

# RESTORED FAITH

By Annemarie Kiely Photographed by Derek Swalwell



A Federation-era home in Melbourne receives a light-filled, nourishingly holistic refresh with romantic Deco-inspired appeal.

**THIS PAGE** in the entrance of this Melbourne home with a view into the sitting room, custom Stamp console table from Grazia&co; Lovelock coat stand from Barbera; Seated Nude rug by Faye Toogood for CC-tapis from Loom; Line 01 pendant light from Douglas and Bec; artwork by Richard Bogusz. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the formal dining room with a view through to the sitting room, Trapeze 10 pendant light by Apparatus from Criteria. In the sitting room, Epic table by GamFratesi for Gubi, enquiries to Cult. *Details, last pages.*



So much of the spiel in interiors magazines centres on designers, and rightly so. They are the professionals who manifest society's wider cultural meanings in material forms whilst articulating our private aspirations and needs. They make beautiful sense of necessary stuff. But sometimes there are revelatory insights afforded by the clients; the ones with a willingness to deep-dive into aestheticism and self, that warrant equal contribution.

This sprawling Federation house in Melbourne's south-east, altered and added to by Kennedy Nolan, served up one such interesting savant: a former clinical psychologist, now a corporate and philanthropic chair who, for the sake of anonymity and the romantic tint of her vision, we shall refer to as Rosie. She is in her sixties, still vital in business, sits between the dependencies of ageing parents and active grandchildren and, is at a life stage when deceleration and downsizing are the norm. But in defiance of quiet retirement, she signed the contract on major real-estate and jumped right into its repair.

Not enough drama in the day, hey? The sarcasm sparks a laugh from the self-described workhorse who starts the tour of her revised heritage home in an oak-lined study siloing all business dealings away from the private back of house. Enveloped by Charlotte Perriand's no-frills furnishings and academic titles that tell of her learning, she imparts the narrative of 'the handball' — the passing of said property from her daughter who, first buying the house then settling on a bigger site in the same street, set about 'massaging' her mother into an "easy" transfer of titles.

"Mum, when will you ever get an opportunity to live just down the street near the grandkids?" says Rosie in mimic of her daughter's hard sell. "When you are old, it will be so great."

Project architect Patrick Kennedy, who is in attendance to advise on continuing works, chuckles at the recall and revises 'massaging' into full-blown manipulation. "She was forced to buy it," he says in declaration that he too is a handball — passing as designer from daughter to mother.

The joint laughter lets you know all scheming was mutually agreeable as Rosie enters what she describes as her "fantasy room" — a formal living space to the left of an entrance hall that Kennedy cured of its dark colonial introspection with a peachy warmth and a hand-knotted and hand-knitted rug by Faye Toogood. It fleshes out Rosie's brand of 'beauty' — the sensual driver of a brief that Kennedy qualifies as soft, light and lining with a little wallpaper.

Those qualities congeal extravagantly in the 'fantasy room', where panels of Phillip Jeffries' silk wallpaper drop streamers of feathery willow branch down to a watery-green idyll of enveloping Womb chair by Eero Saarinen, Chester Moon sofa by Paola Navone, and a ripple-effect Noor rug from Loom. The detail seemingly conjures the Samurai folktale *Green Willow* and conspires to elicit calm and a comment from Rosie about the importance of headroom — "in all of its understandings" — and the need for design to nourish holistically.

"A home is where you come to and go from. When you leave it and go into the world, you want to go with a certain amount of stability and knowledge of who you are and where you come from," she says. "It represents different things at different times in your life. When you are young, you spend so much time out there, creating an identity, that it doesn't really matter but when it comes to my stage

of life, home is where you have more time to express yourself. I never thought I had much to say but this is a cerebral house in many ways, and it makes me want to sit down and start writing."

While self-knowledge and stability may not be the most talked-up attributes of design, Rosie makes profound observation about positive place-making, which — to co-opt poet and author Maya Angelou's definition of success — is about liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it. Good designers give definition to those likes and let the inner landscape of dreams, mysteries and memories materialise in the details, as per Rosie's dining room — a space that improvises the bygone drama of New York City's Waldorf Astoria hotel.

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"I love its atmosphere and I love Deco," she says, lifting eyes to the glowing ceramic bowls and brass industrialism of a Trapeze pendant light by Gotham City's own Apparatus. "I wanted some of that here, but was a bit confused between Deco and Nouveau — it did my head in, so I sat down one night and did an online course."

Proving her pass of its final test, Rosie identifies the early 20th-century stained-glass features and ornate fretwork in the room as Nouveau and nods to the sinewy shape of the Nigel Coates-designed Thonet chairs flanking the room's fireplace as speaking sparingly of the lyricism of Nouveau. She concedes that the gilt-edged art from her former home may conflict with the Deco vibe but deems it important testament to where she has come from and an essential add of pretty and warmth to all of the purity at play.

"A good interior should take any art," reassures Kennedy who, as a like-minded contra-poster, framed the room's Gothic-arched stained-glass feature within a round archway from the vantage of the new addition.


Reached by two circuitous routes that collude to keep mystery and narrative alive, the two-level rear of the property rewards with the sun-filled spectacle of more private living and dining space styled with a nostalgic longing for the travertine-lined glamour of Rosie's parental 1980s home. She talks about comfort pertaining to both mental and physical states, claiming it to be as much a function of past memory as it is of plush seating, and points to the music shrine — a custom-made green record cabinet, with an inner reveal of persimmon red that flags record-playing as a near-religious act.

It anchors an otherwise floating lightness of furnishings that look to an aromatic cedar-shingled wall on one side and a "fantasy wonderland wilderness" on the other. This bush idyll, designed for the delight of grandchildren by Amanda Oliver, courses with a miniature river and flanks with bird and bee-luring natives that repeat in the window-box outside Rosie's upper-level main suite. Its sanctum is found branching off a dark corridor that tunnels with more than a hint of Freudian intent to a bathroom swathed in light, Deco detail and views over rooftops.

Kennedy Nolan's tight management of denial and release, contraction and expansion, light and dark in a labyrinthine plan made analogous to life, is for Rosie both a salve and source of inspiration. "I feel expansive in this home, utterly creative and soothed," she says. "Home is my beauty and my balm." **VL**  
[kennedynolan.com.au](http://kennedynolan.com.au)

**THIS PAGE** in the formal dining room with a view through to the 'fantasy room', the sitting room, custom oak **dining table** by Mark Alexander Design Artistry; Saarinen Executive **chairs** by Eero Saarinen for Knoll, enquiries to Dedece. In the sitting room, Chester Moon **sofa** by Paola Navone for Baxter from Space Furniture; Phillip Jeffries Serenity **wallpaper** in Sepia on Silver Star Dust Silk from The Textile Company; Noor **rug** from Loom.





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**THESE PAGES** in the living, kitchen and dining area, seen from the formal dining room, Gogan sofas by Patricia Urquiola for Moroso, enquiries to Mobilia; Ivy coffee table from Grazia&co; Lebone floor lamp by Inès Bressand for Mabeo from Alm; rug from Jenny Jones.



**THIS PAGE** in the guest ensuite, custom vanity and splashback in Breccia Giallo **marble** from Artedomus; **basin** from Nood Co.; Compact 02 **wall light** from Douglas and Bec; walls in Contour timber **lining boards** from Porta. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the front study, custom fireplace in Norwegian rose **marble** from Artedomus; 511 Ventaglio **table** and 528 Indochine swivel **armchair** by Charlotte Perriand for Cassina, enquiries to Mobilia; 4 Bowl **pendant light** with Arch from Anna Charlesworth.

**THESE PAGES** in another view of the living area, custom **record cabinet** designed by Kennedy Nolan and produced by FineForm Joinery; Uchiwa **armchair** by Doshi Levien from Hay; Apparatus Trapeze **wall sconces** (above record cabinet) from Criteria; mask **artwork** found in Venice.





**THIS PAGE** in the main bedroom, Ligne Roset Desdemone **bed** from Ligne Roset, enquiries to Domo, upholstered in Kvadrat Harald 3 **fabric**; Contour bedside **table** from Zuster; Mos **bench** by GamFratesi for Gebrüder Thonet Vienna, enquiries to Space Furniture; Don Giovanni **lamp** by India Mahdavi from Alm. **OPPOSITE PAGE** in the walk-in robe, ottoman from Grazia&co, upholstered in Elliott Clarke Textiles Oxford **fabric**; benchtop in Norwegian Rose **marble** from Artedomus; Axon **lamp** from Apparatus (on benchtop); walls in Contour timber **lining boards** from Porta (above bench); cupboard fronts in Dulux Figurine **paint**; custom Astoria **carpet** by Tsar Carpets. *Details, last pages.*

