GLORY DAYS

Returning to his home town of Newcastle led interior designer Stewart Horton down a colourful renovation path.

STORY & STYLING *Natalie Walton* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Maree Homer*

TERRACE Owner Stewart Horton with dachshund Mortimer (a housewarming present to partner Brian) and Russian blue feline Lucinda. Carrara marble paving defines the north-facing entertaining area and ties in with terrazzo elements inside. "The steps are a nice place to sit and enjoy a cup of coffee in the winter sun," says Stewart. Emu 'Re-Trouve' chairs (left), Ke-zu. Vintage outdoor table and dining chairs. ▶

FRONT STEPS "We wanted to restore the exterior to its former glory," says Stewart. That included ripping out aluminium windows to reinstate timber frames and restoring the vintage 'Breona' sign. Emu 'Re-Trouve' planters, Ke-zu. **ENTRY** Instead of facing a linen press, visitors now encounter a handsome French console. The enlarged opening to the living/dining space creates an impression of grandeur. Mirror, Uttermost. Black vase, Inartisan. Vintage Wedgwood bowl. Sconces, ECC Lighting+Furniture. **KITCHEN/DINING** This reconfigured space sits under a new coffered ceiling. Stools, Cult. Custom table with marble terrazzo top. Vintage dining chairs. Pendant light, Koda Lighting. Wall plates, Becker Minty. Curtains in Warwick Fabrics 'Chios' fabric. Blackbutt flooring.

Mirrors are used liberally to bounce light around the home.

When Stewart Horton was working as an interior designer in Sydney and transforming spaces for clients, his own home was a small apartment. Such was life for 16 years, including the seven Stewart worked for renowned designer Greg Natale before starting Horton & Co Design.

Eventually, Stewart and his partner, Brian Jones, decided to move back to their home town of Newcastle, dreaming of abundant space and proximity to nature. They found the ideal property in 2013, in an older suburb 20 minutes from the city centre and close to a bush reserve. The Deco-style home, built in 1949, allowed Stewart to use the full range of his experience.

"We immediately fell in love with the red brick and mottled terracotta roof of this 1940s house, as well as the massive yard with its northerly aspect," Stewart says. "But I have to admit, this place was more a labour of love than a smart financial decision."

While the structure had plenty of charm, the interiors required plenty of work. The house only had one previous owner, who built and modified it repeatedly over the decades. "Not a lot of the original building was left," says Stewart. The kitchen was at the front of the home and completely removed from the living and dining rooms. There was no connection to the back garden, and two of the three bedrooms were very small. ▸

KITCHEN Stewart demolished a wall to create a generous kitchen with concealed pantry. "It's opened up the house so much," he says. Antiqued mirror panels line the splashback. Quantum Quartz benchtop in Venatino Statuario. Tap, Astra Walker. Handles, Index+Co. **LIVING** *bottom left, main image* The mantelpiece is one of the surviving original features in this '40s home. Custom sofa by Colby Furniture. 'Quadro' coffee table, James Said. Throw, H&M. Custom rug, Tappeti Fine Handcrafted Rugs+Carpets. Artworks (clockwise from top left) by Paul Klee, Raoul Dufy, Paul Klee, Ken Done, Claire Martin and Stewart Horton.

Identical frames turn diverse works of art into a cohesive collection.

Shortly after they moved in, the couple pulled up carpets and painted throughout. Last year, they moved out and gutted most of the house. "Doing renovations for a living helped, as I knew exactly what to expect, but there are always lessons to learn," says Stewart. "The most important thing is committing to everything at once, rather than staggering the work and prolonging the process."

For this project, he wanted to pay homage to the building's past, so surviving architectural elements became his inspiration. For example, the pink-and-grey scheme of the original bathroom was the starting point for the new one. Terrazzo thresholds inspired the choice of material for the home's wet-area flooring and a custom tabletop; wavy markings on the living room's mantelpiece influenced the curved kitchen island, fluted joinery and coffered ceiling.

The key was to give the original source of inspiration a contemporary spin. "It's really important to let a house have its own language, and not try to impose a style that is in opposition to the original style," explains Stewart.

Now, rather than facing a linen cupboard in the entry, visitors note a beautiful antique iron console, then move through an enlarged opening to the living/dining area with adjoining kitchen – a bright and open space looking out over the entertaining terrace and 100m² garden. On the other side of the entrance, three bedrooms, two bathrooms and an office/library lie off a long hall.

While there are still some improvements to be tackled, Stewart says he relishes the challenges ahead. After all, now he has plenty of time and space to work with. ▸

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BATHROOM *top left and bottom right* Stewart was inspired by the original bathroom's pink-and-grey scheme. 'Projections' double sink, Rogerseller. Tapware, Astra Walker. Wall tiles, Classic Ceramics. Floor tiles, Fibonacci Stone. Stool and wall light, Space. Towel, Atolyia. **MAIN BEDROOM** Dark, soothing textiles balance this vibrant space. Custom bedhead in Warwick 'Brixton' fabric. Wall light, Cult. 'Escape Velour' carpet in Kiki, Supertuft. Artworks by Mia Turner. **OFFICE** *below left and opposite* The former bedroom has been opened up with sliding doors. Custom desk. Chair in fabric from South Pacific Fabrics. Curtains in 'Silky II' fabric, Zepel Fabrics. Walls in Dulux Petite Pink. Art by Tom Yousif. **H&G**

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Repeat variations of one colour (in this case, pink) for visual continuity.