


Living area

Young Salvatore relaxes on the family's huge Minotti sofa. The coffee table is vintage Knoll; the vase is by Jonathan Adler. Interior designer Greg Natale commissioned the rug from Designer Rugs to one of his custom designs; its cut-and-loop pile adds marvellous texture as it catches the light. As well as green, the cushions show the other main colours used in the house: orange, mustard yellow and white. *Turn the page to see more. →*

 *accent colour: green*
holding colour: black

writer: john mcdonald | photography: chris waines, julie crespel (moodboards) | styling: erin michael

THE RESOLVED HOME

*step-by-step with
an interior designer*

Top interior designer Greg Natale shares the knowledge of what you need to do to get **a home that's just right**

Interior designers know their stuff. They can make difficult spaces sing, tired layouts interesting and turn dull decorating schemes into dramatic places to be. Most times they'll approach a project in a very methodical way: listen to the client's brief, devise a look, create mood and sample boards and then, in as quick a timeframe as is practicable, carry out the work required and decorate the house. Not here. For this home – a three-bedroom 1940s house in Sydney's Inner West – interior designer Greg Natale (Gregnatale.com) took a far more “organic”, gradual approach “with a lot of to-ing and fro-ing”. It's an approach that the home decorator, with thought and planning, can take on for themselves.

Homeowners Melissa and Vince Ciolino wanted to take it slow and work in stages. The couple's company, Ciolino Constructions (Ciolinoconstructions.com.au), would carry out the building work in consultation with Greg. Stage 1 involved building a new kitchen at the rear of the house – with Greg recommending surfaces, fittings and materials – and putting in a pool and deck. They also renovated the front of the house, including new timber flooring and wall treatments. Stage 2 – building the extension at the rear of the house – took place a few years later.




*accent
colour:
orange*


*this painting
was the
starting point*

Who lives here?

Vince and Melissa Ciolino with their three boys Max, 11, Salvatore, 8, and baby Marco, 6 months. Pictured far left: their interior designer, Greg Natale. Ciolinoconstructions.com.au

step 1: FIND YOUR STARTING POINT

This is one of the most difficult things to nail, “even for a trained designer”, Greg says. Creating a lookbook of things you like can really help, and if you are hiring an interior designer they can use it as a springboard for their design. “I always tell a client that if you’ve got a good idea, I’ll run with it, but if it’s not a good idea I’ll tell you,” Greg says. What if you’re doing the decorating yourself? Taking your cue from a treasured item can be a great approach. What do you love about it? Is it colour, texture, or both? These can offer great clues about the colours and textures to include in your scheme. Melissa loved her Susan O’Doherty painting (on the black wall behind Greg; Susanodoherty.com.au) – it’s something she would never part with – and Greg used it for deciding on his colour scheme. →

 *black is used as an anchor*



Taubmans Endure Low Sheen in **Sentimental** (white walls).



Dulux Once **Ceiling White** (ceilings).



Taubmans Endure Low Sheen in **Stony Creek** (walls in bedrooms).



New Look Xtratough in **Crystal White** (window trims, cornices), Paint Place.



Taubmans Endure Low Sheen in **Hearty Hosta** (walls in baby Marco’s nursery).

step 2: RESEARCH

You might think that a designer like Greg would stick to a cluster of favourite suppliers. Yes, he has an easily recognisable signature look – modern glam – but he’s constantly on the hunt for new and exciting finds. There’s a lesson in this for the home decorator: once you’ve found your starting point, search far and wide for things that might work for you. “I’m always on the lookout for new things and new suppliers,” he says.

Formal dining

Greg chose a Minotti “Van Dyck” dining table from Dedece and Philippe Stark “Ghost” chairs from Space. The chandelier is Murano crystal. Painting by Scott Petrie (Scottpetrieart.com).




 *white is another anchor*



MOODBOARD 1. Grasscloth wallpaper, \$54.45 a m, Baresque. **2.** Dedar “Argentina” taffeta in Canarino, \$273 a m; through designers. **3.** Marvic “Misa Moire” Plain linen/viscose in Scarlet (armchair cushions), from Seneca Textiles (for retail try Upholstery Solutions, \$129.80 a m). **4.** Schumacher “Adras Ikat” cotton print in Jewel by Martyn Lawrence Bullard, from Orient House (for retail try Fabricstudio.com.au, \$286 a m). **5.** Dida tweed in 09 Nero by Minotti (sofa cover; sofa from Dedece). **6.** Dedar “Argentina” taffeta in Scarlatto, from South Pacific Fabrics, \$273 a m; through designers. **7.** Haymes Interior Expressions low-sheen paint in Rapunzel. **8 & 9.** Honed bluestone tile (80cm x 40cm), \$56 a sq m, RMS Traders. **10.** Greg Natale “Manhattan” rug, \$725 a sq m, Designer Rugs.

step 3: ADD LAYERING & CONTRAST

"Layer until you get it right," Greg says. Depending on the project, this can be achieved quickly or, as with this house, be a gradual process. Greg's clients mostly want to walk into a finished house, but the Ciolinos – like most of us who are decorating our homes ourselves – were in a position to see what worked for them over time. Once the front of the house was resolved (with Melissa's preferences for feminine finishes) and the family had lived with it for a while, Greg worked with them to find the right vibe for the rear, where Vince wanted a more masculine look. The green rug and dark sofa were chosen first – but Greg felt uncomfortable with all-white walls. "I had to really push to get the dark grasscloth wallpaper in. You had this opulent hallway, this black kitchen and this white box. It looked wrong, and the painting looked insipid against the white." The dark wallpaper created a cohesiveness that was missing. →

 charcoal-black wallpaper makes the reference painting pop

Informal dining

Greg worked with a carefully edited selection of the homeowners' own furniture, including this dining setting and the antique Chinese tea cabinet, whose colour echoes the orange in the reference painting at right.



accent colours: kelly green, "Champagne" beige

Master bedroom

Melissa wanted a feminine feel in the bedroom with elements of softness. She'd found the elegant bed at auction, and Greg had it reupholstered. Side tables and lamps from Bloomingdales, Surry Hills. Jonathan Adler "Letter" pillows. Drapes are Dedar taffeta from South Pacific Fabrics.



windows should always be dressed

Master bedroom

"Curtains are the finishing touch to a room," Greg says. When using linen sheers, select blends as the Australian sun will degrade pure linen quickly.



Entrance

The front section of the house preserves the building's retro feel. The sputnik-style light came from Mondo Luce. See moodboard (right) for rug and wallpaper.

step 4: USE TRADITIONAL DECORATING TECHNIQUES

Greg is a firm believer in them. They might seem obvious but are too often ignored – at the decorator's peril. Some examples: use bedside lamps and tables to flank a bed. Beds need to be finished with bedspreads and throw pillows. A resolved sofa must have cushions on it. A sofa is incomplete without a coffee table and, where appropriate, a side table. Decorate the entry area: "For me it's all about putting a beautiful rug down," Greg says. "A mirror. A painting. A pendant light." Never use white rugs or carpet in an entryway – it will look grubby quick smart. Position a single pendant light smack bang in the middle over a table, and don't make it hang too high. Rugs anchor a space – use them. For a dining table, the rug needs to be just slightly larger than the table with the chairs pushed in, and the same shape as the table. Mix curves and straight lines: "I have made a career of this," Greg says. →



Amazing original

The egg-yolk yellow bathroom was retained; there's also a modern bathroom (with laundry) behind the living area.

Main bathroom
Upper walls papered in custom-printed Birds of Paradise wallpaper from Signature Prints.



MOODBOARD 1. Florence Broadhurst "Imperial Brocade" wallpaper, \$350 for 10m roll, Signature Prints. **2.** Rayon series porcelain tile in colour 77436 (60cm sq), Academy Tiles. *This is a larger-format modern tile with a similar colour to the home's originals.* **3.** Kelly Wearstler "Emerald Cut" 100% cotton in Lotus & Ivory (reversible), from Orient House (for retail, try Fabricstudio.com.au, \$265.10 a m). **4.** Greg Natale "South Beach" rug (as hall runner) in custom colour, Designer Rugs. **5.** Kvadrat "Harald" velvet by Fanny Aronsen, \$187 a m, Upholstery Solutions. **6.** Haymes Interior Expressions low-sheen paint in Sand Storm.

 *Charcoal, “Champagne” beige; accent colour: yellow*

step 5: **KEEP IT NEAT & TIDY**

Clutter is the enemy of good interior design, Greg says. “I hate clutter and can’t think clearly when it’s present. But I’m actually a naturally messy person. Being neat and tidy is something than anyone can train themselves to be.” Greg doesn’t like the trend towards eclecticism, where you chuck all sorts of things together. “Even if you are being eclectic there still needs to be common themes. It might be colour or a shape. You should limit the number of common themes in a scheme to three or four, and there should be a common thread from room to room.”

For the boys

The boys’ room is simple, masculine and effective. Ikea “Malm” beds and drawers, inexpensive Sheridan manchester and more Jonathan Adler “Letter” pillows work beautifully. The Florence Broadhurst prints on the ottoman (Japanese Floral) and cushions (see right) provide all the colour that’s required.

The room is balanced, with the beds and drawers at exactly the same height. The pendant is the anchor.

step 6: STAND BACK AND LOOK

Ask yourself. Does it look right? Does it feel right? Maybe you should ask for a second opinion. "Constructive criticism is very important. I ask my friends and colleagues what they think all the time. An objective opinion from someone you trust is gold." On that, a final tip from Greg: "Try and be objective when you're decorating. All professional designers need to be and so does the home decorator." →

Sense of flow

Visual motifs echo each other from room to room, providing cohesion and continuity. Greg's all for clashing patterns so long as there's a common thread. Here it's colour – white, charcoal/black, and creamy beige.



Champagne wallpaper continues but with a graphic variation



MOODBOARD 1. Haymes Interior Expressions low-sheen **paint** in Enigma. **2.** Blume "Greek Filigree" **wallpaper** (BL090) in custom colourway, \$350 a 10m roll, Signature Prints. **3.** Florence Broadhurst "Japanese Bamboo" **fabric** in Sunspot, \$143 a m, Signature Prints. **4.** POP by Sheridan "Jiro" **pillowcase** in Charcoal, \$7.50, Sheridan Factory Outlet. **5.** Sample of the home's **cabinetry** in black-stained American Oak veneer, through cabinetmakers.

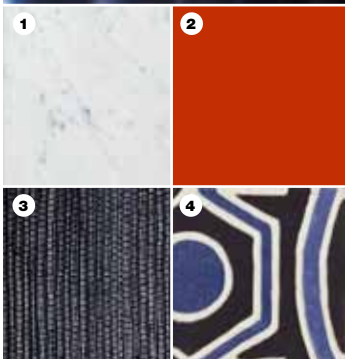
A WHOLE HOUSE PALETTE

at a glance



LIVING

1. BASALT TILES Honed dark bluestone, sealed for longevity. **2. RUG** Greg Natale for Designer Rugs in a custom design and colour; NZ wool; cut-and-loop pile to reflect light. **3. CABINETRY** Black-stained American Oak veneer; through cabinetmakers. **4. ARMCHAIR** Upholstered in a yellow Kvadrat "Harald" velvet, details as before. *For stockists, see page 207.*



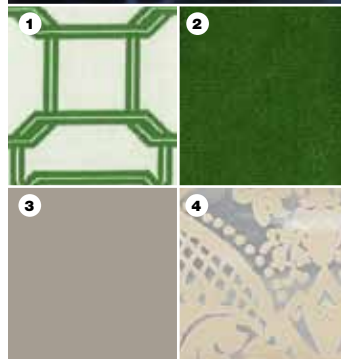
EVERYDAY DINING

1. TABLE Eero Saarinen dining with marble top by Knoll Studio; from Dedece. **2. TEA CHEST** Vintage Chinese. Similar paint colour: Taubmans "Orange Relish". **3. WALLPAPER** Grasscloth from Baresque; similar style: Haiku Fine Stripe. **4. RUG** Greg Natale for Designer Rugs.



LIVING/FORMAL DINING

1. TAFFETA CUSHION COVER Dedar "Annabella" in 18 V. Prato, or Tabularasa in 017; through South Pacific Fabrics. **2. PAINT** Taubmans "Lilac Whimsey". **3. CHAIRS** Gloss black Starck "Ghost" from Space. **4. ART** by Sydney painter Scott Petrie (he also has rug designs).



MASTER BEDROOM

1. MANCHESTER Kelly Wearstler "Emerald Cut" in Lotus & Ivory, as before. **2. BEDHEAD** Kvadrat "Harald" velvet, as before; or Designer's Guild "English Riding", through Radford. **3. PAINT** Taubmans "Stony Creek". **4. WALLPAPER** Florence Broadhurst "Imperial Brocade", as before.



MAX & SAL'S BEDROOM

1. CUSHIONS Florence Broadhurst "Japanese Bamboo" in Sunspot, as before. **2. FLOORING** For similar: Boral tallowwood with Feast Watson "Black Japan" stain. **3. MANCHESTER POP** by Sheridan "Jiro" in Charcoal, as before. **4. PAINT** Murobond "Basket". **ti**