



After enjoying ever-changing city sights and restful river views for over ten years, the owners of this Brisbane apartment finally conceded that the somewhat tired and cluttered interior of their home didn't quite measure up to the fantastic outlook. Finding an equally spacious unit in such a prime position proved impossible, so they decided on "a renovation to the extreme", choosing interior designer John Croft of John Croft Design, who was referred to them by a friend, to handle the comprehensive two-year project. Senior interior designer Kylie Mann assisted John on this assignment.

A simple aesthetic makeover was never going to suffice so in no time at all walls were being knocked out, terracotta tiles and timber decking were making way for sleek stone tiles, and a new, open-plan design



was taking shape. Gone was the 'rabbit warren' feel of the original apartment and in its place a spacious, stylish home – perfect for two yet big enough to accommodate frequent entertaining and visits from their grown-up son and daughter, who are based in London.

John describes the overall brief as relatively straightforward – create a neutral canvas, using one shade of cream, and follow it through in the floors, walls, cabinetry and main structural elements. Then, enrich and invigorate this base with colour, texture and a varied collection of artworks. He recalls the process of finding the "perfect shade of cream" as even more challenging than working with his vivid signature palette. "I've had less trouble with lime green!" he laughs. But the result is just perfect for the owners, who



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describe it as "better than they could've even imagined". The clean, cool backdrop allows colours to really pop, and an expertly handled palette including avocado, ruby, mandarin and sky-blue, together with elegant modern furnishings, has resulted in a fresh, lively and inexplicably 'happy' look.

Three terraced spaces now accommodate the main living areas: the elevated formal living room which opens onto a balcony on one side and a plunge pool overlooking the river on the other; the formal dining area, sleek practical kitchen and glossy, fully equipped bar; and

the sunken lounge, which opens onto a second balcony. This informal lounge is especially spacious, thanks to the addition of an extra-high coffered ceiling in the early stages of the project. Natural light spills in through the floor-to-ceiling glass, illuminating the luscious magenta sofa, custom-made rugs, and two stately, serene marble women by Brisbane sculptor Zygmunt Libucha. This area doubles as a home theatre when retractable block-out blinds are lowered from the streamlined bulkheads and a projector and screen descends from the ceiling.



The bedrooms are granted privacy in a wing running off the home's foyer. The owners requested an opulent feel in the ensuited master bedroom and this has been achieved in spades. Ornate curtaining, plush fabrics in regal gold and red, and a magnificent wall of etched glass panels have created a retreat of palatial proportions.

The home's only feature wall is a sensational bolt of hot-mango in one of the guest rooms. It's an inspired choice and beautifully complements the rich purples in the bedcover, and sculpture by artist Els Houwen. The third bedroom carries a slightly more masculine tone but is still kept warm and approachable with a blend of fabrics in botanicals and stripes, and contemporary decorator pieces.

To create a home which both reflected the owners' tastes and surprised them (in a good way) with its finished design, a trusting relationship was the key. "It's crucial that the client has confidence in their interior designer" John says. And despite being very 'hands-on', approving each fabric swatch and major design decision, the owners admit "you don't really know what something is going to look like when you buy things off a small sample, or in a catalogue or photograph. So when the whole thing started to come together, we really understood the design John had created, and how good he is ... we've been thrilled with his choices."



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John admits that "trust" was at an all-time high during the extravagant creation of a kaleidoscopic crystal chandelier which now presides over the formal dining table. This glamorous piece was crafted from Austrian crystals and shipped to Australia in carefully wrapped individual pieces. Although it was literally impossible to translate a two-dimensional drawing into the exquisite spectacle which emerged, the owners retained absolute confidence in John's impressive vision.

Art and light are defining features of the home, with the use of glass as a stand-out. Not only does it afford spectacular views of the water, glass has been a favourite decorating choice. The owners'

personal passion for the sheer beauty of this delicate, mesmerising material is reflected most strikingly in the large pieces which adorn the home, in particular the colourful, swirling creations of a young fifth-generation Venetian glass artist, Massimiliano Schiavon, whose work they fell in love with on a recent trip to Murano Island. Glass tables have also been included in both lounge areas, allowing the colours of the rugs to shine through, and an informal glass table off the kitchen is topped with a fabulously modern multi-coloured glass 'chandelier' from Italy.

Much care has been taken with the home's lighting, with the owners concluding that "if the lighting looks good, everything

else looks good". A high-tech Dynalite system allows the creation of several lighting 'scenes' in each room, and magical effects have been created in the plunge pool where a network of tiny fibre optic cables were painstakingly sewn beneath the intricate mosaic tiles. They slowly change colour, giving the water an ethereal glow. This attention to detail is extended to the cutting edge technology which has been hot-wired into the home's DNA. In fact, 'technologically advanced' is an understatement here, with an AMX system controlling everything from the lights, to music in each room, to the movies running on any of the televisions. "The owners can be in another country and still open the door



of their home for guests" John marvels. Videopro put the detailed home automation package together, to the complete satisfaction of the owners. "We wanted a system that could grow, accommodate new technologies, and allow us to play our music or movie collection anywhere in the apartment, individually or at the same time ... Videopro did the job superbly."

The owners save their highest praise for John, Kylie and the rest of the "professional and delightful" team. They both agree that working closely with John, on what was sometimes an arduous and time-

consuming process, was always a pleasure. They describe him as "refreshing and passionate ... and very interesting to have around. He is a very artistic interior designer, with a great style."

Sitting on the balcony is one of the best ways to appreciate both the views and John's stunning design. "You have river views on one side and city views on the other" the owners explain. "And looking into the home is another view; of the beautiful colours and amazing lighting that John has chosen for us."