a whole lot of TLC.

SELL OR STAY?

"One option was to move, but we didn't want to sell the house in the state it was – it just wasn't saleable," says Andrew. "So, if we were going to pay good money to fix it, we might as well stay."

By committing to a renovation that went out and up, the couple could also tackle their other great bugbear in the semi – a distinct lack of natural light. "Daniel came up with the idea of a double height void where the dining table used to be, which is such a great idea in a small house. It actually made our house feel so much bigger," says Andrew.



Maintaining a period streetscape, the facade of 1900s period home remained untouched with architect Daniel Stukel designing a modern extension.



"The bespoke steel staircase was actually our idea ... the air and light floats through it beautifully. It's a feature."

WHITE SPACE

The upstairs addition consists of a new generously-sized bedroom with an ensuite and a balcony that is tucked into the existing roofline. "If we were younger and had kids we would have had to split that space and put another bedroom up there, but we could have one really large space just for us, which is exquisite."

The two other original bedrooms remained on the ground floor. Further, Andrew says pre-renovation, the couple's home consisted of multiple colourful walls, but they agreed the remodelled version would be sleek and classy.

"We wanted white walls. Some walls were even purple – it was so hotchpotch that it was important to us to have white walls this time."

One of Margie's priorities was to connect the indoor/outdoor spaces.

"We have a large Manchurian pear tree in our backyard. So the double height void with the big louvre windows and the clerestory window in the kitchen bring the tree right inside at several levels and looks spectacular, especially in autumn. Much of Daniel's colour palette inside with the dark browns and green of the banquette (in the combined dining/kitchen) reflect the outside colours of nature." Even though the footprint was kept the same on the ground level, there were some interesting design elements that gave the couple extra space and storage. Daniel designed bookshelves to sit within the walls and the laundry is found under the staircase.

"It's designed in such a way to look like a bar or an extension of the kitchen. There is even a coffee machine there; it's a really well-disguised and elegant part of the home, instead of having a bog-standard laundry cupboard," says Daniel.



A void above the kitchen floods the space with natural light.

You can still have the house you want later in life. A new home is not just for the young

A BOLD CHANGE

While the revamped home with metal cladding and a dark interior is a world away from the original dated structure, Daniel says the young at heart couple, who are still working in a full-time capacity in the arts, were pleasantly surprised with the bold look.

“Old tastes change and what I designed is contemporary and angular and black, and not typically their style when we started. What they have now is something slick, which is more appropriate with their stage in life,” he says.

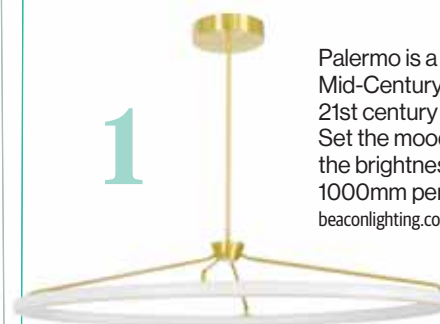
“Not everyone is going to be successful in their 30s, you can still have the house you want later in life – a new home is not just for the young.” Andrew couldn’t agree more.

“I love that we are still in the same house but it has been modernised so brilliantly. I’m so surprised that it’s changed the way we live, it’s a nice place to come home to. I didn’t realise what a significant boost it would make to our lives.”

Ageing gracefully

Sleek replaces arty chic in Andrew and Margie’s home

1



Palermo is a re-imagined Mid-Century classic with 21st century technology. Set the mood by adjusting the brightness. Palermo 1000mm pendant, \$876. beaconlighting.com.au

2

This kitchen mixer, in sexy and sleek black, can be swivelled a full 360 degrees to ensure the water goes just where you need it. Square matte single mixer, \$399



meir.com.au

3

Relax in this olive green velvet armchair which sits beautifully against a modern and natural colour palette of timber, white and black. The Studio chair, \$1099.



atticahouse.com.au

4



Give the laundry some love by adding pink tiles to a room that often lacks flair. Handmade ceramic wall hanging tiles with gold lustre detail, \$100 each.

carladinnage.com.au