



## TIME PIECE

*A happy marriage of history and modernity has transformed a grand but neglected terrace into the perfect contemporary family home*

**I**t started out as a grand terrace built by property developer George Brown in the late 1880s in the inner eastern suburbs of Sydney. In 1959, it was converted into a nine-flat boarding house. In the 1980s, more wings were added, and it moved further and further away from its original design. That was until the property was rescued by a couple who could see its potential and wanted it as their long-term family home. And then began a transformation that took more six years to complete.

"We were living in Pyrmont in an apartment with our two-year-old at the time and we wanted to move to a house," Jamie, one half of the couple, tells *Mansion*. "We had done a few renovations

before, but nothing to the scale of what we did here. We wanted this to be the house we would have all our kids in.

"I am an American and my husband's family is from Brisbane, so we also wanted to be able to have friends and family visit and not be constrained by space. This property popped up on our radar and we thought, this is really interesting."

The couple bought the house in 2010, moved in and lived on the top floor while renting out the remaining flats. In 2012, they engaged Alex Smith of CSA Architects and construction began in 2014 under the watchful eye of builder Don Hanna.

The bulk of the work was completed a year later. But as the pair were approaching the 18<sup>th</sup> version of their master suite and were still not

happy with the final layout, Jamie realised she needed help to transform the newly renovated space into her perfect family home.

That's when Sydney interior designers Arent & Pyke came into the picture.

"I had an idea of what I wanted the interiors to look like, but I was trying to find a way to translate that to our architect when it became clear I needed to bring somebody else in to help me," Jamie explains. "When I saw Arent & Pyke and their projects, I thought: this is exactly what I'm looking for. And from the first meeting we really were on the same page with the overall feel of the house – which is really marrying the fact that it is a grand terrace with modern touches."

Sarah-Jane Pyke and Juliette Arent helped the

family solve the problems with the floorplan to ensure the spaces worked together across the different levels of the house.

"We were so involved in the day-to-day process and at that point we were keen to get the whole thing started so we could move in, but they came along and said, no, no – step back, don't do it this way, think about it in this way, think about how you are going to live in the space," Jamie says.

"They solved problems we didn't even know we had, and then they just created this beautiful, interesting interior without being fussy.

"They take very natural, simple, beautiful things and pair them really well."

The property went from nine flats to a ground floor with three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a



playroom (for the family's two children and their nanny), and a mid-level cellar area (excavated into the steep hill the house sits on) that includes a family room, wine cellar and pool table. On the main level are the master suite, and the kitchen, dining and living rooms, study and bathroom. The attic level has another bedroom with ensuite.

There is space for three cars, as well as a rooftop veggie garden and an outdoor barbeque area. The house was finished late last year.

The family is thrilled with the final result ("I wouldn't change a thing when it comes to the flow and the finishes"), especially the striking kitchen and living area, with its high ceilings, glass doors and exposed beams. "I would happily live in our kitchen and never leave that room," Jamie says. "It's just so incredible. You just get so much air flowing through from the skylights to the doors that open up into the garden. You really feel the seasons – it is such a beautiful space."

Pyke told *Mansion* that the key to the interiors was achieving a slightly nostalgic look that took in the grand history of the terrace without being too clichéd or making it feel like a time capsule.

"We didn't want a theme park," she says, "and what we have is a really interesting and intriguing building. It's a very romantic house, too." M

*Previous page: The contemporary kitchen and living areas open up the space with high ceilings, glass doors and exposed beams. Top and far left: The transformed terrace has reclaimed its grand history without becoming a museum. Left: Part of the master suite (top) and the light-filled kitchen area (bottom). Right: Exposed original brickwork*



## STYLE FILE



**1. LIGHT**  
Heracleum II LED lamp with coated conductive layers by Bertjan Pot, inspired by the heracleum plant. From Space Furniture.

**2. CHAIR**  
Stanley armchair with black steel frame and tan Italian aniline leather cushions. From Urban Couture.

**3. RUG**  
One of a kind Beni Oarain pure wool pile rug made in Morocco. From Loom.

**4. LAMP**  
Daddy Longleg floor lamp by Henrik Pedersen for Fransden Lighting. Metal legs and fabric shade with acrylic top, available in black and white. From Poliform.

**5. VASE**  
Caillou hand-blown glass vases from Belgium, designed by Kate Hume and available in colour sets. From Hub.

**6. OUTDOOR CHAIR**  
Palisade chair by Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec made from powder-coated galvanised steel tubes – round for the frame and rectangular for the seat slats. From Cult.

TOM FERGUSON



## Q&A

SARAH-JANE PYKE AND JULIETTE ARENT  
INTERIOR DESIGNERS AND FOUNDERS OF ARENT & PYKE

### What was your brief for this house?

The interesting thing about this house is that it was built in the 1880s as a home and then converted into a boarding house. So when our client bought it, it was still broken up into nine flats. They had spent a fair amount of time renovating it, with all the planning and heritage stages, so when we came on board part of the brief was just to get excited again, to start loving the house again. They needed to stop thinking about where the rooms were going to be and start thinking about how the house was going to feel.

### How did you propose to make the house feel more like a home?

Our concept was all about materiality and how to marry the old parts of the house with the new parts. We asked them how they wanted to live in the house and what they wanted to feel. We started layering the interiors from that perspective. We did do some planning changes [with the architects], we did make this beautiful new master suite that we could see at the start of the house, and we redefined some children's areas to work a bit better.

### What was your inspiration?

The main one was the original architecture and trying to bring that back, getting rid of all the additions over the years. It is a really gracious home, a really beautiful home, but it didn't have that look or feeling when the clients bought it.

### How do you bring back the past without making it look like a museum?

We didn't want it looking like a theme park. It was all about the detailing, like the way we bought in brass elements or really beautiful stone. We also took up opportunities as they arose on site. At one point they pulled back this wall and we saw all the original brickwork exposed, and then it was about how much do we paint, how much do we leave exposed, what is the character of this space going to be? That big back room that is the kitchen, dining and sitting – we were always going to have more exposed trusses, and at one point it was going to be painted white with boarded ceilings. But as more of the fabric of the building came out, we decided to maintain the timber and exposed black joints. It was all done in collaboration with the architect and about the balance of the elements.