

Herald Sun

Serial renovator's family masterpiece

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Jo McIntyre has created usable family spaces. Picture: Chris Groenhout
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AFTER 11 renovations, including three on the same street, Jo McIntyre is considering hanging up her hammer.

Her years of renovating experience has got her to the point where she now has a family home that is close to her dream house.

“I just love all the little extras, and everything I’ve ever wanted I was able to do with this house,” she says. “With every house there are always little compromises, but with this house there were none.”

But while Jo is satisfied, she is also somewhat exhausted. This last renovation was done while she was taking care of her three children and working on interior-design projects for an ever-growing list of clients through her business, Beautiful Home.

“It was a bit crazy. I sometimes got only three or four hours of sleep a night,” she says. “It certainly felt like an accomplishment when I got it done.”

The stately home was taken back to the frame and a second storey added, along with new plaster and sound-proof insulation in the front rooms. Cornices, skirting and architraves were all replaced. A pool and double garage were added and in total, it took more than nine months to complete.

But the result is stunning. The home now boasts a formal sitting room, two studies, four bedrooms, a rumpus room and an open-plan living and dining area, plus a kitchen with butler’s pantry at the rear.

The really impressive parts of the home, however, are not easily seen, such as the upstairs laundry chute hidden behind a vanity facade, or the mud room where drawers hold each child's school and sports bags. Power points for the children's laptops and phones are also part of this room.

In the laundry are multiple baskets hidden under the bench for dirty clothes, and there is also a drying room. Plus, there are drawers and cupboards for every aspect of the household, from toys and electronic equipment to kitchen appliances.

"There is a place for everything, so we can be really organised and it just makes life so much easier," says Jo, adding that storage is one of the key features she keeps in mind when designing her clients' homes.

"A home needs to be functional, as well as look good. Mums would appreciate that."

She has even found space to accommodate her husband's new-found love of wine, working into the floorplan a wine room with reinforced walls for 4000 bottles and temperature control.

The interior of the house is an eclectic mix of pieces, many from her favourite retailers such as Hermon & Hermon and Jardan.

There are also homewares and furniture she brought back from Thailand after living there for three years. Gorgeous works of art line the walls, with her favourite piece by Rosetta Santucci and another by friend Anita Dammersmith. Anita's work is found throughout the house, and Jo commissions her to do pieces for many of her clients' homes.

With this house finally done, Jo says she has at least 20 hours back in her week and plans to use it to continue working on home and interior designs for clients.

While she says this is likely to be her last renovation of her own home, she does admit you should "never say never".

"Sometimes I can't help it. I just love houses and love taking something old and bringing it back."

>> Postscript with Jo McIntyre

If you could live in another city where would it be? New York.

Your best bargain? The puppets I picked up at the markets in Thailand for \$20 each.

Next on your interiors wish list? A Kantha chair for our bedroom.

Best time of the day in your home? Straight after the school drop-off when I have the house to myself.

How do you unwind? A fireplace going, glass of wine and a book. Bliss.

Top piece of design advice? Buy what you love. It will always fit in somewhere.

What do you love most about your house? I love the storage because it really does make your life so much easier. Architecturally, the house is beautiful and classic, but realistically it is the storage I love.

Do you have a favourite room? The open-plan living and dining room because it gets so much light and there is always someone here, but I also love our bedroom. It is really pretty.

Your secret to dealing with builders? I've never had a problem with them. I think if you know what you want and don't keep changing your mind, you'll always have a good relationship.

Contact details: For more information about Beautiful Home, see www.beautifulhome.net.au