

RENOVATIONS

WORKING TO A MASTER PLAN

Undertaking a renovation in stages works well, and keeps costs under control — as long as you follow a master plan. This house is a great example



Before and after: The back of this old house needed more attention than the front. This is the aspect that gets the sun and faces the garden, so it made sense to concentrate on this area first. An iron and fibro lean-to was pulled down and a concrete slab laid. The second storey exterior is in place, but the proposed loft bedroom in the space it creates will be completed at a later date.



Left: Beams and ceiling of the back extensions are now in place for the proposed loft bedroom. This will be completed during the second or even third stage of the renovation, according to family needs. The important point is that nothing in place now will need to be demolished or altered to allow for newer work. **Above:** The previous view from exactly the same place!

garage and landscaping added.

This was then divided into five stages, concentrating on the back area to begin with. "The idea is that you design the stages so you are not demolishing one stage to facilitate the next," Micheal explains.

"For example, Meg is still very young and won't be needing a separate loft bedroom for many years. So rather than build the loft itself, we simply built the ceiling forming the space for the loft and put in the primary beams – which have left been exposed – until the joists and flooring boards go in at a later stage.

"In the meantime there is a really dramatic six-metre ceiling height and the tall window that gives marvellous north light high up on the wall is actually the double doors of the eventual loft."

Similarly the pergola and terrace are not built yet but the structure is already in place to allow for that to happen in due course.

One point worth noting for would-be renovators: a concrete slab is usual for extension work, but here the slab went one step further and became the flooring itself.

Micheal explains: "We mixed terracotta oxide into the actual structural concrete slab. We poured it in one go. Then with a grinder we took

Architect Micheal Fountain, whose design transformed an undistinguished house in Federation style on Sydney's lower North Shore, begins by explaining why he suggested an instalment plan renovation to its owners:

"It's an older house and needed a massive renovation. But a complete renovation often takes a large mortgage and the house owners can become slaves to their mortgage. If you don't have quality of life you don't enjoy your newly renovated home.

"Whereas if you go for quality rather than quantity you can spend enough to

achieve immediate objectives and be comfortable. So we often do what we call 'lifestyling' the building."

In the case of this house, owners Peter and Sharon Trotter are a busy business couple with a two-year-old daughter, Meg. Peter and Sharon sat down with Micheal and his design team and discussed the no-holds-barred ideal plan. It was extensive – demolish the back of house, put in a new kitchen, new bathroom and laundry, new ensuite and walk-in wardrobe off the master bedroom, a second storey loft and a terrace with pergola at the back. The existing street facade was to be painted, with double

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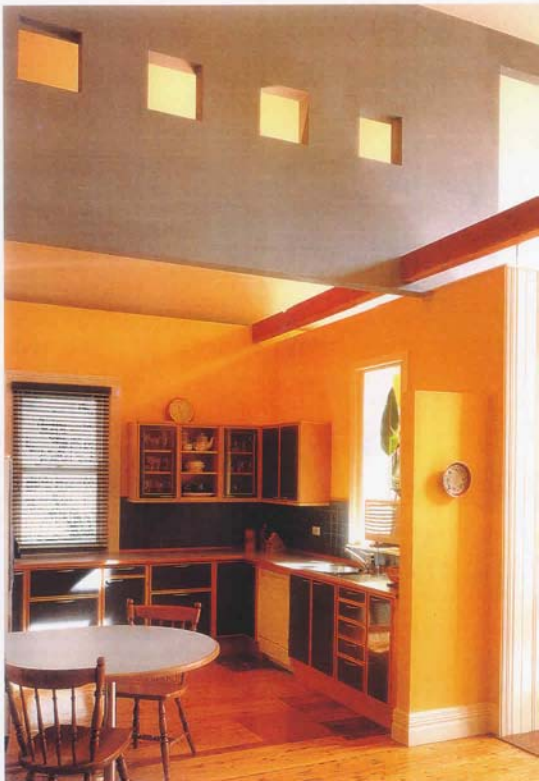
off the top surface to reveal flecks of river stone and blue metal to give the look of terrazzo." Over this, Peter applied three or four coats of slate sealer. The result is handsome, hard-wearing and, as a bonus, the dark toned surface drinks up the sun in winter, when the owners can walk around that part of the house in bare feet.

The front part of the house was given, in this first stage, a facelift via a new terracotta roof (in a retrospective profile) by Monier and new paint scheme that combines blue and light green-grey along with charcoal gutters to go with red brick walls. At the back, an extension was clad in Hardie's Old Style Weatherboard 205, which has the same profile as old-fashioned shiplap timber and which was painted with a Porter's lime wash. (The new gable is high and would have been expensive and very heavy if built in matching brick - this compromise is lightweight, stylish and easily maintained.)

If you are buying an old place, then analyse its condition carefully. In this case, the house had been rented for years and although it looked unkempt and dingy, proved on closer examination to have no cracks in the plaster, no subsidence or other major damage. It was dark and, to put it mildly, stank, but as Micheal Fountain recalls, "once you took the mould off

Below: New kitchen by HTH is simple and workmanlike. Gunmetal grey tiles, striking against 'Roman Ochre' lime wash by Porter's, are combined with toning blue Laminex with timber edging. Circular table was custom made.

Below left: Second storey extension was clad in Hardie's Old Style Weatherboard.



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Top and above: A view of the back extension from the existing house. Note terrazzo-like flooring made of terracotta-tinted concrete which was heavily ground back, then given four coats of slate sealer. Open plan living at rear of this Federation house allows light and sun to flood in.

Right: Original floorboards were sanded and sealed; original timber skirting boards, back to back, edge a remnant of the original brick wall.

the walls there was plaster in beautiful condition" and the place was sound.

Micheal Fountain Architects worked from the front bedrooms towards the back in the first-stage concept. The bedrooms were left in original condition and were simply repainted. The hallway, treated as an artery between old and new, was painted Porter's 'Roman Ochre' with dramatic white highlights.

The kitchen was installed by HTH. Here is a combination of pale grey tiles against 'Roman Ochre', with pale blue Laminex benchtops over cupboard fronts of Laminex in gunmetal grey in a gloss with a matt pattern superimposed and a timber edging. The Trotters had the table custom made. "Expensive," says Peter, "but worth it to get exactly the dimensions and look we wanted."

Which sums up much of this renovation – though not the "expensive" part. Rather than lash out and have everything they wanted done at once –

tempting, but in the end constricting because of the sheer money outlay – the Trotters have a home that works and lives well, provides the lifestyle they want at the moment, and has the promise to be much, much more.

For more details, turn to page 145.



