

MAXIMUM EXPOSURE

The way this huge warehouse apartment has been renovated, the occupants get the rough with the smooth

WORDS **FIONA BROOK** PHOTOGRAPHS **LUCAS ALLEN** STYLING **MEGAN MORTON**



The greys and whites of the living room sofas, lamp, coffee table and Godfrey Hirst carpet blend with the concrete walls and white window frames. Through the archway (opposite), Georgina has furnished an alcove with Turkish kilims and cushions, plus a couple of faux snakeskin ones from Moss.

Georgina Damm and Simon Arnold had been dating for just four weeks when they saw a massive warehouse in Flinders Lane, Melbourne, and decided to take the plunge by renting the place together.

"It's such a happening, groovy lane," says Georgina, the owner and operator of Damm Fine Food. "At night it's a bar scene, with Japanese animation on the laneway walls, and restaurants like The Deanery, which is a wine bar, restaurant and store. On Friday nights the place is filled with people – it's fantastic."

Part of Leicester House, which was built in 1886, the warehouse boasts 3.7-metre-high ceilings and a massive 230sqm floor space. It probably served as a storage facility for fabric or wool in earlier times and so, to become livable, needed a completely new fit-out. The owners, who also happen to be friends of Georgina and Simon, hired architects Allison Jessup and John King to design the home. Work was completed the day before the couple moved in.

Allison explains that a clear distinction was made between the past and the present. "Although the functional spaces in the apartment – kitchen, bathrooms, et cetera – are detailed to a high level of finish, they are set against

the shabby-chic qualities of the original space," she explains.

During the renovation, layers of concrete that had accrued on the walls over many years were gradually chipped away, except for a little saved as testament to the building's heritage. "The beauty of the space is that it has been left really raw," says Georgina. "The features themselves are quite neutral, so it could be anything to anyone."

A wall of original archways divides the open-plan kitchen, living and dining area from the sleeping quarters: two bedrooms, a study and two bathrooms.

The kitchen is slightly raised above the level of the adjoining dining/living space. "I don't do a lot of cooking at home, except when we entertain," says Georgina, whose company specialises in extraordinary food presentation. "But this is the first kitchen I've had that has been really well thought out.

"I love the 'upstand' on the island bench. It's fine to have an open-plan kitchen, but there is nothing worse than having all the mess from cooking on show. This way you can hide it and your guests don't feel compelled to help. The polished stone surface is also fantastic for rolling dough and preparing food."

Furnishing the living/dining area could have been a daunting task, ⇨



A hydroponic lampshade (left) fitted with a regular bulb hangs over the blackbutt dining table (below), which seats 12 people. Behind it, an 'upstand' (right, where Georgina is pictured) on the kitchen island hides cooking equipment. The kitchen also features a quartz benchtop, stainless-steel splashback (behind Simon) and cupboards in American maple veneer.



ht enters the main
hroom through a floor-
celling frosted glass
ndow. On either side the
lls are clad in mosaic
ss tiles. In the bedroom
posite), the owners
ose to retain the original
hway feature. Georgina's
dside lamps are from
om Interior Products and
brass clocks were
ked up at a market in
ng Kong.



“THIS SPACE IS REALLY RAW. THE FEATURES ARE QUITE NEUTRAL, SO IT CAN BE ANYTHING TO ANYONE”

but, fortunately, Georgina was able to incorporate most of her existing pieces. “Everything I had fit so brilliantly,” she enthuses.

However, the warehouse dimensions demanded a couple of striking additions as well as some creative thinking. Georgina bought a two-piece sofa from Jordan Australia for the living area and placed four ottomans in the space around her coffee table, making it a popular spot for casual meals. A 12-seater blackbutt dining table handles more formal occasions.

“Something to consider in city apartments is the size of the lifts. Everyone has big furniture for these open-space apartments, but the lifts won’t always

accommodate it,” Georgina warns, basing the advice on her own experience.

Just off the living area, she has placed a collection of Turkish kilims and cushions, sourced when she was staging a Moroccan theme party for a client. “The trends in events change often,” Georgina explains. “I tend to start with pieces in my home and then find the suppliers because I know they work really well. I transform my home all the time as furniture comes and goes. That’s also how we evolve what we do at Damm Fine Food.”

Other furnishings have come from friends who work in creative fields; Georgina often picks up pieces from them rather than going to the shops.

For example, Sorrento-based furniture dealer Ross Nichols provided locally made items such as the dining table, while the reproduction 1960s floor lamp in the living room (available at Mondo Luce in South Yarra) was a gift to Georgina from a close friend who thought she had to have it.

“I’ve never consciously thought about how my house looks – it just happens,” she says. Perhaps that’s why her decorating style appears so effortless. And it seems Georgina’s calm approach is mirrored in the streetscape below. “It hadn’t ever crossed my mind to live in the city,” she admits, “but I love it. Whenever I’m at home, it’s so peaceful because everyone else has left.” ■