CASE STUDY 2 / A RENO REVAMPED

A renovated bungalow is treated to a fabulous “cosmetic” overhaul

WATCH VERY CLOSELY – here’s how to conjure up a magical makeover and the illusion of more space without moving a wall! Interior designers Natalie Manning and Alex Bain, Principals of Property Lipstick (Propertylipstick.com), pulled the bunny out of the hat in this 1920s Californian bungalow in Sydney’s Inner West. When owners Natalie and Julian Oliver bought the three-bedroom house in 2012, it had been renovated just a year before.

THEN TO NOW The renovation ticked some all-important boxes – a new addition housed a dining area and kitchen bathed in natural light, while the breezy floorplan worked a treat. “We loved the flow,” Natalie Oliver says. “Everything is so open and, as you walk into the generous entranceway, you feel like you are really walking into a home.” But in neutral colours and with lashings of timber, it was a tad bland. And the couple’s furniture, which had served them so nicely till then, just didn’t cut it here. So a revamp was in order. ->

MOODBOARD FROM LEFT Large A-Frame blackboard with timber finish, $120, ThatOnlineShop. Valerie wool rug (1.5m x 2.3m) in Blue, $495, Matt Blatt. Industry ceiling pendant in Sunshine Yellow, $149, Freedom. Sofa cover from Ektoorp 3-seat sofa, Velurina Dark Blue (background), $399, IKEA.
Hello yellow
Pops of sunshine add energy – even the fruit bowl is in on the act! Muuto pendant from Project 82. American oak-like dining table from Jardan. Thonet “No.18” dining chairs in Fluffy Duckling. Blackboard from Newbeachroad.com
who lives here?

Natalie and Julian Oliver and their two daughters,
Charlotte, 6, and Zoe, 4

Budget About $30,000, including about $55,000 for the furniture and $4600 for the joinery.

Do more “We would like to inject more charcoal into the kitchen to bring it in line with the rest of the room, but, as this area had just been done, the owners didn’t want to spend money on that,” Natalie Manning says.

Wow without the ouch! “The oversized mirror in the hall. The pendant light above the dining table was less than $300.”

Space-saving tips The oversized chalkboard, from Property Lipstick’s online store, Newbeathread.com, utilises a lazy corner.
Art & soul

The artwork, Sunlight by Bonnie Graeme, had been with the Clivers from their first apartment and looks totally at home here. "I love its green tones; it's the first thing we ever bought as a couple and it's still one of our favourite things," says owner Natalie. The backdrop of Dulux "Antique White USA" used throughout ensures freshness.

"IT FEELS LIKE A HAPPY HOME, VIBRANT AND ALIVE BUT NOT CHAOTIC"
OPENING GAMBIT The brief to the Property Lipstick team was to zap up the rooms and make them appear a little bigger. The starting point? A dramatic artwork owned by homeowner Natalie. “The rest of the living room had to work with the artwork above the sofa [shown at left], with colours and patterns such as the geometric cushions coordinating with it,” says Natalie Manning, who, along with Alex, waved the decorating wand. They began with removing all the picture rails and replacing an overpowering central pendant in the living room with downlights. “This increased the feeling of space and allowed us to take bookshelves up to the ceiling,” Natalie Manning says.

COLOUR CONFIDENCE Then they played with the palette. “The owner loves primary colours, but we didn’t want it to look too explosive,” she says. Brilliant red and yellow are tempered with charcoal rugs and white walls. “The house had to be young and bright, but also soothing and calm, so you can relax there.” Thonet chairs, a chirpy tweet in cutely named Fluffy Duckling, complement a yellow rubber pendant that’s hard to miss. “You can see the light from all angles,” says Natalie Manning. “The pendant also gives the dining room depth, so it doesn’t feel like a passage.” The duo used other tricks to make the spaces look larger, such as a huge mirror in the hallway; in the living room, oversized rugs are also in on the act.

PATTERN PLAY Pattern demarcates the two zones: there’s a graphic barcode kelim in the dining area and a more sinuous design, with a nod to Marrakesh, in the living area. The dining table was a revelation for owner Natalie: “After some mourning over my old dining table, the girls convinced me we needed a round table. That was the best decision we made. Round tables are perfect for family dinners, everyone faces each other and it feels so cozy and intimate.”
MAKING IT ALL WORK  Multifunctional furniture is another space saver – take the ottoman, which is not just seating, but also contains valuable storage beneath. The custom-made sofa (shown opposite), just 90cm deep, is an ultra-wide 2.65m, to accommodate up to five people. Low-slung and streamlined, it seems larger than it is. Meanwhile, just the one armchair (“we restricted ourselves to just one, so it didn’t block off the room”) in a slim profile adds to the feeling of spaciousness.

Designer Natalie, too, was pushing her own boundaries in this space adventure. “I usually gravitate towards neutrals and play up texture, but I really like the colour here. It feels like a happy home, vibrant and alive, but not too chaotic.”

Dynamic duo
Deftly applied, a touch of Lipstick comes to the rescue. Natalie, left, and Alex discuss their handwork.

Soothing scene (above)
Sign from Doug Up On Bouncer. Plant from Garden Life. Footstool from Ikea.

Reddy, set, go!
The carefully controlled palette creates unity among collections in floor-to-ceiling shelves in the living room.

b&a
What an entrance!
This generous entry endeared the owner to the house from the get-go. Stop sign from Doug Up On Bourke. Throw from The General Trading Company. Ladders from La Maison. Tonal sconces by Alex Bain above Jardan “Andres” chair. For stockots, see page 207.