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BLACK BEAUTY

For this family home in the Southern Highlands, designer Greg Natale went over to the dark side to create a sophisticated, glamorous ambience.

PHOTOGRAPHS ANSON SMART WORDS CHRIS PEARSON

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS LUXE

THIS PAGE The media room is dark and moody with the walls painted in Dulux 'Grey Hearth'. Casa Mia canopy chair from Julia Garner Agencies. Carpet by David Hicks from Stark Carpet. Botanical prints from Edit. 'Bryant' chandelier from Laura Kincade.

OPPOSITE PAGE Creating a real sense of arrival, the elegant entry features marble flooring and wall panelling. Lamp from Pigott's Store. 'Ralph' table and 'Bordeaux' chair, both from Town & Country Style. Fluted mirror from Bloomingdales. Wall sconce from Laura Kincade. 'Glynde Teal' grasscloth wallpaper from Designers Guild.





The Parisian antique double doors in the foyer are a tantalising entree to what lies within this NSW Southern Highlands home. With their rich patina, they instantly lend a beguiling *je ne sais quoi*. And their impact is heightened by the contrast of the slick, green marble floor.

“We wanted the house to feel French, with wall mouldings, well-worn antiques and oak furniture and flooring,” says interior designer Greg Natale of Greg Natale Design. “But, instead of Provençal style or shabby chic, it’s an update. While sage green is an obvious choice for a country home, I combined it with black and white for a crisp, contemporary look.”

The result cannot be pigeonholed – yes, there’s more than a soupçon of French regional style, but it’s peppered with surprises, such as the urban-smart monochrome, lashings of glamour and a little mid-century retro. The deft and flamboyant layering even includes Hollywood Regency, an elegant mid-century aesthetic that Greg has long been drawn to.

Owners Genevieve and Ben Twomey wanted a home with the wow factor – and a little different – and that’s exactly what they got. But, this being a family home for them and their children – Miller, three, Declan, 21 months, and a third on the way – it also had to be comfortable. Scanning the pages of *Belle* for inspiration, Genevieve spotted one of Greg’s earlier projects. “It was that home’s black kitchen that drew me in,” she says. “And I also loved the white panelling throughout.”

The 500-square-metre footprint – and five bedrooms – gave Greg a vast creative canvas. The house had been lovingly constructed in the mid-90s by a professional builder for himself and his wife. But it was Federation revisited, with brick facings, colonial-style windows and heavy

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS LUXE

THIS PAGE Gallic inspiration in the kitchen in the diamond-patterned mosaic-tiled splashback from Di Lorenzo, and the diamond mouldings on the joinery. Black stained oak veneer joinery by Briggs Veneers. Three-shade pendant light from Town & Country Style. In the dining area, 'Delaware' host chair and 'Rhode Island' Chippendale chairs from Laura Kincade. Chandelier from Chandeliers To Die For. 'Oxford' rug by Greg Natale from Designer Rugs. OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP and BOTTOM In the living room, tongue-and-groove bookshelves are painted in Porter's Paints 'Parterre'. Domo Collections sofas. Side chair from Cavit & Co. Coffee table from James Salmond Furniture. Oly San Francisco 'Priscilla' side table from Coco Republic. Mirror from Laura Kincade. Artwork in the hallway is by Scott Petrie.





THERE'S MORE THAN A SOUPÇON OF FRENCH REGIONAL STYLE, BUT IT'S PEPPERED WITH SURPRISES.

timber architraves, which made the interiors dark and oppressive. And the rooms had little connection with the outside. The cornices and panelling, however, would become the starting point for the French regional aesthetic the couple desired.

Greg rendered the exterior in a putty-coloured lime wash for a “soft French, country-house look”, and added French doors all along the north wall, in the open-plan living area and the main bedroom. A new arch between the dining and kitchen adds grandeur and defines the two spaces within the open plan. He also painted out the dark timber architraves.

From the foyer, you enter a huge open-plan living space, which enjoys a postcard panorama of eucalypts and rolling pastures. A hallway forms the spine of the house – on one side are the living areas, flanked by the nursery and parents’ retreat, while on the other are three bedrooms and a family bathroom. A conservatory abuts one corner of the living room, while on the opposite side of the open plan are a media room and study-cum-library.

Sage-coloured tongue-and-groove bookshelves, flanking a crafted marble fireplace, immediately set the tone for the living room, with two glorious chandeliers and Louis-inspired furniture in black linen, lending glamour to the French country aesthetic. Meanwhile, the Hollywood Regency mirror brings elegance, while the coffee table with its concrete top has industrial echoes.

Top of Genevieve’s wish list was a black kitchen. Diamond motifs – in the harlequin-tiled splashback and the mouldings – allude to the home’s Gallic flavour. “You see diamond shapes everywhere in France,” says Greg. The three-shade pendant light overhanging the marble-topped island is also in the French regional style, with a slight industrial edge.

The media room is dark and moody with walls painted charcoal grey. Moody, too, is the study-cum-library, where Greg has used grasscloth wallpaper for richness, and dark, stained timber floors. Adorned with framed maps, horse images and antlers, it has a den-like feel.

The Hollywood Regency influence is perhaps strongest in the main bedroom with its yellow and black palette, lush moire bedhead and faux mouldings. “Real mouldings would have been too heavy, so we used painted mouldings,” says Greg.

He adopted this idea from the work of legendary UK designer, David Hicks, whose influence pervades the home through the black-and-white bordered carpets in the hallway and bedrooms. “The house is so big the floors needed to be broken up,” says Greg. “We put all the pattern on the floors and kept the walls simple.”

And the carpets echo the graphic black kitchen, which is where Genevieve’s journey with Greg began. Her favourite space, it, too, would be perfectly at home on the pages of a magazine. **15**

For more go to gregnatale.com.





THIS PAGE and OPPOSITE The study-cum-library has walls covered in 'Pacific Breeze' black grasscloth from Baresque. 'Monte Carlo' rugs from Designer Rugs. Hickory Chair chaise, 'Cloverleaf' ottoman, and mirror, all from Laura Kincade. Horse ornament from Coco Republic. Deer antler chandelier from Orson & Blake. Round pedestal table from Pecare Trading. 'Hepburn' chairs, 'Provence' desk' and 'Manhattan Library' bookcases, all from Town & Country Style.



SPEED READ

A neo-Federation house in the NSW Southern Highlands receives a stylish makeover, which also delivers all the comforts of family living. + Interior designer Greg Natale of Greg Natale Design has updated the 90s home by installing a wall of French doors on the north side, rendering the exterior and totally refurbishing the interiors. Original detailing, such as cornices and panelling, was retained and became the inspiration for the new decor. + The predominant decorating theme is regional French, but this aesthetic has been refreshed by Greg, who has deftly combined sage green with smart, urban black and white, and teamed raw and textured surfaces with the smooth and slick. + A mix of design influences has been layered over this to create plenty of surprises in a wonderfully elegant home.



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The main bedroom is decorated in Hollywood Regency style. 'Left Bank' bed from Laura Kincaide. Mirrored brass side table and lamps from Bloomingdales. Molmic 'Flockhart' ottoman from Boyd Blue. The walk-in dressing room provides plenty of storage. Moulding above the Caroma 'Tradition' bath from Reece is actually a ceiling rose. OPPOSITE PAGE Sofa from Zanzibar Furniture, brass tables and lamp from Bloomingdales, Theodore Alexander prints from Laura Kincaide.

