

Life electric

The jolt of juxtaposition brings daily joy to the owners of an eclectic chateau in Australia's south.

Words SARAH WORMWELL Photography JEN WILDING

This page The cavernous open plan has been given human scale by creating zones within zones with the living area defined by a Tibet Gallery 'Moss' rug. An oversized Minotti 'Alexander' modular sofa fills the space without impacting sightlines to the kitchen and garden. Molteni&C 'Louisa' tiered side tables from Hub. Opposite page The formal French garden was retained by the chateau's new owners and contrasts with the modern interiors. The ornamental urns and antique lanterns were imported from France.



This page The clean lines of the Kristalia 'Boiaccia' outdoor table and 'Elephant' sledge chairs, all from Fanuli, set off the terrace's original ornamentation. **Opposite page, clockwise from top left** The overriding design language is a study in contrasts, such as the placing of the modernist Atelier de Troupe 'Tempo 8 Wide' chandelier against the original arched windows. Flexform 'Bangkok' ottoman from Fanuli. Molteni&C 'Louisa' tiered side tables from Hub. Christian Liaigre 'Terral' floor lamp. Curtains in Jim Thompson 'Acacia' in Smoked Pearl. A new colour palette was introduced to complement the extraordinary art collection. Guido Maestri's *The Wet* complements sculptural vases by Karlien van Rooyen and Kerry Levy.



For discerning collectors of contemporary Australian art, a French-inspired chateau was not an obvious choice of home, yet the sophisticated gardens, expansive block and opportunity to create a unique aesthetic proved too strong a lure.

On settlement in early 2021, the owners (a couple embarking on a new chapter as empty nesters) consulted interior designer Meryl Hare of Hare + Klein, who had worked on their previous family home. The chateau, built in 1920 by an avowed Francophile, retains its original structure replete with architectural hallmarks: elegant facade, imperial staircase and porte-cochère.

With six bedrooms, five bathrooms, an office, study, multiple living and dining areas, media room, bar and billiards room, as well as hidden gardens and a pool, there is ample room for visiting children, extended family and friends. The task for Meryl and her team was to refresh the interiors in a style suited to the owners' personality and taste as well as showcase their exquisite art collection.

"The gallery-like proportions of the house attracted the owners, however their overwhelming desire was to humanise the space with an interior that was both 'comfortable and relaxed' as well as 'sophisticated and elegant,'" says Meryl. And rather than take their design cues solely from the art or »

These pages Rich aubergine and teal were not the owners' immediate palette choice for the Maxalto 'Lutetia' sofas and the Knoll 'Platner' chairs, however they have become beloved pieces in the ground floor study – also home to favourite sculptures including the Paul Sloan figurine. Textured Stroheim 'Simute' grasscloth wallpaper from South Pacific Fabrics helps create a sense of warmth and enclosure without stealing the light. Serge Mouille 'Plafonnier 3 Bras Pivotants' pendant light from Cult. Zuster 'Halo' cabinets. Nonn 'Journal' coffee table from HG.





« architecture, the Hare + Klein team created interiors that thrive on balanced contrast: sharp and sculptural, ornate and minimal, dark and bright, old and new.

Many original features were retained, among them the curlicued wrought-iron central staircase, the striking series of arched windows and the ceiling cornices. “The strong spirit of the French-style architecture was honoured and complemented by a sensitive overlay of contemporary updates more suited to the brilliantly eclectic art and the couple’s relaxed lifestyle,” says Meryl. The most profound difference between the new and old interiors is evident in the open-plan kitchen, dining and living space on the ground floor, which is cavernous in scale, but needed to feel cosy and home-like.

Warmth and intimacy were created through a complete palette change and the addition of softening window treatments. The kitchen floorboards were re-stained to a deep walnut, the striking island was repainted to temper the metal splashback and layers of texture were added for relaxed ease. »



This page, clockwise from top left A quiet space looking over the garden is made comfortable with the Molteni&C ‘D.154.2’ armchair from Hub in the first-floor media room where much furniture from the owner’s prior collaboration with Hare + Klein has been reused. Hare + Klein custom rug from Designer Rugs. An antique desk and Walter Knoll ‘FK’ bucket chair. Artist Sally Bourke’s *The game is up* over the fireplace inspired the choice of the Tapetti ‘Pleated’ silk rug. DCW ‘Respiro 3’ pendant light from Spence & Lyda. B&B Italia ‘Tufty-Time’ sofa. The &Tradition ‘Forakami’ pendant lights were chosen for their sculptural lines. *Red in recline* artwork by Deborah Paauwe. **Opposite page** In the ground-floor hallway, Alexander McKenzie’s moody work *The Source* contrasts with the vibrant Tapetti runner.





« Careful furniture selection and orientation was also important in creating a welcoming atmosphere. Zones-within-zones encourage people to come together while enabling sightlines to connect to the exceptional gardens and facilities – another key priority for the owners. Other rooms, particularly the media room and study, called for rich, luscious colour to establish quiet luxury while the clever use of textured walls creates a sense of enclosure. The seagrass wallcovering used in both rooms is reflective, ensuring it doesn't “steal the light”.

The owners modestly claim they placed complete faith in Meryl to deliver on their brief but she says she sees it slightly differently: “Our clients trusted us to push them a little out of their comfort zone with a good example being the aubergine velvet pieces in the study. But they definitely had a lot of input – you can see from the artwork they have fabulous taste, so we encouraged their thoughts and as a result the process was a pleasure.”

While initially overwhelmed by the size of the project, the owners say they couldn't be happier with the results: “We really wanted to demonstrate that Australian art can hold its own against any backdrop. It's an eclectic collection, and not to everyone's taste, but we love that we can champion incredibly talented local artists in a way that does them justice but also feels like home.” ■

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This page Imported from France, the ornate antique chandelier in the main ensuite juxtaposes the modernist & Tradition 'Shuffle' side table. The space is softened by a Rug Establishment 'Cumulus' rug and Dot Magnus 'Fiorano' window treatments. **Opposite page, from top** The main bedroom suite on the first floor is a calm sanctuary for the owners. Fiona McMonagle's artwork *Supreme* is a hero piece as is the Maxalto 'Alcova 09' bedframe. Barbera stone and bronze side table.

SPEED READ

» Having purchased a French-inspired chateau, the owners engaged interior designer Meryl Hare and the Hare + Klein team to reinterpret the interiors to humanise the scale. » While the grand proportions were a drawcard for the owners, who wanted to showcase their extensive Australian art collection, the overwhelming desire was to create a comfortable and relaxed environment. » The interior scheme is a study in balanced contrast: sharp and sculptural, ornate and minimal, dark and bright, old and new. » The vastness of each room was softened with clever design details, such as zoning, architectural lighting, bespoke furniture and layers of texture.

 SIGNATURE STYLE
KEY PIECES


1 & Tradition 'Formakami JH5' ricepaper and oak pendant light, \$415, from Cult. 2 'Opal' glass bowl by Kristina Dam, \$379/large, from HK Edit. 3 Lee Broom 'Half Cut' Champagne coupe, \$165, from Space. 4 'Halo' storage cabinet, with marble handles, \$9900, from Zuster. 5 Moroso 'Longwave' armchair, \$6510, from HK Edit.

This page, from top One of multiple outdoor seating areas connecting the home to the formal gardens. Paola Lenti 'Afra' chairs and 'Zoe' rug. The chateau's porte cochère and topiary hedges were designed by the former Francophile owner. Opposite page The sleek and smooth B&B Italia 'Tobi-Ishi' outdoor table and Tribù 'Contour' chairs play up the ornate balustrades.

