



**This page** The handsome Georgian Revival facade with pillars and portico strongly hints at the grandeur beyond. **Opposite page** In a corner of the living room, lamps from 1stDibs. Bolier cabinet re-lacquered in Burgundy from Studio Cavit, with Baccarat 'Louxor' crystal vase from Palmer & Penn, and 'Boule' brass bowl, 'Beta' ice bucket and 'Fleur' marble sculpture, all from Greg Natale. Kate Bergin artwork. Porta Romana 'Giacometti' stool covered in snakeskin fabric from South Pacific Fabrics.



# MASTER

Words CHRIS PEARSON Photography ANSON SMART

# STROKES



Via palette and pattern, a palatial Georgian Revival home in Melbourne adapts to family living, while also embracing grace and elegance.





While interior designer Greg Natale applied his masterly brushstrokes to this grand Georgian Revival home in Melbourne's southeast a decade ago, the owners invited him back in 2019 to dab more lavish layers onto its vast canvas. And this was not gilding the lily – by retouching his earlier efforts, he has made the home into, some would say, a work of art.

In such a huge home boasting seven bedrooms and nine bathrooms, not all the rooms were remodelled the first time around. And the rooms that were completed needed more warmth for a family now totalling six children and a little tweaking to even better serve their needs. "Evolution rather than a revolution," says Greg, who embraced the chance to revisit the elegant 1930s mansion.

The owners bought it in early 2013, drawn to its palatial proportions. Two huge sitting areas and separate dining, study and media rooms offered break-out spaces for a boisterous family while also giving them room to mingle. Seven upstairs bedrooms gave the family room to grow. The owners were also seduced by the solid brick construction and the manicured garden, which boasted a pergola, pool and tennis court: a recipe for easy entertaining. But the recently renovated interiors were an avalanche of white, far too chilly for family living, and conspicuously short on glamour for such a gracious home. And the humungous entry, no doubt ideal for wedding receptions, was yawning and unwelcoming as indeed was most of the house.

"The house had amazing bones, but it was bland and the rooms disjointed," says Greg. "We added intimacy by adding layers and textures." Luckily, due to those bones, the only structural »



**This page** So lavish is the new entry area that it now becomes the formal living room, complete with burgundy Vladimir Kagan 'Serpentine' left and right sofas from Holly Hunt. Boca Do Lobo 'Empire' centre table in walnut from Covet House with 'Liza' box and vase from Greg Natale. 'Empire' chandelier from Luxxu. Painting by Dale Frank. 'Moire' rug by Greg Natale from Designer Rugs. 'Blob' hand-blown glass lamp on 'Miro' console side table with glass top, both from Porta Romana. 'Kintsugi' wallpaper from Porter Teleo. **Opposite page, clockwise from top left** 'Souffle' cocktail chair from Kelly Wearstler. Vintage sculpture from 1stDibs on custom plinth from Covet House. Studio VC 'Cooper' sconce from Visual Comfort. 'Precision' large square-mount ceiling light from Kelly Wearstler. On console, 'Georges' lacquer box and 'Mies' vase both from Greg Natale. Vintage Murano glass mirror from Conley&Co. In the powder room, Ginger & Jagger 'Fragments' mirror from James Said. Custom lacquered vanity with brass accents, 'Appia' wallpaper in Burgundy, 'Ziggurat' and 'Soleil' boxes, 'Mies' and 'Setllo' vases, all from Greg Natale. 'Utopia' wall light from Kelly Wearstler. 'Ava Gold' accessories from Labrazel.





**This page** Greg relocated the formal dining room to free up the previous space for a children's playroom, essential for a family with six children. Dining table custom made by Greg Natale with dining chairs from Kelly Wearstler. Grey silk wallpaper, 'Apollo' vase crystal in Amethyst, 'Dante' vase in Nero, 'Liza' bowl in Maroon and 'Despres' rug, all from Greg Natale. Artwork by John Olsen. 'Rock Edge' chandelier by John Pomp from A Rudin. **Opposite page, from top** The kitchen was made over in a darker palette with a Fume di Nevia benchtop from Artedomus in granite instead of marble. Custom bar stools and joinery by Greg Natale. Vintage lights from 1stDibs. Noritake 'Bob' dinnerware from Temple & Webster. In the wine and bar room, custom joinery in Grigio Carnico marble from RMS Marble & Stone and stained American oak. Waterford Crystal 'Lismore' decanter from Amara.





« work needed was the removal of a wall between the main bedroom and the ensuite to create an open-plan parents' retreat.

Also in that first renovation, he stained the timber floors in the formal living (ditching off-white carpet, a no-go with children), family living area, study and dining room to create sophistication and a smooth flow throughout, adorning them with patterned rugs. Textured wall treatments included silk wallpapers in the formal areas and the main bedroom, and grasscloth in less formal areas such as the family room and media room, "There was no painted plasterboard left," he says. "These finishes create luxe layering and mood." Similarly, in the family room, he installed a wall of shelving, a fireplace and a slatted timber ceiling to create a cossetting intimacy. In the main bedroom, he installed a fireplace and reoriented the bed so it faced the extensive grounds. "It was a huge room. I played with the proportions."

This time round, the home's layout needed one more tweak – what was once a dining room adjoining the kitchen has been turned into a highly practical playroom for youngsters, while the dining has been shifted into one of two living rooms. And Greg has added more of his famous "layers". Key to that layering is the addition of ceiling mouldings to nearly every room, the architectural detailing having been stripped out by a previous owner. While he wallpapered rooms previously untouched, he re-wallpapered some, too, while charcoal silk wallpapers in the living room and the main bedroom were retained.

Perhaps the most striking change is the entry, now a sitting area in its own right, which no-one could accuse of being unwelcoming. While monochrome in Greg's previous iteration, its walls now boast a striking hand-painted Porter Teleo wallpaper. And velvet burgundy Vladimir Kagan sofas, replacing a vast round white ottoman, sit under an inverted wedding-cake glass chandelier. Carpet with an ikat-inspired pattern, meanwhile, replaces chilly and formal marble tiles.

The owners wanted the new dining space oriented to the rear yard. "We created a custom dining table and introduced a rug, but re-used the existing timeless dining chairs," says Greg. By contrast, a new outdoor sitting area, or cabana, with upholstered furniture and louvres has a breezy, yet sophisticated, Saint Tropez ambience.

Perhaps the biggest change in this fascinating game of spot the difference was the palette – while last time around, it was largely monochromes, with pops of colour, Greg has given full flight to his and the owner's favourite hues: rich rubies, burgundies and maroons. "We bumped up the burgundies, which so remind me of Paris," he says – with all the warmth and allure of mulled wine. Dark ceilings in many rooms add to the embracing, cocooning effect. Kitchen benchtops, previously coolish Carrara marble, now sport darker granite. By contrast, pink – another favourite for Greg – adds softness to children's bedrooms and some bathrooms.


"The original starting point for the palette," adds the owner, was a buttoned De Padova ottoman in rich burgundy in the family room. "We just loved it and it predicated the plum and purple in the living areas." It influenced the furniture choices in another way, too. "With children, we wanted soft, rounded shapes," she says.

Greg's trademark geometrics and organic prints pervade every space. "Pattern is in my DNA," says Greg. "It's what I do, but the colour is all tonal, with nothing jumping and contrasting. While this home's maximalist, it also has clean, uncluttered lines.

"I love the burgundies, the warmth, the moodiness, the grandeur and the high ceilings, hard to find in a new build," he adds. "It's been great going back – you can redo things that perhaps didn't work the first time around." And the rest? They prove how well his special touch worked in the first place. ■ [gregnatale.com](http://gregnatale.com).







### SPEED READ

» When the owners bought this seven-bedroom Georgian Revival home in Melbourne's southeast in 2013, they were seduced by its size and its epic proportions. » But they were less enamoured of the all-white colour scheme, which was chilly and unwelcoming and undersold such a gracious home. » In 2013, they hired interior designer Greg Natale to add luxe and more human scale to the spaces. He achieved this with mouldings, silk and grassweave wallpapers, and a monochrome colour scheme with pops of colour. » In 2020, they asked him to revisit it, to add even more warmth and layers for family living. In what amounts mainly to a tweak, he added more mouldings and "bumped up the burgundy", the owner's – and his – favourite hue.





**This page, clockwise from top** The pool, complete with pergola, has a St Tropez resort ambience. 'Savannah' sun loungers and umbrellas from Janus et Cie. Kettal daybeds from Mobilia. In the office, chair 'No.693' and 'Iceland' drinks cart from A Rudin. 'Coquette' table lamp from Kelly Wearstler. Ceiling light from 1stDibs. Antique desk client's own. Artwork by John Olsen. 'Hide' rug in Burgundy from Greg Natale. Custom marble console table and 'Palazzo' bookends from Greg Natale. **Opposite page** In the casual living room, under another artwork by John Olsen, Minotti 'Hamilton' sofa and 'Elliott' coffee table from De De Ce. Cushions custom. DePadova 'Capitonné' ottoman from Boffi. 'Geometric Circle' vase from Vanessa Mitani. Large white and gold vase, bronze vase and ceiling lights, all from Kelly Wearstler. Vintage lamps from 1stDibs. Custom joinery by Greg Natale.











**This page** The study area in the main bedroom. Knoll 'Saarinen' armchair re-upholstered in 'District' fabric from Kelly Wearstler. Vintage table lamp from 1stDibs. On desk, 'Rope' bowl, 'Diane' marble tray and 'Nico' box, all from Greg Natale. On shelves, 'Mask Bird' vase and 'Brick' vase from Vanessa Mitrani, L'Objet 'Crocodile' gold vase from Amara. Artwork by Waldemar Kolbusz. **Opposite page, clockwise from top** The sitting area in the main bedroom with vintage sofa from 1stDibs, Minotti 'Quinn' arm chairs from De De Ce and Baker Furniture 'Quarry' accent tables from Studio Cavit. Murano glass lamps from eModerno. Artwork by Martine Emdur. 'Wave' centre table from Boca do Lobo. On shelves, 'Classic Legs' sculpture from Kelly Wearstler, and 'Dynasty' vase, and 'Egon' and 'Metropolis' boxes, all from Greg Natale. 'Diane' custom carpet by Greg Natale for Designer Rugs. The dark and moody main bedroom ensuite. Grigio Carnico marble on floor from RMS Marble. Greg Natale black mosaics from Bisazza. 'Origami' bath from Apaier. 'Burj' wall lamp from Govet House. 'Precision' ceiling light from Kelly Wearstler. Burgundy lacquered side table from 1stDibs. 'Polar' bowl from Greg Natale. In the main bedroom, pink ottoman from 1stDibs. Minotti 'Hamilton' bed and 'Archipenko' bedside table, both from De De Ce. 'Atollo' table lamp from Euroluce. Cushions from Greg Natale. Cruz 'Chili 13' faux fur throw from Ivy Lane. Artwork by Waldemar Kolbusz.



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- 1 Sub-Zero 'ICBCL3050WSPL' built-in 146-bottle wine storage cabinet, \$22,495, from Winnings. 2 Vladimir Kagan 'Big Picture' sofa, made to order, from Holly Hunt. 3 Gareth Ashton 'Lucia' bath filler in Brushed Brass, \$1586, from Abey. 4 'Tulle' stone bath in Diamond White, from \$10,495, from Apaier. 5 Greg Natale 'Delaunay' rug, \$4050, from Designer Rugs.