



GUIDING LIGHT

An optimistic eye and a dash of design expertise turns a neglected rental property into a light-drenched family home

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SITTING ROOM (opposite) Owner and interior designer Amanda Browne's chocolate Burmese cat, Oliver, rests on a custom-made Grant Featherston-style armchair under a giant photograph of the Eiffel Tower, from Ikea's Premiär range of prints.

LIVING AREA (this page) Adding real warmth to the room is a fireplace from Agnews (visit www.agnews.com.au) installed in the floating line of cupboards. "I wanted this end of the room to have a focal point and there's nothing like a fireplace to provide that," says Amanda. She had the coffee table made from recycled doors. "The table is so huge and strong, it is not uncommon to find people sitting on it as well as around it!" The light boxes on the wall were made by daughter Stephanie as a Year 12 art project. >

It was a certain irresistible something that drew Amanda Browne back to the dated apricot house with the leaking roof in Melbourne's bayside suburbs. A neglected rental property, it had been on the market for months, considered by many, but largely unwanted by all who saw it. That is, until interior designer Amanda's well-trained eye saw through its lacklustre facade to the treasure trove beneath.

Sensing the possibilities, Amanda returned to the three-bedroom house again and again, intrigued by what her imagination conjured up every time she stepped inside the 12-year-old, two-storey building. "It was the light," explains Amanda. "The upper storey had windows all the way around and no matter what time of day, the sun just poured in. It also had a great view of Port Phillip Bay, as it's only one block back from the beach. I had a great feeling about the place and knew it would be mine."

Amanda finally signed on the dotted line and moved in with her daughters, Stephanie and Lucinda, a few weeks later. No stranger to the renovation process, Amanda booked a builder to arrive the same day; the first job was to fix the upper deck, which was causing a leak in the two bedrooms below. Then, the staircase in the entrance was realigned and two doorways moved to give the space a better flow.

Stained bedroom carpets were replaced with plush pile, and timber floors were stripped and limewashed in a calming grey.

Upstairs, the old kitchen made way for Amanda's office, concealed by a new wall. At the other end of the living space, a partition wall was removed to open up the area so the new high-gloss black kitchen could take pride of place. A coat of Dulux's White on White paint, indoors and out, banished the home's dated tones, giving it a contemporary look.

Just a few months later, the renovation was complete and the decorating began. Amanda pulled together a collection of favourite pieces, reupholstered or reworked harmoniously with a smattering of new items. "A mistake many people make is getting rid of everything and starting over. You can lose the soul of your home by throwing away all the bits and pieces you have collected," she says. "By re-covering, repainting and even changing a lampshade, you can reinvent things and make them work."

This little house, once unwanted, has been transformed into a social butterfly, hosting Lucinda's 18th birthday, Christmas parties, barbecues on the deck and impromptu late-night gatherings in the generous living area. "People always seem to find their way here," says Amanda. "Maybe it has something to do with all this light, showing them the way!"





LIVING AREA A wall from the bottom of the stairwell to the ceiling hides the new office – a smart use of the dead space where the kitchen used to be. The wall provides a perfect spot for one of Amanda's favourite pieces of art, *Falls Number 1* by Robyn Burgess, which overlooks a living area filled with a selection of mismatched junk-shop treasures, including a French-style sofa, covered in 'Mahe' linen from Mokum, and a chair re-covered in striking lattice-effect fabric (see page 85 for details). A Moroccan ottoman from Husk, coral-patterned cushions from Unique Fabrics and a bold spherical pendant from Beacon Lighting add a sophisticated tone. >



MASTER BEDROOM {top left} The darkest room in the house, Amanda's bedroom receives much-needed light thanks to the addition of the metallic 'Silver Screen' wallpaper by Barbara Barry (see page 85 for details) and a mirrored bedside table from Bloomingdales in Sydney. The muted fabrics in the room bestow a calm mood, with a plush velvet bedhead, paisley Indian silk throw and a range of pale velvet cushions. A charcoal nude print by artist Les Gibbs adds a gentle human element to the walls.

SITTING ROOM {top right} It's a clash of the metropolises in this downstairs living space. Oversized prints of New York and Paris from Ikea stamp their style on the room, while the modular couch (re-covered in a taupe fabric by Warwick; www.warwick.com.au), Grant Featherston-style chair and a faux-zebra cowhide rug add comfort. A shiny, conical side table from Bisque Interiors and a chrome floor lamp from Freedom complete the room's cosmopolitan look.

LIVING AREA {left} Against the dramatic backdrop of the black cupboards and grey mirrored glass, a cosy corner has been created with chairs and sofas grouped around a recycled timber coffee table. The black theme continues in the hound's-tooth cushions and dark lampshades. Another Grant Featherston-style chair adds a punch of dusky red, with lighter contrast provided by the white B&B Italia sofa.